

# U.S. History Syllabus

William H. Taft College Prep

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## What Are We Going to Do?

This is one of the most important courses you will ever take and not only because it is a requirement for graduation. We will look at the many perspectives that have fueled the 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 the U.S. government functions and how it does not function
- how to have meaningful discussion and debate (so we can be expert politicians)
- the roles that economy, politics, and society had in the creation of modern America
- how to interpret maps, graphs, the work of others, and historical documents
- how to make a path to truth through hypotheses, inferences, and analysis
- become compassionate and informed participants in the democratic process

*You might even learn who I am!*



## How You Can Find the Teacher

If you cannot find me in our classroom, I will probably be hanging out in Room 206. This is where I will be after school and before school. (My 8th period class wraps up in Room 212.) You can drop things off in my mailbox downstairs or send me an e-mail. I check my mail 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

*The Americans, 12 Ed.* by Gerald Danzer, et.al. \$85

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 may 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: 30%** This includes any work done at home, projects, and minor essays. *Homework is usually graded on a 3 or 5 point scale, depending on the complexity. Projects may range widely in scale.*

**Participation: 20%** This includes in-class contributions, having a positive attitude, prepared by reading, attendance (unexcused tardies and absences)

**Assessments: 20%** This includes unit tests and other quizzes and exams.

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

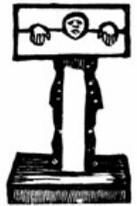
**Final: 10%** A comprehensive final will be given at the close of each semester

**A 95-100    B 88-94    C 81-87    D 75-80    F the toilet-74**

*Taft 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. This is very serious! If you need help with citations, please let me know, before you find yourself in the stocks. (See class website for details on citations.) 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.



**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** regularly 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. You will lose participation points for being tardy. If you do not sign the tardy book, you will be marked absent.

**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. You will lose participation points for every unexcused absence. 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, forgetfulness, or hungry dogs:** I want you to learn from your mistakes and so I will accept late work if I get it within 48 hours from when it is due. This work will *eventually* be evaluated and you will get only half credit... 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.

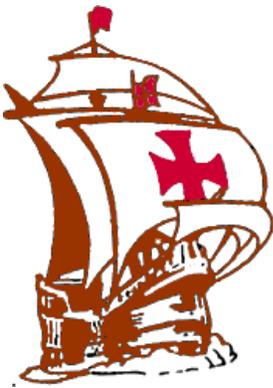
## In the classroom...

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, stoning, 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.

## Columbus Was A Nervous Guy



When Christopher Columbus began his voyage he was unsure about how long it would take him to get to other side of the ocean. No one he knew had ever made the trip before and he was a bit worried about dying at some point due to starvation, mutiny, or giant sea monsters. He was unsure and nervous as he made his way across the ocean and expressed such in his journal. In the end he tripped over some islands in the Caribbean and the effects of his effort contributed to the development of the modern world (for good or bad.)

The lesson is: 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***....