Course Overview, Requirements and Expectations

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American Nationhood

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a one-semester course that begins with an examination of the question: What does it mean to be an American? This question serves as a focus for our study of American experience from 1763 to 1865. Our study begins with the efforts of Europeans to accommodate their heritage with the American environment and concludes with the growth of sectional conflict and how sectional conflict led to the Civil War. The philosophy of the Declaration of Independence, the structure and safeguards of our Constitution and Bill of Rights, and their application to the events of this period will be examined and analyzed. You will evaluate the interaction of the American people with their political, moral, and intellectual leaders concerning national and international events. The values and institutions of 1754-1865 will be identified as catalysts for such later developments as industrialization, urbanization, and the growth of America as a world power.

As we approach this course, and work together to study the beginning of the American experience, please keep 3 essential questions in mind:

1. What does it mean to be an American?;
2. Is the Constitution truly a living document?; and,
3. Are political parties good for our nation?

REQUIRED MATERIALS

1. One three-ring binder, specifically for history class;
2. Pen or pencil;
3. Loose leaf paper; and,
4. Binder Dividers - you will need 7.

COURSE OUTCOMES

As a student in this course, you will have the opportunity to:

* Become conversant in a broad range of issues related to early U.S. history
* Think critically about the birth of the American Nation from many historical perspectives
* Deepen your understanding of how American identity is impacted by early U.S. history
* Identify the key events, people and places in early U.S. history
* Examine your own perceptions of the beginning of the American Experience, and how it impacts and affects the American society today

COURSE RULES AND STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

There are a few rules that need to be followed to ensure the success of our classroom:

1. Respect your peers, teacher and physical surroundings;
2. Be in your seat when the bell rings. Unexcused lateness will result in a detention or a referral to the dean;
3. Class cuts = 5 points off your final grade and a referral to the dean; and,
4. Strike Rule: Any behavioral problems, such as offensive, derogatory or disrespectful language will result in the student receiving a strike. Once the student receives 3 strikes, it will result in the student being removed from the class and sent to the dean. Fighting, screaming, and other sorts of gross misconduct will result in immediate removal from class and being sent to the dean.

These are my expectations of you as students:

* Attend class everyday.
* Come to class prepared – this means with your binder, a writing tool, and an open mind.
* Complete all assignments, both in and out of class.
* Participate!! You will enjoy the course more if you do!
* If you do not understand something, simply ask! You’ll be doing yourself, and probably someone else, a favor.
* Always try your hardest.

AVAILABILITY

E-Mail: I am available by e-mail at all times. I check my e-mail regularly throughout the day and will respond to any questions you have as soon as possible.

Before/After School: I am available before school, by 7:30 am in room D205, and after school in room D205 until 3 pm everyday. If you’d like to meet with me at a later time, or meet with me earlier in the morning, I can meet you then – but please ask me 1 day in advance.

THOMAS CRANE LIBRARY HOURS

Monday – Thursday: 9 am to 9 pm, Friday – Saturday: 9 am to 5 pm, Sunday: 1 pm to 5 pm.

GRADING

Your grades will be based on a point system. Every assignment will be assigned a certain value in points as listed.

# Classwork = (10 – 75 points)

Classwork includes any activity completed, collected and graded during class. Classwork assignments can be made up only if the student is absent the day it was assigned. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to come and see me for work that you missed while you were out of class. *Participation will be an important part of your classwork grade* – *it is to your benefit to stay awake and pay attention in class.*

# Homework = (10 – 75 points)

Homework will be assigned with due dates. It is in your best interest to do your homework on the night it is assigned, as it specifically relates to our classroom dicussions. If you are absent it is your responsibility to check with me for any assignments you might have missed.

# Quizzes = (10 – 100 points)

Quizzes will be announced and unannounced. Homework may be checked by a short quiz at the beginning of any class period. If you are absent the day of a quiz, it is your responsibility to come see me to make it up.

# Binder = (100 points)

Your binder may be graded once a term. Your binder is extremely important. You will receive no credit for things falling out or tucked into the pockets. Your binder should be neat and well organized with clearly labeled sections for each unit.

# Tests = (100-200 points)

Tests will be given at the conclusion of each unit. Most tests will be a combination of multiple choice, matching, short answers, and essays. If you are absent on the day of a test, it must be made up within *ONE WEEK* of when you return from your absence.

# Projects = (100-200 points)

# Each term projects, or essays, may be assigned to accompany a unit. More information will be provided when a project is assigned.

COURSE METHODOLOGY

**Unit 1: The Revolutionary Era**

**Essential Questions**

* + How did colonial discontent affect the relationship between Britain and the colonies?
  + How did the colonies use economic protest?
  + What were the military engagements between Britain and the colonies?
  + What were the strategies behind the military campaigns?
  + How was fighting for their rights and freedoms an advantage for the colonists?

**Key Concepts**

* The effects of French and Indian War caused discontent between Britain and the colonies
* The Colonists used economic protest to fight Parliamentary power
* The First Continental Congress acted as a government during the Revolutionary crisis
* Republicanism, state constitutions, voting rights and individual freedoms were created with the Declaration of Independence
* Hostility between the French and the British caused France to support the colonies
* A unique American culture arose as the Revolutionary War ended

**Topic Outline**

* Colonial America Review
* The Colonies Fight for Their Rights
* The Revolution Begins
* The War for Independence
* The War Changes American Society

**Unit 2**: **The Constitution and Founding Documents**

**Essential Questions**

* + What was the character of the newly formed Confederation Congress?
  + What issues were at stake during the Constitutional Convention?
  + What were the compromises reached during the convention?
  + How was the debate between the Federalists and Antifederalists shaped?
  + How was the Constitution formed and ratified?

**Key Concepts**

* The Articles of Confederation provided a workable but faulty national government.
* The Constitution divides power between the federal government and the state governments
* The Constitution established three branches of power in the federal government and gave each branch the ability to limit the power of the other branches.
* The state governments approved the Constitution through individual conventions
* The Constitution is a Living Document

**Topic Outline**

* The Confederation
* A New Constitution
* Ratification
* First Tasks of New Government

**Unit 3: Solidifying a New Nation – Federalists and Republicans**

**Essential Questions**

* + How did the first political parties form?
  + What were the growing tensions between the nation’s political parties?
  + What were the similarities and differences between the early presidencies?
  + How was the federal judiciary strengthened?
  + How did the War of 1812 affect the United States?

**Key Concepts**

* George Washington helped define the office of the American Presidency**.**
* Disagreements between political parties threatened citizen’s rights.
* An important Supreme Court decision asserted that the Judiciary had the power to decide whether laws passed by Congress were constitutional.
* The War of 1812 gave Americans a strong sense of national pride.

**Topic Outline**

* Washington and Congress
* Partisan Politics
* Jefferson in Office
* The War of 1812

**Unit 4: Growth and Division**

**Essential Questions**

* How was the Supreme Court strengthened?
* How did nationalism affect the nation’s foreign policy after the War of 1812?
* What changes took place in transportation and communication in the early 1800’s?
* How did the Industrial Revolution change methods of production?
* How did the Missouri Compromise affect the nation?
* How did Jackson’s background influence his ideas of democratic government?
* Why was the nullification crisis important?
* What are the connections between the religious and social reforms of the 1800’s?
* How did both Northerners and Southerners view abolitionism?

**Key Concepts**

* Increased national pride marked the years immediately following the War of 1812.
* The Monroe Doctrine marked the beginning of U.S. involvement in Latin America.
* Revolutions in transportation and industry brought great changes to the North.
* New manufacturing techniques reshaped the organization of the American workforce.
* The invention of the cotton gin made cotton a key part of the South’s economy.
* The South developed a social structure based largely on agriculture and the institution of slavery.
* Sectional disputes eroded the spirit of nationalism that wept the country after the War of 1812.
* The Democratic – Republican Party raised the conflict of those who wanted to expand federal power and those who wanted to limit it.
* The American political system became more democratic during the Jacksonian era.
* The U.S. underwent dramatic social and cultural changes during the early and mid 1800’s.
* Abolitionist reformers challenged the morality and legality of slavery in the U.S.

**Topic Outline**

* American Nationalism
* Industry v. Cotton
* Growing Sectionalism
* Jacksonian American
* The Spirit of Reform
* The Abolitionist Movement

**Unit 5: Manifest Destiny and Westward Expansion**

**Essential Questions**

* Why were Americans willing to give up their lives in the East to move to the West?
* How did the U.S. settle its land disputes?
* How were Texas and Oregon admitted to the Union?
* How did the war with Mexico affect foreign policy?

**Key Concepts**

* Several inventions helped to make settling the West possible.
* In the 1840’s Americans migrated West to the Plains and the rich land of California and Oregon.
* Texans hoped to transplant American institutions to their new homes
* American settlers in Texas fought with Mexico to gain independence.
* The proposed admission of Texas to the U.S. caused tension over the issue of expanding slavery.
* Boundary disputes in Texas and the American attempt to purchase the California territory, led to the war with Mexico.
* The war with Mexico brought new territories under the control of the U.S.

**Topic Outline**

* The Western Pioneers
* Independence for Texas
* The War With Mexico

**Unit 6: Sectional Conflict Intensifies**

**Essential Questions**

* How was the idea of popular sovereignty applied to the issue of expanding slavery?
* How did Americans respond to the idea of popular sovereignty?
* What events of the 1850’s led to increased sectional conflict?
* What were the main goals of the Republican and American parties?
* What attempts were made to reach a compromise between the demands of the North and the South?
* How and why did the Civil War begin?

**Key Concepts**

* The acquisition of new land heightened sectional tensions over slavery.
* Resentment over the Compromise of 1850 led to a further increase in sectional tensions.
* As sectional tensions arose, some Americans openly defied laws they thought were unjust.
* The slavery controversy accelerated the breakdown of political parties and the growth of hostility between the North and South.
* After Lincoln’s election, many Southerners placed state loyalty above loyalty to the Republic.

**Topic Outline**

* Slavery and Western Expansion
* Mounting Violence
* The Crisis Deepens
* The Union Dissolves

**Unit 7: The Civil War**

**Essential Questions**

* How were the military advantages of the North and South different at the start of the Civil War?
* How were the lives of soldiers and civilians affected by the Civil War?
* How did the Civil War affect the economies of the North and the South?
* How did Gettysburg affect the Civil War?
* How did the results of the Civil War affect the nation?

**Key Concepts**

* The North and the South each had distinct advantages and disadvantages of the beginning of the Civil War
* The Confederacy’s weak central government had difficulty coordinating the war effort
* The Union hoped to seize the Mississippi Valley and cut the Confederacy in two
* Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation to punish the South and to make the soldier’s sacrifices worthwhile
* The Civil War brought great changes to the lives of soldiers and civilians alike
* The Unions victory at Vicksburg cut the Confederacy into two parts
* After four years of fighting, the Civil War ended in 1865 in victory for the Union

**Topic Outline**

* The Opposing Sides
* The Early Stages
* Life During the War
* The Turning Point
* The War Ends