

## AMERICAN HISTORY 2017-18

### NINTH GRADE

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**Course Objective** – Westminster School seeks to provide a Christ-centered mastery of historical events with emphasis on the study of original historical documents as an integral part of a well-rounded educational program. History is the unfolding of events under the hand of a sovereign God who controls the universe, and we will further explore his will throughout the ages.

**Historical Thinking Skills** - This course is designed to challenge and develop in students critical thinking skills when learning about the past. Thus the following skills are emphasized:

- 1) Chronological reasoning (understanding cause/effect and various patterns throughout history)
- 2) Comparison and contextualization (evaluating differing perspectives on events and assessing ways in which they are connected)
- 3) Crafting historical arguments from historical evidence (being able to form an opinion and appropriately defend that stance)
- 4) Historical interpretation and synthesis (weaving together what you have learned to draw broad conclusions)

### **Class Content**

Our study of U.S. History begins in 1491, the year before Columbus' journey to the "New World," and takes us through an examination of present-day issues. Throughout the study we will focus on the four following themes:

- Political institutions, behavior, and public policy
- Social change, and cultural and intellectual developments
- Diplomacy and international relations
- Economic developments

### **Themes/Central Questions**

What is the ideal form of government?

How does the United States' government work?

Who is an American? (discussing identity and race)

What is the American Dream?

How does America interact with the rest of the world? (Foreign Policy)

### **Assessments**

40% of your quarterly grade consists of "minor assessments" (quizzes, homework, discussions, and participation) while 60% consists of "major assessments" (tests and papers/projects). Regular quizzes and homework assignments are purposefully designed to either reinforce subject matter previously covered in class or prepare students for upcoming discussion and learning.

At least three major assessments will be given per quarter as well as a semester exam in December and cumulative final exam in May that will focus on big picture ideas from our yearlong study of history. To assist students in establishing a broad understanding of our nation's history, students will memorize a timeline of thirty key events and dates in American history (fifteen per semester). This timeline will be included on both the semester and final exams. Students must adhere to the Student Handbook in regards to academic guidelines, such as the late work policy that calls for an 11% grade reduction per late day for major projects and papers.

### **Plagiarism and Academic Honesty**

Any and all instances of cheating will be punished harshly, including possible failure of assignments, parent notification, and detentions or suspension. Keep in mind that plagiarism sometimes happens by accident. It is still a punishable offense. Avoiding plagiarism requires intentionality. So for all papers, tests, quizzes, and homework it is your responsibility to ensure what you turn in represents your own work, knowledge, and preparation, and that when you have used other sources, you give them proper credit.

## General Classroom Expectations

- Be respectful...of others, of the facilities, etc.
- Come to class each day ready to learn! This includes being prepared for class with the proper attitude and necessary completion of outside work. Homework is never assigned without a clear purpose in mind – thus your task is to complete it with the utmost effort.
- You will need to take and keep daily notes from our class lectures and discussions. These notes are the central way we cover material for quizzes/tests.

## Calendar (this overview is approximate in nature and should not be considered the “final word”)

- First Quarter (August 7 – October 6)
  - Settling and Establishing the American colonies
    - *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*; selected works by Jonathan Edwards, John Locke, and William Bradford
  - Seeking Independence
    - *Common Sense* and excerpts of *The American Crisis* by Thomas Paine, *The Declaration of Independence*, and selected works by Patrick Henry
- Second Quarter (October 11 – December 15)
  - Formation of the American Republic
    - *Articles of Confederation*, *US Constitution*, selected excerpts from *The Federalist Papers*, and selected works by Montesquieu
  - Growth of American Society (through the early-19<sup>th</sup> century)
    - Excerpts of *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville and selected works by John C. Calhoun, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Thomas Jefferson, and William Lloyd Garrison
  - Era of Manifest Destiny to the Dawn of the Civil War
    - Selected speeches by Abraham Lincoln and Confederate Orders of Secession
- Third Quarter (January 3 – March 2)
  - The Civil War
    - “The Emancipation Proclamation,” “Gettysburg Address,” and other selected works by Abraham Lincoln and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*
  - Era of Reconstruction (through the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century)
  - The Dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- Fourth Quarter (March 6 – May 17)
  - The Era of World War I
    - Selected speeches by Woodrow Wilson
  - The Roarin’ Twenties, Great Depression, and World War II
    - Selected speeches by Franklin Roosevelt
    - Varied primary source documents from World War II
  - The Cold War
    - Selected speeches by John F. Kennedy
  - The Civil Rights Movement
    - Selected speeches/works by Martin Luther King, Jr
  - A Glimpse at Contemporary America

## Additional Course Information

### Harkness Discussions

A good discussion is a great way to learn. It helps you fine tune what you do know and come to terms with what you don't know. And since you are working with others, it's always possible they will know something you don't or understand it in a way you hadn't considered. These kinds of discussions are as old as education. In ancient Greece it was practiced by Socrates and has come to be known as the Socratic Method. In more recent times, elite prep schools like Phillips-Exeter have taken their cues from Edward Harkness, a philanthropist who advocated teachers conduct class around large oval tables (like the one in the Legacy Room) where students would find it easy and natural to converse about their subject matter. This has come to be known as the Harkness Method.

Whatever the title, a good discussion requires three things: good listening, good thinking, and good speaking. First, you have to listen to the ideas of others and consider the ways they understand the issues. Second, you have to process what others are saying and develop your own opinions. Third, you have to contribute in a thoughtful, helpful, and courteous manner. In this way, a good discussion can cultivate both wisdom and eloquence.

But it requires more still. To fully participate, you must also know the text because most conversations will be based on readings. So make sure you are reading carefully and keeping good marginalia so you can find helpful references quickly in a discussion setting.

Getting a 100% on a discussion will mean you contribute a reasonable number of times, listen well and respond to others, and cite the text in at least one of your comments.

### Reading Guides

There are three components to good reading: anticipation, active participation, and reflection. The reading guides are designed to assist you in working through these three stages. First, I will usually provide you with a preview of a reading. Read this carefully, making sure you know the major characters I mention. Second, I give you some guidance on what to look for in using marginalia. Remember, this is a bare minimum. I will occasionally check for marginalia, and I'll be looking for at least one or two marks per page. Third, I will give you questions. Do NOT stop and answer these along the way. They are designed to help you assess your reading AFTER you have finished. You may and should read the questions ahead of time, and you may want to mark a capital Q in the margin when you notice an answer. But don't interrupt the flow of reading to write an answer, this is the opposite of what the reading guide is meant to help you with.

### Vocabulary Improvement

Another practice of advanced readers is finding the meaning to unfamiliar words. Choose words from each night's readings that are either vague and unclear or totally new. Avoid proper nouns, and aim for terms you might see again. You should write the definition in your book or on a separate piece of paper to get credit. These words will be checked periodically either as part of a quiz or separately.

### The Art of Marginalia

What is Marginalia? Dictionary.com defines marginalia as "notes in the margin of a book, manuscript, or letter." My favorite definition comes from the Wikipedia page on marginalia: "scribbles, comments, and illuminations in the margins of a book."

Practicing marginalia allows you to better focus on what you are reading. By making notes as you read, your mind is actively engaged in the text and not wandering about. The "notes" and "scribbles" you make in a book can help you remember details, find patterns, and connect ideas. Marginalia also allows you to look back and easily find certain elements in the text for your own use during open book tests, class discussions, and paper writing. By writing in the margins, you are turning your book into a tool that will help you remember and process. Think of marginalia as leaving "thinking tracks" through a book. There are many joys to be found in reading and writing in the margins. Marginalia is a discussion, a talking-back to the book, which can also lead to better discussions with others, another joy of reading.

So what should you write? Each of you will develop your own style, so feel free to experiment. One word of caution though: all emphasis is no emphasis. Avoid underlining half a page of text. Sometimes your excitement might get the best of you, I understand, but generally make precise marks that will guide your attention to important information. Here are some of my symbols and practices.

- Underlining for 2-3 lines of important text (usually the wording itself somehow stands out to me)
- Brackets for longer passage
- Stars (★) or checks (✓) for striking or important material (stuff to remember)
- Exclamation points (!) for material I disagree with or find shocking or disturbing
- ALL CAPS for important themes I am tracking

Additionally, you may want to mark information for questions in the reading guide (possibly a capital Q).

How much should you write? Often I will ask you on a quiz whether you used marginalia. To answer yes you need to have marked something on roughly every page of the reading. I also expect that you used at least three different kinds of marks (e.g., underlining, exclamation, and written response).