

AHAP Syllabus

Course Description:

Knowledge of the way people have lived and of the way events and ideas have shaped our lives, helps us understand the world of the present. *E Pluribus Unum* is the nation's motto: *Out of Many, One*. From the multiple backgrounds, interests, and experiences of its people, to what extent has the United States forged a national identity? How close has it come to realizing the ideals of its founders? Have noble intentions been forever corroded by the realities of slavery, discrimination, poverty, conflict, war, and special interests? As the United States faces its future, especially after September 11 [and now Hurricane Katrina], can it expect from its people a unity that respects diversity, patriotism that respects dissent, and laws that respect individual rights? As we grapple with such questions in this course, I hope that you will emerge with: (1) an enjoyment of—or at least satisfaction from—the learning process itself; (2) a broad knowledge of the history of the United States sufficient enough to feel prepared to take the Advanced Placement exam during the morning of May 9!; (3) an appreciation of some of the cross-currents in the nation's history implied by the unit/diversity theme; (4) the acquisition of skills useful to an ongoing study of history and the social sciences, and (5) an enhanced understanding, through a study of contemporary events, of the role of the United States in today's world.

AP US History is a challenging course that is designed to be the equivalent of a freshman college course in a high school setting. It is a year-long survey of American history from the age of exploration to the present. Solid reading and writing skills, along with a willingness to devote *considerable time to homework and study*, are necessary to succeed. Emphasis is placed on critical thinking skills, essay writing, interpretation of original documents and historiography.

You will be required to apply the effort necessary to act as an historian and develop the ability to analyze historical evidence to determine its validity and relevance, identify point of view and the nature of bias, and recognize the necessity of objectivity and substantiation. The methodology of an historian involves skills that are highly transferable--the ability to formulate generalizations, interpret and use data and to analyze and weigh evidence from conflicting sources of information are applicable to many other academic and practical disciplines.

Besides lectures or PowerPoint presentations on important themes of U. S. history, you are expected to participate in class verbally through discussions of primary documents and events, debates of key issues and possible mock trials. Furthermore, you are expected to continually develop your writing skills through regular short essays, essay exams and maintain a notebook of all class materials. When documents or document packets are given as part of the homework assignment, you must underline or highlight key passages that show point-of-view, or that summarize the gist of the document, or that show bias. You must also add margin notes reflective of your intellectual "conversation" with those documents as you are reading them! The volume of material involved in a survey course of US history is extensive and you can expect to do *a lot of reading not only in the text*, but also from outside sources and research both in the library and through the internet.

AP United States History is challenging and stimulating and, compared with other high school courses, *takes more time and requires more homework* (but you already know that). Consequently, there will be a focus on *strengthening skills* in taking objective exams, in addition to writing clear and compelling essays and doing research and analysis of historical data. Therefore, *regular study, frequent practice in writing, historical analysis, class discussions/debates/seminars, and study/review/and test-taking strategies are major elements of the course.*

Course Objectives:

- Master a broad body of knowledge
- Demonstrate an understanding of historical chronology
- Use historical data to support an argument or position
- Differentiate between different schools of historical thought
- Interpret and apply data from original documents, including cartoons, graphs, letters, works of art, music lyrics, etc.
- Effectively use analytical skills of evaluation, cause and effect, compare and contrast
- Work effectively with others to produce products (such as original DBQs, PowerPoint presentations, review sheets for the entire class) and solve problems
- Prepare for and successfully pass the Advanced Placement Exam

Our primary text will be Alan Brinkley, *American History: A Survey* (11th edition), with numerous handouts, primary and secondary source readings, **online study guides** (<http://www.historyteacher.net/AHAP/AHAPTopicSheets.htm>) with accompanying **web link pages** and self-correcting **practice quizzes** (<http://www.historyteacher.net/USQuizMainPage.htm>) on my web site.

Materials Required:

- Wide loose leaf binder [at least 2" or larger to be kept at home] --> this will not only be your primary notebook, but you will be creating your own individual "review book" as well and should keep it neat and well-organized, so that you have things at your fingertips.
- One small [1"] binder [your "working notebook"] that will be brought to school each day with the materials/homework notes, etc., needed for the current unit being studied. -> include some clean loose leaf paper and some blank, white computer paper in the back.
- 3-holed college-lined [narrow-lined] loose leaf.
- A yellow-colored highlighter and at least two other colors.
- Individual loose leaf tabs/dividers [one for each of 30 topics, plus one for review sheets].

A Key To Success:

The most important grading factor in this class is *consistent effort*. The reading load is especially heavy the first 7-10 weeks, in order to cover the maximum amount of material in the time we have allotted. To do this with the least amount of stress, sharing is definitely encouraged. *You are ultimately responsible for understanding all material for testing*. The amount of time required for homework for this class will vary with your reading speed. *You should expect to do something for this class every day*. I hope that you will enjoy the year, work hard, and come out of it in May "thinking like a historian", able to tackle the demands and challenges of any college course!

Late Policy:

In order to receive credit for all work, it must be submitted when it is due. I will deduct 10% off of the original grade you would have received for each of the first three days after the original due date (max of 30% deduction). After that time, you will receive a zero for that assignment. Exams missed due to absence will be taken within THREE school days after you return unless prior arrangements are made. You are strongly encouraged to let me know if you are going to miss class beforehand, if you know, so that we can make a plan together for when work can be made up.

Grading Policy:

My grading system is very simple—the total number of points you receive divided by the total possible points for those assignments. One grade will be a class participation/discussion/presentation grade for 30 points and will be included as an additional grade to your total point value score. Before the end of the marking period, I will ask for your self-evaluation sheet which lists the criteria for you to evaluate yourself for that participation grade. It will serve as a guide for me before I make a final decision on your score for that grade. Therefore, your final grade for each marking period is 99% in your control, so you get what you give! You can download a blank "Marking Period Grade Sheet" at the beginning of each quarter so that you can keep track of your own grades.

Class Rules:

1. Always give your best effort on all class activities and assignments. They are opportunities to learn, achieve and grow. Take advantage of them.
2. Academic Freedom: All students have a right to their opinions, (however unpopular). How you support your opinions is a key to doing well on the AP exam and in this class. **Respect for the opinion of others is a class requirement.**
3. Remember that your personal honor and integrity are a very precious and important part of who you are as a person. Therefore, I expect that you will do all of your OWN work at all times (see the HGHS Student Handbook for further information regarding cheating/plagiarism).
4. Do not be late. Be inside the door when the bell rings, unless you have a legitimate excuse to be tardy.
5. Keep in mind that I want all of you to do well. I am one of your many Academic Coaches and I want you to reach your goals and your full potential as a student and as a person.
6. I encourage you to approach me after class so that I can give you my undivided attention [if I am free] or see me in the halls, email me, so that I know we need to talk. Never hesitate to share your respectful feelings with me. Students quickly learn that I will eagerly listen and respond to their concerns when they approach me courteously.