

Advanced Placement United States History Pomperaug High School 2011-2012

Welcome to Advanced Placement United States History. The AP program in United States History is designed to provide students with the analytical skills, factual knowledge, and enduring understandings necessary to deal critically with the problems and materials in United States history. The program prepares students for intermediate and advanced college courses by making demands upon them equivalent to those made by full-year introductory college courses. Students should learn to assess historical materials—their relevance to a given interpretive problem, their reliability, and their importance—and to weigh the evidence and interpretations presented in historical scholarship.

In the course you will learn the story of the United States from its beginning to today. You will also learn to assess and use historical materials. Because of the amount of material we have to cover it is important that we get a good start before the school year begins.

Summer Reading Assignment

Three works of historic fiction (also available at bookstores or on-line stores).

- *Centennial* (1974) James Michener (pages 139-992)
- *Chesapeake* (1978) James Michener (pages 19-816)
- *Texas* (1985) James Michener (all)

Reading Ahead for the Year

Two primary source works (also available at bookstores or on-line stores)

- *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) Frederick Douglass (all) Fall Semester
- *The Jungle* (1906) Upton Sinclair (all) Early Spring Semester

Reading a Historical Novel

The purpose of reading a historical novel in a history course is to give you a greater feel for the past than you normally get from your textbook and course lectures. Although the narrative, dialogue, and characters in a historical novel are fictitious, a good novelist will present historically accurate descriptions of past events and help you to imagine the experience of what it was like to live in a different time and place. Examples of historical novels frequently assigned in history courses are Michael Shaara, *The Killer Angels*; Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*; Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*; and Richard Wright, *Native Son*. You will get to experience the greatness that is James Michener!

When reading a historical novel,

Pay close attention to details like clothing, food, modes of transportation and types of housing. How did people in the book live their everyday lives differently than people do today? Determine the historical context of the novel. What larger historical events were happening at the time, and how does this history intersect with the narrative of the book? Think about how the characters in the novel experience the events surrounding them. How do the characters interpret their times, and what does this tell you about the past?

Enjoy the story! Historical novels are often well-plotted books with colorful characters that you might not have discovered on your own. You may want to keep a journal of sorts to take notes and record your impressions of the stories. **At some point during the first week of the class you will be assigned an essay (in-class/out-class) that addresses all three of the novels. Please make sure that you have completed your reading by the start of the school year as it is virtually impossible to read the over 2500 pages in the first week of the school year!**

Interpreting Primary Sources

Primary sources are materials that were created during the historical event they describe or were recorded soon after by people with firsthand knowledge of the event. Some primary sources, such as the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America, are so important that they become, or are the cause of, important historical events. Other primary documents, like census records, take the form of large series of statistical data. Photographs and older films can also be primary documents.

How to read a primary source:

Take note of who the author of the source is and what that person's role was in the events described.

Record any specific facts the source contains.

The exact words (or images) of a primary source may be important so read carefully.

You will be quizzed over the two primary source readings during the semester – as a result of this, you are not required to read them during the summer (but it is highly recommended as it would be a great time saver!)