

Contemporary American History Guidelines

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What Are We Going to Do?

This is one of the most interesting courses you will ever take. We will look at the many perspectives that have fueled the recent history of this country and do so with a critical eye. Our goal is the goal of every scholar of history and that is **truth**. Historians want to know how things came to be the way they are, not just to know what went on long ago. This helps people make better decisions about the future. In a country that claims it is democratic, this kind of careful decision-making is very important and you must be well-armed with an understanding of how to find the truth so that your future decisions will be sound ones. You lead the country with your vote.

We will also, along the way, learn

- how to write subjective and objective essays (so we can prove our points)
- how to ask our bosses for a raise (so we can live in mansions)
- how to have meaningful discussion and debate (so we can be expert politicians)
- the roles that economy, politics, and society have in the modern U.S.
- how to interpret maps, graphs, perspectives of others, and documents
- our role in the country both politically and as a consumer
- how to make a path to truth through hypotheses, inferences, and analysis



That sounds like fun!

How You Can Find the Teacher

If you cannot find me in our classroom, I will probably be hanging out in Room 210. This is where I will be after school and before school. You can drop things off in my mailbox downstairs or send me an e-mail. I check it often, but you should allow ample time for a proper response. You can make appointments to see me anytime by confirmed e-mail or in person. Let me know about any problems before they become too big.

Texts & Materials/Actions Needed to Succeed

Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in American History since 1945. by Larry Madaras \$55

The 20th Century: A People's History. by Howard Zinn \$25

Handouts and Website Readings online TBA (Acrobat Reader, html)

2 Notebooks (One for notes and one to be kept in class as your "Open Book".)

What to bring to class. Every period, a student is required to be in his or her seat with a notebook (labeled with name, period, and subject), a working pen, and all other materials as directed by teacher during previous meeting. I will take participation points off if this is not done.

Reading is very important in the social studies. You are responsible for ANYTHING included in any reading (including captions and text features) even if I do not go over it in class. There will often be a quiz and there will always be discussion so be prepared.

Grading Scale & Evaluation

Homework: 25% This includes any work done at home and minor essays. *Homework is graded on a 5 point scale and minor essays on a 10 point scale.*

Assessments: 20% This includes unit tests and other quizzes and exams. *These assessments are meant to prepare you for the AP test and will include many actual AP questions. Quizzes may vary in format.*

Openers & Classwork: 20% This includes journal-writing and other classwork. *Open assignments must be well-reasoned and in the appropriate format.*

Participation: 15% This includes in-class contributions, having a positive attitude, preparation, attendance (unexcused tardies and absences)

Projects: 10% This includes major writing assignments and projects. *These assignments must be done in the specified format in order to be accepted. Writings are graded based on AP's 9 point scale.*

Final: 10% A comprehensive final will be given at the close of each semester

CPS Grading Scale:

A 95-100 **B** 88-94 **C** 81-87 **D** 70-80 **F** the toilet-69

CPS policy on excessive absences may result in a failure... so show up!

Extra Credit: I like it when students have ideas for extra credit. Make any proposals to me in person or in writing and I will consider your ideas. Occasionally I may make extra credit available for various tasks. You are not eligible for extra credit if you are missing assignments.

Cheating, plagiarism, or other dishonest means to get your work done will result in a zero grade for the assignment and will require me to report the incident for disciplinary action.

If you appear to me to be cheating that is just as good as cheating. Look honest during tests. Keep your eyes to yourself and raise your hand with any questions.

Anything you write for homework should be your own work. If I suspect dishonesty, you will receive a grade of ZERO and your parents will receive a phone call.



You may see me about your grade or if you have specific questions about an evaluation, but this should be done outside of class. I will **post grades** whenever I can for you to track your status.

Attendance & Making Up Missed Work

Tardiness: If you arrive to class after the bell rings, you are tardy. Walk into class quietly, sign the tardy book and have a seat. Hanging out beside the door in the hallway does not constitute being in class. You are on time if you are **AT YOUR DESK** when class begins.

Missing work due to absences: I do not care much about whether an absence is excused or not, the point is that you were not in class to receive valuable information. Upon return, see the teacher **AFTER CLASS**. Check assignments while you are away. It is your responsibility to make up missing work. You will fail a test if you do not schedule a makeup test the day of your return. Missed participation points can not be made up without use of a time machine

Due to laziness, stupidity, forgetfulness, or hungry dogs: I want you to learn from your mistakes and so I will accept late work if I get it within 24 hours from when it is due. This work will be evaluated and you will get half credit, if I ever get around to grading it.... but half is better than zero!

Stuff Happens: You will find that I can be very reasonable if you have any issues and attempt in a mature and responsible fashion to take responsibility for any dilemmas that may pop up. Let me know if you have any special issues you feel I should know about as soon as you can.

In the classroom...

We are all friends here and this room should be a safe place to explore new ideas. You are to treat each other with respect so we can all learn. Everyone has a right for their opinion to be heard in the classroom. There should be no heckling, stonings, witch hunts, etc. When someone is talking we should be listening to their concerns before responding. History and the social studies can evoke very strong passions for which we should be ready.

Swearing, curses, and other insensitive comments are not tolerated at all. It will result in official disciplinary action with the dean if I hear it because it is not the sort of thing that should be coming out of the mouth of a scholar. We should respect the personal property and space of other students. I do not tolerate sleeping, eating, or drinking in the classroom.

Note that I will treat you like adults with the respect and responsibilities attached to that status. You are responsible for your own actions and inaction. It might be tough at first, but learn to deal with it. If you are unable to cope with this, you may find that this will be a very tough semester.

Note:

When you are in the midst of learning something new and strange it is normal to feel uneasy and nervous. That is what actual learning feels like and in the end it is well worth the trouble. So go with the flow and trust the process....

MAJOR UNITS

Current Events will be discussed regularly in this class. Be ready to bring in news items and complete current event projects.

SEMESTER ONE

1st QUARTER

- **Expectations, overview, and previews.** What are we doing? What is going on? Who am I?
- **World War Two: The Nation Unites.** How did the war change U.S. culture, race relations, politics, economics, conservationism, and all that jazz? Good neighbors.
- **The Birth of the Cold War.** How did the Cold War get started? What is a Cold War? Who was Stalin? How did nuclear weapons change the world? What is deterrence? The Red Scare.
- **Happy Days?** Were the 1950s America's "happy days?" How did the role of a consumer change in the 1950s? What about the birth of suburbia? What about segregation?
- **Containment and Camelot.** What did JFK accomplish? Why did people admire JFK? How was the role of the US changing on the world stage? Was the US an imperial power? When did the war in Vietnam really start?

2nd QUARTER

- **I Have a Dream!** The rise and fall of King. Different ways to resist racism in America. The Civil Rights movement gains ground.
- **The Wacky 1960s.** Who were the baby boomers? Why were the 1960s so revolutionary? Sex, drugs, rock'n'roll counter-culture. Why was the war in Vietnam have so many vocal critics? The presidency of LBJ.
- **1968.** The crucial election of '68. Assassinations of important leaders. Riots and demonstrations.
- **Rise and Fall of Nixon.** How did the Vietnam war end? The Watergate scandal. Reaching out to the communist bloc.
- **The Less Wacky 1970s.** Foreign relations go underground. The problem with energy. Oil and recession. The creation of a national food policy. The Womens' Rights movement and Native American rights movement.

SEMESTER TWO

3rd QUARTER

- **Consumer Ed.** Finances, consumerism, advertising, lending and borrowing, food policy. A bit of test prep as well.

- **The Reagan Revolution.** Carter and the Ayatollah. Trouble with Nicaragua. The rise of the Christian Right. Was Reagan the “great communicator?” How did Reagan’s plans pan out in the 1980’s.

4th QUARTER

- **The Even Less Wacky 1980s.** The rise of synergy in the business world. Who are yuppies? Civil rights in the 1980s. The drug wars. Kilpatrick Doctrine.

- **1989.** The election of 1988. My problem with turning in homework in 3rd grade. How the Cold War came to an end. Did the Cold War come to an end?

- **The Un-Wacky 1990s.** The Gulf War. Bush’s New World Order. NAFTA. Bill Clinton and Yugoslavia. “Fun” with interns.

- **W.** The rise of George W. Bush and the elction of 2000. The 9/11 attacks. What is al Qaeda? How did the definition of “enemy combatant” change? The Bush Doctrine. Guantanamo, the Patriot Act, etc. What was Dick Cheney’s problem?

- **O.** We will discuss the future of America.