U.S. History

*Course Syllabus: 2015-2016*

# Chris Waddell, M18

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# Course Description

Welcome to U.S. History; a survey course that blends the chronological and thematic study of major events on the American timeline. Course readings focus primarily on key developments and participants in the unfolding story of America, as well as the institutions and principles of democratic government established by the U.S. Constitution. Class discussions, textual analysis, activities and projects encourage students to make connections throughout the course: connections between historical events, connections from past to present, and connections to personal experiences.

As the instructor, I make conscious decisions about course content and themes for exploration. These decisions emerge from the following presuppositions:

1. The story of America has been forged by the contributions of diverse populations; even if historians have been slow in recognizing such diversity.

2. The Declaration of Independence, U.S. Constitution, and Bill of Rights hold out unprecedented promises of liberty and equality, but access to such “ideals” has been a source of great conflict throughout our history.

3. The study of history is saddled with the problem of bias; therefore, students should be given interpretive skills to identify and evaluate the perspective of the historian.

4. The Social Studies classroom presents students with a unique opportunity to explore and cultivate their emerging world view; therefore, the environment must be made safe for all ideas.

**Units of Study**

I. Americas Foundations

II. Democracy, Freedom, Liberty, Rights & Responsibilities

III. Westward Expansion & Slavery’

IV. Industrialization & Imperialism

V. Progressive Era

VI. Imperialism & WWI

VII. The Roaring 20’s

VIII. The Great Depression & New Deal

IX. WWII

X. Post War Confidence and Anxiety (1950’s)

XI. The 1960’s: An Era of Change and Protest

XII. From Nixon to Reagan: Confidence, Crisis, and Conservatism

XIII. The 1990’s America in a new World and Technological Revolution

XIV. 9/11 and Beyond

# Materials

Each student is required to maintain a three-ring binder, a spiral notebook and writing materials. Highlighters are strongly recommended for “interactive reading” activities.

Additionally, it is recommended that students have colored pencils or markers. Lastly, I have for the past several years provided the following items to my classes out of my own pocket but am asking for those that can contribute to bring a box of tissues, post it notes, and glue stick(s).

**Expectations & Policies**

**Attendance**: Due to the discussion format of this course, students need to attend class everyday. The reading is unrelenting, quizzes are frequent, tests are large, lecture notes grow daily, and class discussions are evaluated. Although school policy (see Student Handbook) allows students to make up work from absences, the pace of the class will not slow down to let absent students catch up. An absent student is left to their own initiative to catch up; I will not hunt students down to remind them of deadlines.

**Major test dates are pre-announced. I expect perfect attendance on these dates.**

**\***Exceptions will be made for documented illnesses or pre-arranged absences.

**Academic Integrity**: Students are expected to do their own work; free of plagiarism, copying, cheating, or any other form of dishonesty. Students failing to maintain integrity will receive a grade of **ZERO** on all related tests/assignments and face progressive discipline as outlined in the Student Handbook.

**Presence and Participation**: The success of this course and the success of students both depend on students being physically and mentally present and engaging in active participation. The grading policy is designed to reflect each student’s willingness and effectiveness in class discussions as well as their presence during class. Presence does not necessarily mean just good attendance. I have had students who miss several days of class due to prolonged illness or other complications and I understand these situations and will work with any student who needs additional support. However, being consistently tardy, truant, using your device inappropriately, or creating distractions for others in the room are all examples of not being mentally present during class. Simply put you should be here and should participate in class everyday that you can be.

**Late Work and Extra Credit:** I do not accept late work. Sorry but you are juniors now and I need you to be responsible young adults. There will be ample opportunities for extra credit. Each one that is completed will boost your grade by .5%. You can complete up to 4 a semester for a 2% bump at the end of the semester. Grades in this class will not be rounded so the EC is very important.

**Grading:** Your semester grade consists of the following weighted categories:

60% Performance (formal assessments that includes but is not limited to tests, quizzes, papers, and projects.)

20% Presence and Participation (how often and how effectively does a student add to discussion and their mental presence in class; not on their devices, not creating distractions for others, not interrupting discussions, etc. See section below for further details on this.)

20% Assignments (reading guides, notebook checks, in-class writing, lecture notes, etc.)

Your semester grade is calculated (NOT ROUNDED) on the following scale:

100-90% A

89-80% B

79-70% C

69-60% D

59%… F

**\*All testing dates are subject to change; announcements will be made at least one week in advance.**

Presence and Participation Scoring

Scoring for this category is updated throughout the course of the semester. There is a weighted category in the grade book entitled “Presence and Participation.” In this category students have already been given 100/100 points. As the semester progresses deductions and additions will be made to this category based on several criteria.

1. **Preparedness and engagement in class discussions and activities.** Students are expected to come into class having completed any readings or assignments and to be able to use the information from them in our class. Students who willingly engage in the conversations with applicable and useful knowledge will gain points. Even if the student is shy, they are consistently prepared with constructive responses when called upon. Students who regularly demonstrate that they have not prepared for discussions and activities will face deductions.
2. **Use of class time.** As a teacher who has a full life outside of class and many obligations with my time I understand that many of my students do as well. That is why I work to provide a fair amount of class time to work on assignments and readings. I expect that students make the most of this time. I will award points to students who are using their class time well throughout the semester.
3. **Working with group members.** This class is designed to have students work with one another regularly. This will take place in formal group assignments and or projects as well as informal in-class discussions and activities. Students who are excellent group members, treat each other with respect, are inclusive of one another’s ideas and contributions and seek out participation from shy or quiet group members will receive additional points. Reciprocally, students who are not respectful of those in their group or who shut out ideas will be deducted.
4. **Appropriate Use of Technology.** Technology is a powerful and useful tool when used appropriately. Technology also has the capacity to distract us, and those around us, from opportunities to learn and grow together. Learning to use and manage technology appropriately is a professional and life skill. In U.S. History the policy is as follows:

-Appropriate Use of Technology is a part of the weighted category in the grade book worth 10% of your overall grade entitled “Presence and Participation.”

-My expectation is that devices are silenced and stored out of sight from bell to bell.

-If I need you to use your device during class time you will receive a clear invitation to do so.

-If you are managing an emergency situation, for example a sick loved one, and you may need to use your device during class, it is your responsibility to inform your instructor ahead of time. Please step out quietly to communicate and then return promptly.

-In the unfortunate event that a student does not follow the above stated guidelines a 20 point deduction will be made in the “Presence and Participation” grade.

-If five such deductions occur the student will have lost all 100 of the points for this category and will be referred to administration for progressive discipline.

Please read this syllabus carefully and then sign and return this page only by Friday, Sept. 11th.

I have read and am aware of the U.S. History classroom policies.

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