

To: 2017-2018 A.P. United States History Students

Topic: Introduction to APUS and to AP Summer Movie Assignment 2017

From: Mrs. Jade Harris

Welcome to A.P. United States History!

Over the past decade the College Board has been redesigning the Advanced Placement United States History course and exam. The AP US course stresses college-level historical thinking skills, thematic understandings, and clear learning objectives. The AP Exam has moved away from multiple-choice questions emphasizing recall toward questions that require students to combine skills and knowledge. The rest of the exam requires students to write in depth about primary sources, scholarly research, themes, and key concepts stressed in the college-level U.S. History survey course.

One of the seven themes in the new course is **Identity**. The theme of identity focuses on the formation of both American and group identities in U.S. history. By the end of the course, students should be able to explain how various identities, cultures, and values have been preserved or changed in different contexts of U.S. history, with special attention given to the formations of gender, class, racial, and ethnic identities. Students should be able to explain how these sub-identities have interacted with each other and have contributed to the construction of American national identity. The overarching questions regarding the study of identity in U.S. history is: how and why have debates over American national identity changed over time? Also, how have gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnic, religious, regional, and other group identities changed in different eras of U.S. History? In addition, awareness of **multiple identities** helps students to examine the United States from **multiple perspectives** and to see the diversity reflected in the American experience.

This summer we are asking students to explore this theme of identity by watching one documentary and **four** contemporary movies and then writing about them. **The written assignment will be due in the second week of classes via TURNITIN.com. We strongly suggest that you answer the questions as soon as you have seen the movies; but please do not SHARE your assignment before the second week of school.**

All of the movies are rated either PG or PG-13. We encourage you to watch the movies with family or friends this summer, but the written assignment should be your own work. **TYPE YOUR PRELIMINARY NOTES AS YOU WATCH OR RIGHT AFTER YOU WATCH EACH MOVIE.**

Background (think about these questions before you watch the movies):

- What does it mean to be an American? What common beliefs do Americans have? How might this contribute to unifying a diverse people in the United States?

- What groups do you belong to within the United States? (i.e. what are your group identities?)

This includes gender, class, racial, ethnic, religious, political, region, generational, other...

For example:

Mr Dickson: male, middle class, caucasian, married - father of three, Anglo-Saxon, raised Episcopalian, New Englander, 50 something

Mrs. Harris: female, middle class, african-american married, mother of three, raised Christian –Charllean, Baptist- 51

- What tensions or conflicts exist between your different identities? Which group do you identify with first?

- How do people living in the United States reconcile their group identity (ies) with their national identity as Americans? Identify several conflicts between group identity and national identity.

The Movies

STEP 1: READ THE QUESTION ON PAGE 3

STEP 2: WATCH THIS 30-MINUTE MOVIE

MTV Rebel Music: 7th Generation Rises, This is a documentary movie about how young Native American activists have used music to celebrate their history and culture and to call attention to problems facing the Native American community. It is available on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aRwprNai4A>

Note Question 6!

STEP 3: WATCH FOUR (4) OF THESE EIGHT MOVIES:

---all movies are available streaming via Amazon---

[*Amreeka*](#), 2009 - Muna Farah is a proud Palestinian Christian immigrant single mother who arrives in a small town in Indiana, with her teenage son, shortly after the deployment of American troops to Iraq.

[*Blood Done Sign My Name*](#), 2010 - inspired by actual events, the story of Oxford, North Carolina where racial and civil unrest emerges after a white business owner is acquitted after allegedly killing a black veteran returning home from Vietnam in 1970.

[*Finding Forrester*](#), 2000 – Jamal Wallace is an inner-city teenager from the Bronx who has an aptness at basketball and a genius at writing. While always a “C” student, Jamal comes to the attention of a prestigious New York prep school when he scores highly on his standardized tests. Despite being a talented writer, Jamal must overcome obstacles put in place by his bitter literature teacher. A relationship with a reclusive Pulitzer-Prize winning author, William Forrester, helps Jamal negotiate the new world of opportunities opening up to him.

[*October Sky*](#), 1999 - In 1957, Homer Hickam, a young man inspired by the launch of Sputnik, brings his passion for rocketry to the small coalmining town he lives in.

[Smoke Signals](#), 1998 - One of few American films to deal with contemporary Native American culture and was based on Sherman Alexie's book, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. The film follows the adventures of Victor and Thomas, two young friends from the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation, as they travel to Arizona to retrieve the ashes of Victor's dead father. -- *this film is available on Netflix as well*

[Spare Parts](#), 2015 - Four Latino high school students compete in a premiere robotics competition against renown colleges such as MIT. Based on a true story

[Real Women Have Curves](#) (2002) - Ana, a first generation Mexican-American teen, cannot wait to go to college despite her family's insistence that she remain home to help out in her sister's garment factory. Ana's desire to leave home must compete with the cultural expectations of family and heritage.

[Perks of Being a Wallflower](#) (2012) - Charlie, a shy teenager attending a suburban high school, meets two free-spirits that open up his world to music and friendship.

Movie Questions for Written Assignment:

FORMAT:

- **You should write a thoughtful well-written paragraph - at least five sentences for each question**
- **You may bullet point, but write in complete sentences & always be mindful of proper spelling and grammar.**

1. **Explain** what being American means to you. What common beliefs do Americans have? How might these beliefs contribute to unifying a diverse people in the United States?

2. **Explain** the group identities of each of the main characters in the five movies - including *Rebel Music* (try to write about at least two characters from each movie - see above for explanation and examples of group identities).

3. **Explain** your own group identities (i.e. what groups do you belong to?) **This is your opportunity to tell your teacher who you are. Take some time on this section and discuss your identity in depth.** Discuss how some of your identities could cause tensions with other parts of your identity. **Then explain** which character's group identity (ies) is **closest** to yours. (Pick one character - could be from any of the movies). NOTE - This should be longer than the brief teacher samples given above)

4. For each Hollywood movie, **explain** how a **conflict** between the main characters centers on conflicting ideas of what it means to be an American (as you defined it in your answer to question 1 above). Explain how this conflict connects to a current political or cultural debate.

5. **Rank** the Hollywood movies in order from which you think **best** deals with current debates about identity in America to **least** and explain your ranking. (Note: stating a movie is "boring" or you "don't like the actor(s)" is not stretching your analytical brain).

6. What role does music play in shaping the identity of the Native American Activists who are profiled in *Rebel Music*? Does music play any role in shaping your identity? **Explain.**

DUE DATE:

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TURNITIN.com**

QUESTIONS? Email Mrs. Jade Harris @ jade.harris@cms.k12.nc.us