

HONORS U.S. HISTORY I

MR. MEGUERIAN

2013-14

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Course Description

As historian Walter McDougall recently wrote: "the creation of the United States of America is the central event of the past four hundred years." As citizens, we should understand that event and the evolution of this country, seeing both the grandeur of our past and the unpleasant baggage we carry as a nation. There is a great line in Steven Spielberg's film **Amistad**: "We are who we were." That is what the study of U.S. History must embrace.

This course, then, is a survey of American History, from the peopling of North America through the end of post-Civil War Reconstruction in 1877. This is a challenging course -- the **rough** equivalent of a freshman college level course-- that covers the first half of the College Board's AP US History curriculum. Students will be given experience in college level reading, writing and personal responsibility for learning. Emphasis is placed on critical thinking skills, writing, recognizing and evaluating points of view, interpretation of original documents and historiography (that is, how historians think and reconstruct "history"). It is assumed that students in this Course will take the College Board's AP US History exam in May of 2015.

The College Board recently revised the U.S. History curriculum to place much greater emphasis on developing historiography skills. In particular, the four types of skills that the College Board, and this course, emphasizes are: chronological reasoning, comparison and contextualization, crafting historical arguments from historical evidence, and historical interpretation and synthesis. Elements of these general skills are:

<i>Skill Type</i>	<i>Thinking Skill</i>
<i>. Chronological Reasoning</i>	1. Historical Causation 2. Patterns of Continuity and Change over Time 3. Periodization
<i>Comparison and Contextualization</i>	4. Comparison 5. Contextualization
<i>Crafting Historical Arguments</i>	6. Historical Argumentation 7. Appropriate use of relevant historical evidence
<i>Historical Interpretation and Synthesis</i>	8. Interpretation 9. Synthesis

The College Board has further identified a set of learning objectives, organized by seven major themes that illustrate what students should know and be able to do by the end of the AP U.S. History course. The new themes are:

- **Identity**
- **Work, Exchange, and Technology**
- **Peopling**
- **Politics and Power**
- **America in the World**
- **Environment and Geography — Physical and Human**
- **Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture**

We will address each of these skills and the learning objectives within the first five of the nine historical periods identified by the new AP curriculum. Those five periods are:

PERIOD 1: 1491–1607

On a North American continent controlled by American Indians, contact among the peoples of Europe, the Americas, and West Africa created a new world.

PERIOD 2: 1607–1754

Europeans and American Indians maneuvered and fought for dominance, control, and security in North America, and distinctive colonial and native societies emerged.

PERIOD 3: 1754–1800

British imperial attempts to reassert control over its colonies and the colonial reaction to these attempts produced a new American republic, along with struggles over the new nation's social, political, and economic identity.

PERIOD 4: 1800–1848

The new republic struggled to define and extend democratic ideals in the face of rapid economic, territorial, and demographic changes.

PERIOD 5: 1844–1877

As the nation expanded and its population grew, regional tensions, especially over slavery, led to a civil war — the course and aftermath of which transformed American society.

For our purposes, these 5 general periods will be further broken into sub-periods.

A wide variety of activities will be employed in this course. Students can expect to participate in cooperative projects that may include oral presentations, simulations or role-playing. Students are also required to participate in small and large group class discussions (thoughtful and active participation in class discussions and presentations comprise part of the course grade).

Traditional lectures will also be a significant part of the curriculum. Videotapes, cartoons, maps, paintings, music and films will be used in conjunction with conventional assignments. Because religion played an essential role in the young life of the U.S., we will spend some time talking about the religious beliefs of 17th, 18th and 19th century Americans.

Tests and quizzes will be based on the readings assigned **AND** on class lectures and discussion. Students are expected to read the textbook and will be responsible for the content; **including that content not actually discussed in class. Taking notes on class discussions is critical.** Taking good class notes is a skill that we will work on during the year.

Instructional Materials

--Textbook – Boyer, Paul S., et al., The Enduring Vision, 5th ed.

Grading

Marking period grades are calculated on a total points system: points earned divided by points offered. Typical quarter grades will consist of approximately four test grades and several writing and in-class assignments. Class participation will be represented in the quarter grade by the rough equivalent of a test grade. **I do not offer extra credit opportunities.**

There will be a cumulative final in this course. Also, as part of the fourth marking period grade, each student will be required to prepare an 8-10 page research/thesis paper.

Behavior

Students are expected to act their age and should expect to be treated in like fashion: as the musician Prince wrote: "Act your age not your shoe size. . . ." (While this might not cover those with really big feet, you get the point) Nothing detracts from the educational environment as much as random pockets of off-topic chatter between students: the students directly involved in the conversation miss content and other students, who may be distracted, miss an opportunity.

Honor Code

All students are expected to do their own work. **Copying another student's homework OR jointly working on an assignment which is not designated a group assignment** is CHEATING, is unacceptable and it will be dealt with accordingly. Both the student copying and, if applicable, the student allowing the copying will be subject to the same discipline. (this includes the situation where two or more students collaborate on an assignment and present effectively the same responses) Parents and students are strongly advised to review the policies contained in the Chatham High student handbook at the beginning of the school year.

Plagiarism is also not acceptable. Material or ideas obtained by a student from an outside source and included in an assignment or project response must be properly cited: when in doubt, provide a citation. Be advised: **Copied or plagiarized assignments will receive a grade of zero and they may not be made-up in any way.**

Attendance and Make-up Work

Students are responsible for all material and work missed due to an absence. It is the student's responsibility to find out the homework assignment, notes and class work for that particular day. Every effort will be made to ensure that this information is available for students who miss class. Students absent on a test/quiz date or project due date must take the test/quiz or submit the project on their return to class.

Finally, a word about late assignments: for every day beyond the due date, 10% is deducted from the grade received on what is submitted. Each marking period each student gets **one** "limited freebie;" an otherwise late assignment may be handed in without penalty for a period of up to 4 days beyond the original due date. After that grace period, regular penalties are incurred.

Communication

Students should not hesitate to ask **any** questions they have regarding the course or their performance. The same goes for parents. If extra assistance is required, I **will** make time outside of class to insure that each student has the opportunity to succeed. That is why I am here. I do read my email several times during the school day and in the evenings. I am around the school. If you have an issue, let me know **before** it becomes a problem.

A Final Thought

This Course will require more time than many other high school courses. Students can expect to do an extensive amount of reading not only of the textbook, but also from supplementary sources. Solid reading and writing skills, along with a willingness to devote time to homework and study, are a prerequisite to success.

Student Signature: _____

Student Name: _____

Parent Signature: _____

Parent Name: _____