



Educating the leaders of tomorrow

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS



High School 2022-23

NOTES



UIL CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS NOTES

Academic Year - 2022-2023

Written by Linda Tarrant and Beth Bryant

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Linda Tarrant, President, Hexco Inc.

HEXCO ACADEMIC

www.hexco.com

P.O. Box 199 | Hunt, Texas 78024

Phone: 830.367.3825 | Fax: 830.367.3824

Email: hexco@hexco.com

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THE STARTING POINT

Welcome to another year of UIL Current Issues & Events (CI&E). The purpose of this manual is to help prepare you as a student and your coach for one of the League's most interesting and challenging competitions. But first, a statement of the obvious: We can no better predict what will happen between now and March 2023 than you can.

Sure, we can say with some certainty that conflict will continue in the Middle East and that politicians will continue to fight in the name of their political party. We just don't know who, when, where or why.

The intention of this booklet is to be the starting point. This should give participants a backdrop for viewing and analyzing news across the state, country and world. The manual can be taken apart and put into a three-ring binder, but it cannot be copied for sharing (see the copyright note at the bottom of each page and the full copyright notice on the back of the title page). From there, each student can add pages with additional or related news as it is encountered or expand on a topic that is lightly introduced or covered with some hard facts or with an article you find particularly insightful.

Consider this a workbook that provides an outline or overview of what students need to know. It's a primer and a guide to show participants where and how to begin. Students who can master the information in these notes will understand the context in which events and issues exist, and they'll have gone a long way toward being a productive member of their CI&E team.



News is a moving target! It can change every day and sometimes multiple times a day. For instance, did anyone know anything about COVID-19 when the 2019 school year started? This outbreak has built into a pandemic and affected every person in our country and much of the world for the past three years. Things will be continually changing, and it's your job to keep up with all of it.

THE BARE MINIMUM

This manual does not replace reading a first-rate metropolitan newspaper or news website. We do not recommend usage of any source that espouses a particular political ideology. It's your job to find an objective, comprehensive source of news. The Texas Tribune is invaluable for state stories, and we recommend exploring Al-Jazeera, Reuters and BBC News for U.S. and international reporting. It's great to seek different points of view. If the Drudge Report, Glenn Beck and InfoWars are your main sources of information, good luck.

Regardless, you can't understand the "why" and "how" and potential impact of what's happening in the world if you don't know the "who," "what" and "where" of the world's main events. Students who possess this knowledge are not only more likely to win at this contest, but they are more likely to participate in civic life, move up career ladders, succeed in college and generally have the esteem that comes with being regarded as an educated person. This is not an insignificant matter. Don't underestimate its importance.

Learn to distinguish between "factual news" and "fake news." According to a Pew Research Center study, Americans consider fake news a larger problem than racism, climate change and terrorism, and it suggests that fake news may be accelerating the process of polarization. In the days of Walter Cronkite, the news was simply reported as it occurred. In today's world, the news is analyzed, usually either from a conservative or liberal point of view, as it is reported. The result is biased reporting, and much of this stems from information given by politicians and activist groups. Always cross-check your information. If you don't know how, ask. Being aware of current events isn't true awareness if you have bad information, and in many cases, it can be worse, so verify, verify, **verify!**

Timeliness of tests is tricky as most tests are written far enough before a meet that they can be edited and replicated for distribution. Most of the "current" news

starts about the middle or end of August. Gauge how important an event or person is in the grand scheme, and center on those entities. An event occurring in small-town Texas has few ramifications, but a violent demonstration in a town or city has far-reaching consequences.

This text is focused on what we perceive as pivotal people, places and issues. In other words, we've tried to provide more about Ukraine and not so much about Uruguay. However, something may happen in Uruguay or Timbuktu that is important, so don't forget they are out there.

THE UIL RULES



The basis of this contest is the UIL Constitution and Contest Rules and the UIL Current Issues & Events Manual. Both provide specific information about rules, policies, teams, wild cards and all the other technical details students don't necessarily need to know but coaches do. That information is available for free on the UIL website, and we won't duplicate much of it in this manual. We highly recommend that you order a set of last year's tests for insight into how typical areas are covered or questions are asked.

Regarding the information in this manual, notice that when we include an entry of an obscure person or place, it is because we think that entity is important enough to monitor. It is also good to understand the context in which this entity exists. Hopefully, this manual will paint the big picture so that you can fill in the gaps with specific information as events occur.

The bottom line is that we're writing this in the summer of 2022. Issues and events to be covered in the district, region and state meets will take place between September 1, 2022, and May 2023. You'll need to collect, store and retrieve data from every viable, reliable news source available if you hope to succeed in CI&E.

CI&E COMPETITORS

There is plenty of evidence out there to show that many high school students are not culturally literate. The majority of Americans couldn't tell what "GOP" stands for according to a 60 Minutes/Vanity Fair poll a few years ago. Government of the People? Grumpy Old People? Government of Power? Try again. According to the poll, only 45% of Americans answered correctly: The Grand Old Party are today's Republicans.

Only one in four Americans could name more than one of the five freedoms guaranteed by the First Amendment — freedom of speech, of religion, of press, of assembly and of petition for redress of grievances — according to a 2006 McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum survey.

Yet students who participate in the CI&E competition demonstrate their knowledge and mastery of topics ranging from the unrest in the Middle East to the subtleties of Texas politics, from the latest technological developments to the status of COVID-19. Year in and year out, students show that they can engage in the significant issues around the world and have fun doing so.

THE ESSAY - IT COUNTS



At the UIL State Meet, it is uncommon for a participant to score a perfect 40 on the objective portion of the test. Occasionally, we have a tie, and this is broken by the essay. One four-way tie for first place a few years ago was easily broken by the essay. One essay clinched the first place. But there was still a three-way tie for second place. Again, turn to the essay for the top six, and the student in sixth place moved up to second. The student in fifth place moved up to third. Thus, three of the four in a tie for first place did not end up in the first three places.

However, that's not the only reason that the essay matters. According to a LinkedIn survey of nearly 300



U.S. TREASURY DEPARTMENT

the federal government owes to its creditors. Concerns center around the impact on economic stability, growth and unemployment and the related strength of the U.S. currency in trade. Others consider the issue manageable.

As of the end of July 2022, the national debt of the U.S. government was \$30,606,218,500 and growing well over 30 trillion dollars, or \$91,825 per each person living in the U.S.

The Senate also passed HB 3684, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act in November 2021. Estimates on what this spending will add to the national debt range between \$256 billion and \$400 billion, a stiff increase.

PRISON USAGE AND REFORM

In January 2021, President Biden issued an executive order to end the use of private prisons. The policy was initially installed under the Obama administration and was reversed by former President Trump in 2017. The order prohibits the Justice Department from renewing contracts with for-profit, privately-operated prisons in an effort to address racial justice.

President Biden has also promised to focus on preventative measures. The following goals are listed under President Biden's plan.

- Create a grant program to encourage states to focus on prevention instead of incarceration.
- Expand federal funding for substance use and mental health research.
- Fund initiatives that pair mental health experts with those who need mental health care.
- Create a task force to make recommendations for addressing discrimination in the justice system.

- Address misconduct in police departments.
- Decriminalize cannabis use.
- Eliminate profiteering of the justice system.
- End cash bail.
- End the death penalty.

In addition, President Biden has advocated for the Safe, Accountable, Fair and Effective (SAFE) Justice Act which was introduced in the House in 2017 to reduce the population in federal prisons and increase probation efforts. No activity has been taken on this bill.

The state of Hawaii recently passed a bail reform bill. The bill was intended to improve Hawaii's troubled prison system by requiring judges to release offenders arrested for non-violent crimes without bail. The passage of the bill, which made only a modest change to the existing system, brought on a public outcry. Governor David Ige vetoed the bill.

RACIAL ISSUES



BLACK LIVES MATTER CALLS FOR JUSTICE

The death of George Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man who died after a police officer held him down with his knee for over eight minutes in Minneapolis, resulted in riots, looting, widespread protests and angry people calling for an end to police brutality and deaths by police and others across the country. The police officer, Derek Chauvin, was charged with second-degree manslaughter, second-degree unintentional murder and third-degree murder. A jury ruled that Chauvin was guilty of all three charges, and he was sentenced to over 22 years in prison. Officer Thomas Lane, Tou Thao and J. Alexander Kueng were on the scene during Floyd's arrest and charged with depriving Floyd of his constitu-



AFRICA

looming economic disaster and crashing oil prices, and it is not likely for him to be a long-term presidency. The government has been trying to resolve financial and economic problems caused by budget and trade deficits from a decrease in energy export revenues. He plans to develop agriculture to cut down on imports of food, but change has come slowly due to the pandemic.

Journalist Khaled Dreneni reported on the crackdown by the government on the Hirak protest movement, and the court sentenced him to a three-year prison term in 2020. Amnesty International also has repeatedly called on authorities to halt prosecutions of Hirak activists, protesters and journalists. The third anniversary of the Hirak movement occurred in February.

CAMEROON

Conflict in north and southwest Cameroon began in 2016 over poor governance. Thousands of lives have been lost during the insurgency, and the government

has made little effort to end the conflict. The government continues to restrict freedom of expression and enables state-sanctioned persecution of LGBTQ individuals.

EGYPT

In the years since Mohammed Morsi's overthrow in 2013, conditions have not improved under President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi. The country has become increasingly autocratic, and widespread abuses have been perpetrated, including torturing or imprisoning dissidents, initiating arbitrary arrests and making people disappear with no trace. The Muslim Brotherhood has been particularly targeted. Journalists and activists have been jailed, and the media is strictly controlled. Though el-Sisi appeared to change his course of repressive policies when President Biden was elected and appeared to be changing his course on human rights, to date, do-

WORLD - MIDDLE EAST

Current mapping shows the Middle East as comprised of countries covering the Arabian Peninsula and Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran and sometimes Afghanistan. The majority of the people are Muslims who practice Islam. Allah is the omniscient god of Islam, and the Prophet Muhammad was the last prophet to reveal Allah's plan to Muslims.

Conflict in this area goes back 1,400 years to the time of Muhammad's death in 632 CE. Two branches of Islam formed, the Sunni and Shiite, each with theological differences in their interpretation of the Quran. As each sect has developed a unique culture and doctrine, there is continued conflict about which is the dominant sect, and this conflict has branched into power, politics, land, resources and rights.

As the U.S. continues withdrawing some of its military from the Middle East, the void will likely be filled by some combination of Russia, China and probably Turkey and Iran.

AFGHANISTAN

In August 2021, Taliban fighters gained control of Kabul and saw the collapse of the Afghan government. President Biden sent thousands of additional troops to attempt extraction of the U.S. diplomatic personnel in Kabul, which was successful. However, thousands more Americans and Afghan allies, who worked with the U.S. military, waited in line for extradition as refugees and many have not gotten out of the country.

Currently, the country is undergoing a plummeting humanitarian and economic condition. Many of the freedoms that women and girls grew accustomed to

have been overturned. Many secondary schools were closed, and women were banned from working in jobs other than health care or teaching. Many limitations were enforced on the Afghan media. The freeze on Afghanistan's currency and loss of foreign aid resulted in an economic collapse.

The Taliban are forming a "grand army" for the country that will comprise troops who served the old regime. Forces took control of more than 300,000 light arms, 26,000 heavy arms and roughly 61,000 military vehicles after the U.S. withdrawal. The withdrawal was hastily accomplished and has been compared to the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, which was catastrophic.

ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND SYRIA (ISIS)

Reports suggest that ISIS is bigger currently than over eight years ago when it founded its self-styled caliphate. The conflict goes on, and an end remains out of reach. The U.S. has deployed troops over to Iraq and Syria and dropped thousands of bombs, but ISIS persists. They have lost much of their leadership and many capable men, but they continue to recruit. The U.S. has conducted airstrikes and kept hundreds of troops in Syria in counterterrorism efforts against the Islamic State and al-Qaida.

Masrour Barzani, the prime minister of Iraqi Kurdistan, has worked with the U.S. against ISIS since its inception. He has taken issue with some of the current movements of the U.S. military. He felt that ISIS would continue its resurgence as long as Syria remains in chaos and while corruption and economic malaise hound Iraq.

Starting as a splinter group of al-Qaida, ISIS intended to create an Islamic state, called a caliphate, which would encompass Iraq and Syria and other areas. They continue with a low-level form of insurgency in these two countries. The society would mimic that of the region's ancient past under Sharia law, which dates to the eighth century. The group is infamous for its mass killings, public beheadings and executions, crucifixions and other violent actions as well as holding a large number of people as slaves, particularly women and children. Their participants are intent on destroying holy sites and abolishing antiquities. They have claimed responsibility for hundreds of terrorist attacks around the world.

