**American Studies: 7/8th Language Arts and Social Studies**

*What does it mean to be an American?*

*How much influence do we have over our lives and the world?*

*How does nature influence who we are as a people or who we might become?*

*How do we tell stories and why does it matter?*

These are some of the questions that we will grapple with this year in American Studies. I am very excited to teach this course because of the tremendous amounts of opportunity we have to explore our world. This class is a combined Social Studies and Language Arts class composed of seventh and eighth graders. Throughout the year we will use Social Studies as a context for reading, writing, and expanding our Language Arts skills. This class will begin with the formation of North America, its early settlement by Asiatic peoples followed by its colonization by Europeans. Then we will learn about the American colonies their revolutions, governments, and will continue to study American history up through Reconstruction and the retrenchment of white supremacy. With these historical events as a backdrop, we will read, analyze, and create literature, poems, plays, short stories, films, and much more. This class will support you as you build academic skills such as critical thinking, reading, research, writing, and public speaking.

**Course Format**

This course will be two back-to-back periods of the school day providing continuity of subject matter and serving as a “homeroom” to help students transition to the class schedules of the secondary grades. During this course we will use readings, films, and lectures with discussions, group projects, and art projects. We will also have short weekly writing assignments and students will keep a writing journal for various quick writing activities in class.

This class will also have two days a month minimum of outdoor class field work. **Typically this will be the first Monday and Tuesday of the month**, though specific outings may change due to opportunities and schedules of guest presenters. It is the goal of these outings to investigate watershed health in the region and observe firsthand the human development systems we are studying in class.

**Course Alignment with Standards**

This course is designed to develop the skills, knowledge, and dispositions which global citizenship requires. Students completing this course will learn and practice skills that will be applicable in their present and future lives and careers. This American Studies course is aligned with the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and the Oregon State Social Study Standards for eight grade.

**Classroom Rights**

This list, co-created by students and Mr. Sixta, lists some of your rights as students in this classroom.

1. You have the right to an education.
2. You have the right to property and privacy.
3. You have the right to health and safety.
4. You have the right to give input and be heard regarding your educational environment.
5. You have the right to be treated with respect from your peers, teachers and others in this classroom.

**Mr. Sixta’s commitment to ensuring student rights**

1. Every student in my class has the opportunity to receive an equitable education that is relevant, engaging, interesting, and useful for their life.
2. This classroom is a safe environment for all students. Hateful speech and violent actions will not be tolerated.
3. Students and their families receive the respect of person, property, and privacy that they deserve and are entitled to as students, citizens, and residents of the Butte Falls High School Community.

**Texts**

Appleby, Joyce, Alan Brinkley, James McPherson. *The American Journey.* New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2005.

Cayton, Andrew, Elisabeth Perry, Allan Winkler. *America: Pathways to the Present.* Needham: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1998.

Wilhem, Jeffrey D., Dougals Fisher, Kathleen Hinchman, David O’Brien, Taffy Raphael, Cynthia Hynd Shanahan. *Literature: Reading with Purpose.* New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 2007.

Zinn, Howard. *A Young People’s History of the United States.* Adapted Rebecca Stefoff. Vol. 1 & 2. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2007.

In addition to the texts listed above we will also use materials from *The Choices Program* from Brown University, PBS, and other fiction and nonfiction materials.

**Course Outline**

This is a tentative outline of the topics and when they will be covered over the course of the semester. The schedule may change as relevant opportunities arise.

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| **SEMESTER 1** |  |
| **Date** | **Unit**  **(Corresponding Standard Listed Below)** |
| Week 1 | Welcome |
| Week 2 | Pangea   * SS 7, 8, 9, 10, 27 * CCR 2, 7 CCW 2 |
| Week 3-4 | 1491 & Reading Strategies   * SS 3, 16, 24 * CCR 6 CCL 3,4 |
| Week 4-6 | Colonization   * SS 11, 26 * CCR 6 CCW 11 |
| Week 6-7 | Slavery - Cotton, Rice, Sugar; Haiti (Works Cited)   * SS 27 * CCR 2 CCSL 5 |
| Week 8 | Animals (SS) Grammar (LA)   * SS 8, 13, 16 * CCL 1 CCR 2 CCW 2 |
| Week 9 | Pet Election   * SS 17,28 * CCSL 4,6 |
| Week 10-13 | American Revolution   * SS 4, 5, 16, 24 * CCR 1, 4 CCW 3 CCL 3 |
| Week 13-14 | Constitutional Convention   * SS 4, 5, 8, 14, 15, 18,20,21 * CCR 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 CCSL 1,6 |
| Week 15-16 | Bill of Rights; Articles of Confederation   * SS 4, 5, 8, 14, 15, 18, 20,21 * CCR 1, 2, 4, 5, 8 CCSL 1 |
| Week 17 | Hamilton/Jefferson   * SS 6, 17, 26 * CCR 2 |
| Week 18 | OPEN   * SS 1 |
| **SEMESTER 2** |  |
| Week 1 | Lewis & Clark   * SS 3 |
| Week 2-3 | The War of 1812 & Trade   * SS 3, 8, 11, 13, 22, 23, 25 * CCSL 2 CCR 4, 5, 7 |
| Week 4-6 | American Indians   * SS 3, 16, 24 * CCR 6 |
| Week 6-8 | North/South (Poems, Creative, Grammar, Instructional)   * SS 12, 23 * CCR 4, 8 CCW 9 CCL 5 |
| Week 9-10 | Mexican American War   * SS 4, 9, 12, 25, 26 * CCW 11 CCSL 3 |
| Week 11-12 | Western Settlement   * SS 3, 8, 12, 24, 25 * CCR 1, 3, 6, 9 CCW 9 |
| Week 12-13 | Dred Scott   * SS 6, 7, 19, 27 * CCR 1, 2, 4, 8 CCW 1 CCSL 1,5,6 |
| Week 14-16 | Civil War (A National Food Fight)   * SS 9, 18, 24 * CCR 4 CCL 3 |
| Week 17 | 13th & 15th Amendments   * SS 18 |
| Week 18 | Reconstruction   * SS 12,2 * CCR 8,10 CCL 6 |

**Evaluations**

There will be multiple types of evaluation over the course of this semester. I am a firm advocate that consistent qualitative and quantitative feedback will help you get more out of your studies. In addition to receiving traditional grades for this course, I will regularly write comments on papers, tests, projects, and other assignments. During class, I will make time to talk with you about the projects you are working on and expect that you will hold me accountable for providing feedback on your work or clarifying assignments. Other forms of communicating evaluation will be done by:

1. **Quarterly Conferences** will be conducted between student and instructor to discuss classroom learning, social skill development, personal goals, and portfolio projects.
2. **Proficiency:** School Districts in the State of Oregon are moving to a proficiency-based approach of measuring student achievement. As a result, we will have at least one proficiency report card showing which Common Core for English Language Arts and Oregon Social Study Standards you have mastered and which still need to be completed. As we progress this year, I will communicate with you and your caregiver more about the goals and meaning of this proficiency report card.
3. **Formal Course Grades**  
   The final grade for this course will be based on the following elements.
   1. **Extended Unit** (15%): Each semester will have one extended units during which we spend a few weeks looking in depth at a particular topic. During the first semester we will spend additional time looking at the American Revolution and during the second semester we will learn about the American Civil War. Grading for the unit will be an average of the individual skills learned and demonstrated during that unit.
   2. **Units** (45% = 9 Units x 5%): Each semesters we will have nine additional units. Each unit will have a culminating activity to demonstrate knowledge.
   3. **Writing Units** (20% = 2 Units x 10%) (CCW 4,5,6,7,8,10 CCL2): Each semester we will have two units focused on improving formal written communication. You will have writing assignments that build off the previous skill as the year progresses.
   4. **Notes** (10%): As we explore local watersheds and visit historical sites in Southern Oregon you will be expected to document your observations and keep a compiled history of the places we visit in their class notebook. You will write and draw during these excursions and need to keep your notes for future classroom reference. Furthermore, you are to maintain a class note book with your notes, readings, field notes, and assignments to be turned in every quarter.
   5. **Journal** (10%) (CCW 4,6,10): Students will maintain an in class journal where we will write, brainstorm, and create stories, poems, and essays of different lengths.

**Policy On Electronic Devices**

Though we will use cell phones and laptops in class many times to reference information and to support one another’s learning, to enhance individual and collective focus all phones need to be silenced during class sessions. In addition, please refrain from texting and other forms of electronic “chatting” and “surfing” the web during class activities and discussions. Use of Facebook, Snapchat, and other social media that doesn’t relate to class material are not allowed during the class period. If you need to communicate electronically or check the Internet, please do so before or after class. Electronic devices cannot only distract the user but they can also be disruptive to your peers’ ability to concentrate, focus, and learn. Your cooperation is appreciated.

**Academic Integrity**

There will be no tolerance for plagiarism or any other academic dishonesty. In particular, papers with plagiarized ideas or languages will be graded “NC” and must be rewritten with proper citations and references if the student intends to pass the course for credit. The consequences for plagiarism are that a student will receive the grade of “NC” for any unit that contains plagiarised or other academic dishonesty and the work will need to be redone and resubmitted.