

8th Grade United States History

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Please look over both the purpose of this course and important procedures. This will be an important document to reference over the course of the year.

Course Purpose

The fundamental goal of the class is to explore the history of the United States during its existence as a nation to present-day and also before the founding, in its initially Native American, European, and African heritage. This multicultural trend continued (and continues!) to evolve into the modern vision of America. This ‘melting pot’ has not been without problems but it is one of the important characteristics that makes the United States so unique.

But the ‘facts’ are only the beginning! More importantly we will strive to understand the complex and dynamic nature of history. We will explore the underlying causes of events and the effects they would have on the course of the country and world. As we examine the events of our past, it is also important not to focus so much on the details that we forget to pause and reflect on the ‘big picture’ and larger processes.

By studying how American society has developed, you will gain a deeper understanding of your own place in society. You will see how people made choices in their lives and how these choices affected the world. It is my hope that by exploring the stories of our past together we will come to understand important connections to the present. We will grapple with *big history questions*, some of which cannot be answered definitively about who we are as a nation, how we have come to be the way we are, and perhaps who we want to become as we look to the future. This, in turn, will create a strong sense of responsibility we all have as citizens of both the United States, and of the world.

The final important purpose of the course is to develop strong skills which will aid you as you continue your academic careers. These skills include the methods which historians employ to understand the past as well as strong communication skills in writing and speech. Effective listening, note-taking, and test-taking, and reading habits will also be developed over the course of the year. These study skills will be critical as you enter high school next year.

Please recognize that it is impossible to cover every aspect of American history. It’s also trickier because we’ll spend time occasionally looking at current events. Don’t worry, you’ll get American history again in the Upper School.

Important Procedures

***Remember to review the “Student Handbook” regarding academic honesty, dress code, appropriate behavior, and emergency procedures.

Grading breakdown...

0-59% (F); 60-69% (D); 70-79% (C); 80-89% (B); 90-100% (A)

Weighting...

25% Homework + 20% Classwork + 10% Participation + 30% Tests + 15% Quizzes = 100%

Beginning of class...

- Come in and be ready to learn!
- Have necessary materials for the class: Chromebook, notebook, textbook, writing utensil, etc.
- When the bell rings have a seat and begin the *bellwork* that will be posted on the SmartBoard.

Chromebooks...

- have your Chromebook every day (if it is needed and you don't have it → detention)
- only open your Chromebook when told to (verbally or in the bellwork → otherwise, write-up)
- only walk with your Chromebook closed (otherwise, write-up)
- be sure you are checking your email daily and keeping your files organized

In class...

- Be an active and constructive participant both in listening and discussing
- Be respectful of everyone in the class (no chatter and no insulting language) let's keep the conversation productive and positive. You can learn a great deal from the varied perspectives of your classmates.
- Specific words/phrases which I think are particularly hurtful and will earn a write-up: 'shut up', 'gay', and 'retarded' and the like. Obviously context is the key.
- Participation is important as it is just enough of a factor to impact borderline final grades. If you are quiet and neither a negative or positive contributor to class I view that as an average participation score. Similarly if you have good days and bad days, that is average. An average participation score is 75%. I will be posting participation scores every other week so you have a barometer of how you're doing.

End of class...

- The clock does not dismiss you, I do. I'm pretty good at keeping track of the time, but be patient and don't pack up beforehand because things sometimes go down to the wire.

Homework...

- Assignments for the week will be posted on my website on Sunday (and will be linked from MyBackpack) through a document called the *Weekly Agenda*. This agenda will give you a good idea of what to expect in the upcoming week so you can coordinate your history work accordingly with all your other responsibilities and commitments. This will aid your organization and time-management skills. Continue to check the document over the week if you forget to write down your homework.
- Late work will be penalized by one letter grade every *day* it is late. Obviously there are exceptions, so the key is to communicate issues with me and we'll work out a solution.

Tests and Quizzes...

- There will be 2-3 tests each trimester and they will be announced in class and on the *Weekly Agenda* at least two weeks in advance of the test date.
- There will also several quizzes every week. They will be announced in the *Weekly Agenda* so there will be no surprises. The quizzes will cover specific sections as indicated on the *Weekly Agenda*. Pop quizzes are possible only if I sense people are not keeping up.
- Until further notice, the quizzes are open note. I'm hoping this will encourage you to keep up with the reading, encourage an active reading of the text, as well aid your actual results. It will count as an easy 3 point homework assignment as well. I will check these at the beginning of the class and if you notes prepared for every quiz I will drop the lowest quiz score each trimester as a reward for your diligence.

Big picture...

- The class is structured to emphasize and reward organization and a diligent work ethic. If you can keep organized and stay on top of relatively easy but regular work you will be in much better shape in class. Further, this will provide a strong foundation in class for those who may struggle on the tests or quizzes (the more difficult aspects of the class). In short, take care of the easy parts of class so struggling on the harder parts will not pull you down to an unsatisfactory grade.