

WEST Academy High School

Course Descriptions

2024-2025

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West Academy Diploma Requirements: 40 credits to graduate

All students are required to earn one credit from each of the five required courses listed below.

Business Requirements and Other Required classes:

All students are required to earn one credit from each of the 4 required courses listed below.

Careers: Exploration & Development

Junior/Senior status preferred

Students will explore three major themes to determine where their career interests lie. Students will complete an interest profiler to explore their interests, values, and ideal lifestyle and how these items will influence their career choice. Next students will explore the career clusters and research the skills and education necessary for selected career choices. Students will then use the research above to further develop employability and soft skills. In this course, students will complete a job search, create a cover letter and resume, as well as research post-secondary education if it is in the student's career plan.

Computer Applications

The purpose of this course is to give students an in-depth introduction to Office 2010. Students will learn the fundamentals of Word, Excel and PowerPoint. This course will acquaint students with the proper procedures to create documents, worksheets, and presentations suitable for coursework, professional purposes and personal use. Students who take this course will learn these skills by completing hands-on activities.

Health

The health course is to help students recognize the value of attaining and maintaining good health. If students know the benefits and rewards of good health, they are more likely to find the motivation to achieve it. Students need this knowledge, in order to get healthy and to stay healthy. This course is offered in an online format to be completed during the school day.

Personal Finance

Junior/Senior status preferred

The basic objectives of this course are to help students explore all aspects of financial life: budgeting, money personality, saving, credit and debt, consumer awareness, financial services, role of insurance, income and taxes, housing and real estate, investing and retirement.

English Requirements and Offerings

All students are required to have 8 credits of English

- English 2

Required

This course focuses on building students' ability to understand, analyze, and respond to nonfiction. Students will read a wide variety of text formats from cross-curricular subject areas, with an emphasis on building vocabulary, analyzing text structure, learning the basics of rhetoric and propaganda, critiquing and evaluating an argument, and using evidence to support conclusions when writing. Students will synthesize a variety of these skills as they analyze (in both oral and written formats) the validity of arguments as well as the credibility of sources. Additional course goals focus on fine tuning writing and grammar skills.

- English 3

Required

As a complement to English 2, this course focuses on building students' ability to understand, analyze, and respond to fiction. Students will explore how messages are conveyed through fictional media- from poetry, literature and drama to film and video. In addition, students will build their ability to discern what is being conveyed by a piece of media, how and why those messages are constructed, and how to think critically about what they hear, read, and watch as they progress from simple texts to more complex ones.

- English 4

Required

This course is designed to help prepare students for college and career writing. Awareness of purpose, audience and task will be emphasized as students practice conducting research (including citing sources), drafting paragraphs and essays, revising, and writing effectively on given topics. Specific writing tasks include argumentative and narrative essays, letter writing skills, and workplace documents such as emails, instructions, and reports. English grammar and usage will be reviewed and applied.

- **American Authors**
This literature-based class emphasizes the major periods of American literary history and the accompanying social climate. Short stories, plays, and poetry are areas of concentration. Areas of emphasis include: an author's purpose for writing, social/period influences, gender/racial/socio-economic issues, and literary elements.
- **Popular Literature**
In this class, students will examine various genres of literature and media (including but not limited to: novels, magazine articles, films, and podcasts) from contemporary authors and creators surrounding a particular theme/topic. Students will analyze how authors and creators alike use literary elements in their works and draw conclusions about how texts relate to current societal or personal issues. Frequent class discussions and technology-enhanced projects will allow students to develop a deeper understanding of and connection to literature.
- **Creative Writing 1/Creative Writing 2**
Both of these courses are intensive writing courses designed for students who want to improve their creative writing skills. Students will journal and complete exercises to expand vocabulary, descriptive techniques, and figurative language skills as they practice writing poetry and short stories. Creative Writing 2 students will expand upon these skills to write plays, more involved short stories, and additional forms of poetry. Students will develop a portfolio based on their top pieces and will have the option of submitting pieces to a literary magazine.
- **Publications**
Students enrolled in this class will help with the production of the yearbook for WEST Academy. Publications students will learn how to develop a unifying theme for print as well as the basics of journalistic writing, interviewing, photography, and how these elements combine to tell a story and create a record of the school.

- Independent Reading

This class is offered by teacher approval only as an independent study for a student who enjoys reading and/or is interested in discovering new authors and titles/genres to read.

Students who enroll in this class MUST be available and willing to meet for 30 minutes on Friday afternoons to complete a weekly reading conference. Reading logs, reflections, and a number of creative novel projects will be required to receive a passing grade.

Math Course Descriptions

All students are required to have 6 math credits.

Algebra 1A

Algebra 1A covers the first half of Algebra 1. It provides the necessary foundation for students for the rest of their math classes. Algebra 1A covers linear functions, graphing, algebraic equations, and linear inequalities.

Algebra 1B

Prerequisite: Algebra 1A

Algebra 1B covers the second half of Algebra 1. Algebra 1B covers polynomials, factoring, quadratics, and systems of equations. Everything will be covered more in depth in Algebra 2A.

Algebra 2A

Prerequisite: Geometry 1B

Algebra 2A covers the first half of Algebra 2. It briefly reviews the topics covered in Algebra 1 and introduces the student to higher level topics in mathematics. Topics will include linear functions, quadratic functions, and polynomial functions.

Geometry 1A

Prerequisite: Algebra 1B

Geometry 1A covers the first half of geometry. Geometry 1A covers a basic introduction to geometry and proofs, ratios and proportions, and triangle congruences. Students will apply a variety of problem solving procedures, mathematical thinking and reasoning to solve problems involving geometric concepts.

Geometry 1B

Prerequisite: Geometry 1A

Geometry 1B covers the second half of Geometry. Geometry 1B covers polygons, parallelograms and transformations. Students will apply a variety of problem solving procedures, mathematical thinking and reasoning to solve problems involving geometric concepts.

Statistics

Prerequisite: Algebra 1B

Statistics covers descriptive and inferential statistics. Statistics covers central tendencies, probability and how to read statistics. Students will apply knowledge on normal distribution curves in case studies.

PE Requirements

All students are required to have 4 PE credits

Physical Education

Required

All students are required by state law to participate in physical education classes each year they are in attendance. An effort is made to provide a variety of activities to meet the needs and interests of as many students as possible. The major goal is to provide activities that are life long.

Science Requirements

All students are required to have 6 science credits

Animal Biology

Animal Biology is about the study of the animal kingdom and how organisms adapt, evolve and how they are classified based on characteristics. The main focus is on Charles Darwin and his theory on Natural Selection and Evolution.

Cell Biology

Cell Biology is about the study of living things, while understanding cellular life and how they are affected by environmental factors. The 4 major units are the scientific method, microscope, cells and genetics.

Earth Science

Earth Science is about the study of Earth's history and how physical and chemical processes have helped shape the land and atmosphere we live in. This should be one of the first science classes taken at WEST Academy, if the student has less than 2 credits.

Human Biology

This course is about the body systems, their structures and functions and how they are interconnected in order for the body to work together as one unit. Should have completed Cell Biology or Applied Biology before taking this course.

Plant Biology

Plant Biology is a course designed to teach students about Ecology and how organisms interact with others in ecosystems. Students will learn about matter, energy flow, conservation and photosynthesis. Students will also learn about some common trees found in Iowa. Must have completed Cell Biology and this class is most often taken as a senior.

Social Studies

All students are required to have 6 social studies credits (Including US History I, US History II and US Government)

American History I

Required

In American History I students will study thematic units that show recurring themes throughout history centered around three main units: Economic Crisis, Labor Movements, and War & Conflict throughout history and their effects on society and culture and how they still impact us today.

American History II

Required

Prerequisite: American History I

American History 2 covers Counterculture, the Struggle for Rights, and Power & Authority as thematic units that show these themes and their recurrence throughout history. Students will study their effects on society and culture.

US Government

Required

Junior/Senior status preferred

Students will learn the make-up of the United States government systems from local to federal governments and how each is intertwined.

Contemporary American History

Contemporary History will cover the themes of Innovation & Technology, Environment & Geography and will also take a look at Conspiracy theories throughout history. Students will discover these repeated themes and their impact on society and culture.

Psychology

This course exists to help the students analyze and solve their problems with themselves and others. Basically, it tries to answer the question: "Why do people act the way they do?" Emphasis is placed on the biological and environmental influences on one's behavior, covering areas such as: Personality, Behavior Modifications, Learning, Social Psychology, Dream Analysis, and Intelligence. The course is open to all students and becomes a valuable tool in helping them to manage their lives.

Social Psychology

In Sociology we will discover the meaning behind behavior and society's impact on an individual. Through the text, quick labs, case studies, projects, and discussions students will have the opportunity to analyze current social issues relevant to an adolescent student. Major themes the course will discuss are: Cultural Diversity and Conformity, The Adolescent and Adult in Society, Social Stratification, Gender, Age and Health, Family, Education, and Religion in Society.

Additional Learning Opportunities

iJAG: Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates (elective credit)

Students are given opportunities to learn about soft skills and themselves by doing different hands-on projects to better help them learn or decide what they would like to do when they finish high school. Students can go on college tours and field trips to different employers that they would like to learn more about. We have job shadows and do fundraisers throughout the year of school. After senior year they have a year of follow up with the specialist to help with finding employment and support in whichever way that they may need.

Possible Selves

The Possible Selves program is designed to increase student motivation and to work on goal setting. Students will examine their future and determine what goals are important to them. They will then set goals, create plans and work toward their goals as part of the WEST program. Students will also complete the Socially Wise program which focuses on building relationships, handling difficult situations and what to do in various situations.

Work Credit

This course is designed for WEST Academy students who have acquired a job that demonstrates a positive career choice. The student will be in contact with their advisor weekly during the work experience. The student will be under the supervision of their advisor and the community employer. Weekly work summaries will be required. West Academy credits are earned by completing required assignments and the number of on-site working hours engaged. The course must be taken during the school year. Work Credits: 120 hours/trimester = 1 credit

Learning Skills

Learning Skills class is for students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Students enrolled in this class will work on academics and behavioral goals outlined in their IEP. Progress towards goals will be graphed to provide information to parents at annual reviews/parent-teacher conferences. Students will be allowed to receive assistance in other classes as mentioned as accommodations in each student's IEP.

In addition to courses taught directly by WEST Academy teachers, students may also take classes in the following ways:

- Students may enroll in classes taught at Newton Senior High School.
- Students may enroll in online classes approved through Newton CSD and supervised by a certified teacher.
- Students may enroll in DMACC Career Academy for dual-enrollment credit.