

Advanced Placement United States History

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Menlo School

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"History is much more complex than the pap they feed you in school. Think of it as an onion. The outer, tough brown surface is the outline narrative we are all familiar with--what Voltaire called 'the lie agreed upon.' To get to the inner, fragrantly human layers of the onion, you sometimes have to peel. It takes time and thought, and most people don't bother...but it is an exercise that should be tried at least once."

-- Neil Steinberg

Description

This course covers American history from the European encounter with the New World to the present. It emphasizes political, social, economic and diplomatic history as well as trends in American culture and religion.

Having chosen to take the Advanced Placement section of the course, you need to keep in mind what this entails. First of all, you will read more and read it faster than in regular U.S. History. We have to make it through a two-volume textbook in two semesters and we have to cover the material thoroughly. Any way you cut it this means a chapter a week, every week, for a year--sometimes in conjunction with major independent research projects. Secondly, by taking this class you are agreeing to take the APUSH exam in May. The exam emphasizes test-taking under time pressure and the mastery of analytic and interpretive skills in reading and writing. We will spend considerable time honing these skills during the year. They don't come easily. You will have to work hard at them; but once acquired they are yours for life.

The whole point of an AP class is to give you the opportunity to do college-level work. I hope it proves an exciting and enriching intellectual experience for you. In return you need to commit to a college-level workload and bring a college-level attitude to class. This means completing all reading assignments on time, bringing the reading with you to class, and coming prepared with your own opinions and questions about the reading. It also means, if needed, taking on the responsibility of arranging tutorial meetings with me.

Reading

Alan Brinkley, American History: A Survey, 12th edition (2 volumes)

John Tulp, Essentials of American History

John Stoessinger, Crusaders and Pragmatists, 2nd edition

Optional:

Larry Gonick, Cartoon History of the United States

The United States Constitution: What It Says, What It Means

Supplies

Bring a 3-ring binder, with a supply of writing paper, to every class along with the day's assigned reading.

Assignments

Your grade will be based on attendance and class participation, quizzes, tests, papers, research projects and exams. These will be weighted roughly as follows:

Attendance and participation	10%
Quizzes and tests	50%
Papers and projects	25%
Exams	15%

Improvement will be rewarded: you can do poorly at the beginning and still do well in the class. Make-ups and extensions are negotiable as long as you take the responsibility to come see me before the day that work is due. The further in advance you talk to me the more reasonable I will be. Late work---including late make-ups---will otherwise be penalized one full grade per day, or one-third of a grade if completed late on the due date. *Be ready to make up any missed work on your first day back at school.*

Attendance

I expect you to attend all classes and to arrive prepared to participate in discussions. This means doing the assigned reading for the day and remembering to bring the assigned reading with you. If you know that you will be unable to attend class, be sure to make arrangements with me in advance about making it up. Yes, unexcused absences (and unprepared attendance) will affect your grade.

...and remember:

- Like most things in life, what you get out of the class will depend on what you put into it. Try to take part in an active way, which means not only doing your homework but also keeping an open mind about other people's ideas. It will make class discussion a lot more interesting.
- Deadlines matter. Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. It is always your responsibility to come to me to arrange make-up times or alternate due dates for missed deadlines. Otherwise, "Ain't no love on the day of."
- I will let you know in advance when we are going to meet during the gray period.
- Do not lie, cheat, or steal someone else's work and present it as your own. Such behavior will get you a zero on the assignment and formal disciplinary action by the school.
- Keep in touch. Check your *Menlo* e-mail account regularly; you are responsible for reading whatever I send you. Talk to me, call me, or send me e-mail if there is anything you want to go over. I'm usually available during most of my prep periods (C, E, and F) and during breaks, but it's a good idea to book ahead.

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