

# 2014-2015 A.P. U.S. History Student Syllabus

Mr. Soong

Rm210

## Course Description

Advanced Placement U.S. History is meant to be a college-level course taught in high school. As such it has several distinct advantages as well as some unique challenges when compared to typical high school courses. One advantage of A.P. U.S. History is that students can earn college credit and high school credit for the same class as long as they “pass” the AP Exam (see next section for more information about the exam). This can save them time and money in college. Enrollment in A.P. classes also can give students an edge in admissions when applying to college. Most importantly, by exposing students to college-level rigor in a high school setting, A.P. can prepare students for much greater success in their university coursework.

However, that same level of rigor makes A.P. courses significantly harder than non-A.P. courses, and arguably harder than even most freshman courses in college. The reason for this is that the A.P. Exam is harder than most final exams in college. It has to be. Otherwise, colleges wouldn't accept its scores. Another challenge is the pace. We must finish our college textbook in April, well before the end of the second semester. All this must be accomplished by high school juniors who are two years younger than the students taking the comparable course in college.

As a result motivated and disciplined students have better success in this course and on the exam. Even though good attendance and completing homework are essential to success, they are not enough. Students will have to demonstrate their mastery of essential skills and content on college-level exams and essays. This will require a level of hard work and study that is new to many students. Most students will struggle for a while as they adjust to the work load, expectations, and pace. Those involved in extracurricular activities, taking additional A.P. classes, or who are employed should carefully weigh the demands of this course against their other commitments. There is tutoring and study groups available during the year.

## The A.P. U.S. History Exam

A.P. exams provide students a chance to earn college credit while still in high school. The A.P. U.S. History exam, administered Wednesday May 14, 2015, is 3 hours and 15 minutes in length. Half of the exam is a 100 minute multiple choice/ short answer section. The other half is a 95 min. free response section. There are 55 questions in the multiple choice section for 55 min. Then a 4 question short answer section for 45 min. The free response section is divided into a 60 min. Document Based Question (DBQ), and a long essay question (chosen from a pair) to be written in 35 min. All students are required to answer the essays.

The A.P. U.S. History exam is graded on a five point scale. Generally, most public universities award credit or placement to students who earn a 3 or higher while many private colleges require a score of 4 or higher. However, since each school is free to set its own policy, students need to check the specific policies of the institutions they are interested in attending.

All students enrolled in this class second semester are *required* to take the A.P. U.S. History exam. Each A.P. exam costs about \$89. There are waivers and fee reductions available, which reduce the cost of the exam. Any student who does not take the A.P. exam will be required to take a similar exam on the same day that will comprise 20% of that student's second semester grade.

## **Academic Objectives**

- Students will be prepared for the Advanced Placement United States History Exam.
- Students will study selected historical themes and the significance of major interpretive questions.
- Students will be trained to analyze and interpret primary sources, including documentary material, maps, statistical tables, and pictorial and graphic evidence of historical events.
- Students will learn how to approach history critically and be able to analyze and evaluate competing sources of historical information.
- Students will be able to express themselves with clarity and precision and know how to cite sources and credit the phrases and ideas of others.
- Students will learn test-taking skills, including how to successfully take timed exams.
- Students will learn to take notes from both printed materials and lectures.

## **Student Behavior**

Punctuality and excellent attendance are required and necessary to succeed in this class. Therefore, Kennedy's attendance policy will be strictly enforced. Please see the student and parent handbook for more information.

All students are expected to behave in a manner appropriate to a college setting. Those who do not can expect fair, consistent, and natural disciplinary consequences for their inappropriate actions or attitudes. Typical consequences include but are not limited to warnings, time-outs, detentions, referrals, parent phone calls, parent conferences, behavior contracts, and even expulsion from the class. Consequences may also be remedial, such as washing *all* the desks in the classroom if caught writing on one desk. No food or drink, except water, may be consumed in the classroom without permission.

## **Grading**

Per district policy, report card letter grades signify the following: A="Outstanding Achievement;" B="Good Achievement;" C="Satisfactory Achievement;" D="Minimum Achievement;" F="Failure due to Unsatisfactory Achievement."

There are several major categories for grades given in this class (see next page). Grades are calculated by the relative weight given to each category, not simply by adding up a student's points for the class and dividing by the number possible. The two categories most heavily weighted are "Unit Exams" and "Timed Writes." These are the two components of the AP exam and are also among the most difficult parts of the class. As a result only some students earn A's. Most students earn B's or C's. A few may even earn D's, or F's. Grades will be posted in class approximately every 3 weeks. If you want to discuss your grade you will need to make an appointment for before or after school or during lunch. **DO NOT ASK ABOUT YOUR GRADE DURING CLASS TIME.**

<u>Grading Scale</u>		<u>1<sup>st</sup> Semester Categories</u>		<u>2<sup>nd</sup> Semester Categories</u>	
90%–100%	A	Unit Exams	30%	Unit Exams	30%
80%–89%	B	Timed Writes	20%	Timed Writes	20%
70%–79%	C	Chapter Homework	20%	Chapter Homework	20%
60%–69%	D	Project(s)	5%	DBQ Project	10%
0%–59%	F	Other Assignments	15%	Final Project	10%
		Final Exam	10%	Other Assignments	10%

**Unit Exams**—Unit exams will usually be given every two to three weeks over the proceeding chapters. Each exam will cover all the readings, lectures, discussions, etc. since the previous exam. Students who know they will be absent on the day of an exam must inform the instructor several days prior to arrange an alternate time. Otherwise, they will receive a make-up exam which may be more difficult than the original, missed exam. Excused absences and field trips are *not* acceptable reasons to miss an exam *without* informing the teacher several days prior. Only students in extreme situations, as defined by the teacher, will be allowed to make-up the original exam. First semester exams will usually consist of 50 multiple choice questions with five possible answers. Second semester exams will also consist of five answer multiple choice questions. However, second semester exams will be longer (60-80 questions) and will include some questions from earlier units. The lowest first semester exam score of each student will be automatically dropped at the end of the first semester. No second semester exam scores will be dropped.

**Essays**—The largest part of the Advanced Placement exam is the essay portion. Therefore, considerable time will be spent learning and practicing how to write effectively. Specific essay guidelines and expectations will be handed out at a later date. Those essay guidelines must be carefully followed. (Students also enrolled in A.P. English must take care to follow the A.P. history guidelines and *not* the A.P. English guidelines when writing A.P. U.S. History exams.) Students will usually be required to write essays once per unit, starting in October. It is anticipated that all essays will be in class “timed writes.” These essays will be similar to the type given on the A.P. U.S. History exam and will be graded on the same nine point scale. Students who need to make-up an essay due to an absence can expect a different, perhaps more difficult prompt. The following chart shows how the rubric’s point values will be converted into a score for the first semester. Please use a black or blue PEN, no pencil.

9=110%    8=100%    7=95%    6=90%    5=85%    4=80%    3=75%    2=65%    1=50%

**Chapter Homework**—Students are expected to complete a major assignment each chapter that will force them into the details of the text. The goal is for Students to be given a choice of several different types of homework to complete. Obviously, they should choose the type that they believe will best help them master the material and prepare for the timed writes and unit exams. Students who do poorly on the class assessments will lose their ability to choose their homework activity. More details will be provided later. *Late homework* will be accepted; however there will be a penalty. (10% for one day 30% for up to one week, and 50% after one week)

**Projects**—One or more group projects will be assigned in the first semester. These may consist of a formal debate, a student-led lecture or review activity, a counterfactual activity, historical simulations, etc. Projects will require a significant amount of research and preparation outside of class. Rubrics and detailed instructions will be forthcoming.

**Assignments**—Students will receive various other assignments, such as secondary readings, maps, primary source materials, etc. These assignments will generally be graded on a full/half/no credit basis. All in class assignments are due at the end of the class period and all take home assignments are due at the beginning of the next class unless otherwise stated. Participation points will also be included in this category. *Assignments have the same late work policy as homework.*

**Final Exam**—All students will take a cumulative, multiple choice final exam at the end of the first semester. The final exam will include an essay question.

**DBQ Project**—Students will work in groups to create a document based question, essay, poster board, and related materials. This project will require significant research and teamwork outside of class. Groups will choose potential DBQ topics from an approved list. No groups will be allowed to cover the same topics. Rubrics and detailed instructions will be forthcoming.

**Final Project**—After the A.P. exam, students will work alone and or in groups to create one or more projects. Topics, rubrics, and detailed instructions will be forthcoming.

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**Cheating**—While students are encouraged to help each other and work together, cheating will not be tolerated. Cheating occurs whenever a student attempts to take credit for someone else's effort. Cheating can take place in or out of the classroom on anything that has a point value attached to it. Any student found cheating will be given a 0% (which will not be dropped in the case of an exam) on whatever was cheated on. He/she may also be suspended from class pending a parent conference. A second offense will result in a parent conference and another 0% on whatever was cheated on. Any further offenses will result in even more serious negative consequences which may include additional grade reductions and even expulsion from the class with a transfer grade of "F." Copying homework is considered cheating.

**Extra Credit**—Students will receive extra credit for purchasing the Amsco review book in the Fall and an approved test prep book in the Spring. Additional details will be forthcoming.

**Extended Time**—Every student will be given the opportunity to extend the due date of ONE chapter homework assignment by one additional school day each semester. This does not apply to exams, timed writes, or projects.

**Disclaimer**—The teacher reserves the sole and complete right to modify this syllabus at any time and in anyway he sees fit. Minor syllabus modification often happens during the school year. However, any changes will be made for the good of the class and announced as soon as possible.

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## **A.P. U.S. History Syllabus Summary**

- A.P. U.S. History is as hard or harder than a typical college survey history class.
- A.P. U.S. History students will read an entire college textbook by mid-April.
- Most students do not earn an “A” in an A.P. course.
- Students will learn much more in an A.P. class than any regular class.
- Students who take A.P. classes usually do much better in college.
- Only students who are motivated, persistent, and take the initiative will do well.
- 90% of the second semester points will be awarded in the first 12 weeks.
- All students enrolled 2<sup>nd</sup> semester in A.P. U.S. History must take the \$89 A.P. Exam on May 14 2015. There are fee waivers available to lower the cost.
- Students will have to complete several large projects outside of class.
- Any students caught cheating will receive a 0 for the first offense.
- If absent for a test or essay, make arrangements BEFORE being out.

This summary is meant to highlight some of the key points from the syllabus about the course. Please read the entire syllabus for more details about A.P. U.S. History.

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I have read, understood, and will abide by all of the provisions of the entire A.P. U.S. History syllabus.

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(period)

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(student signature)

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(parent name)

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(parent signature)