
PETERS TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

COURSE SYLLABUS: HONORS AMERICAN HISTORY

Course Overview and Essential Skills

This rigorous honors course in modern American history emphasizes the political, economic, and social history of the United States from the 1890's to the present day. It will include nightly homework and reading assignments. An emphasis is placed on high-level writing/research assignments, and document-based question analysis. It necessitates critical thinking skills through class participation in discussion and group activities. The course focuses on the decisions, events, and people that shaped our nation's history in the 20th century to the present. Areas of concentration include US diplomacy and involvement in foreign wars, the increasing role of government in American life, the changing status of women and minorities, and areas of significant social and economic change. Students will analyze the past to inform and analyze the present.

Course Textbook and Required Materials

- Textbook: Danzer, Gerald A. *The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. Orlando, Florida. 2012. ISBN: 978-0618689873
- Online textbook link: <http://my.hrw.com/>; username and password is specific to each user
- Articles and videos from approved news/educational sources
- Folder & notebook or binder with paper, writing utensil

Course Outline of Material Covered:

Unit or Topic	Concepts/Skills/Resources	Timeframe
MODERN AMERICA EMERGES 1900-1920	<p>In the first two decades of the 1900s, Americans embraced the Progressive Movement and many of its reforms. Entrepreneurs focused on the improvement of industrial efficiency and big business. To compete with other world powers for raw materials to fuel industrialism, America gains colonies overseas and builds the Great White Fleet. Rise of American imperialism and controversy. WWI is caused by nationalism, imperialism, militarism and the system of alliances. American was drawn into WWII because of economic ties to the allies and the sinking of naval vessels in foreign waters by Germany. After the United States enters WWI and helps to defeat Germany, President Wilson tries to fashion a lasting peace. The Treaty of Versailles unfairly punishes Germany and leaves many issues unresolved in Europe</p> <p>Skills Intensive/active reading on Progressive Era and themes Contextualization on emergence of Modern America Research & writing for opinion/formulation of thesis on Progressive Era</p> <p>Possible secondary resources: <i>The Century</i>, <i>The Story of US</i></p>	About one month

THE ROARING '20'S	<p>The clash of the wave of immigration, and nativist and isolationist sentiments after WWI caused friction between social groups and caused controversies about political and economic policies. Americans enjoy prosperity and new conveniences produced by American businesses. The revolution in Russia leads to America fears that a revolution will occur in the U.S. due to political radicals and labor activists. During the 1920s, rural America clashes with a faster paced urban culture. Women's attitudes and roles change, influenced in part by the mass media. African American ideas, politics, art, literature, and music flourish in Harlem and elsewhere in the United States. A conservative laissez-faire political philosophy characterized the presidencies of Harding, Coolidge and Hoover</p> <p>Skills Intensive/active reading Contextualization of US presidential policies Research & writing for primary perspective of key 1920s figures impact Collaborative problem solving with regards to 1920s changes in US</p>	About one month
THE GREAT DEPRESSION & THE NEW DEAL	<p>The economic boom of the 1920s collapses with the Stock Market Crash in 1929 as the United States enters a deep economic depression, which expands to a world-wide crisis. President Hoover's small-scale actions are unable to end the downslide. President Roosevelt launches his New Deal program aiming to end the Great Depression through massive government programs to employ workers, and to stabilize and regulate financial institutions. The Depression and Roosevelt's New Deal have profound effects on the nation as both the role and the scope of the federal government are greatly expanded.</p> <p>Skills Intensive/active reading on the impact of New Deal programs/policies Contextualization of changing relationship between US Government and citizens Verbally supporting an argument from provided resources on New Deal programs vs alternative economic solutions</p> <p>Possible secondary resources: <i>Cinderella Man</i></p>	3 weeks
WORLD WAR II	<p>The United States remains isolated from world affairs as economic and political factors lead to the rise of nationalist leaders in the Soviet Union, Germany, Italy, and Japan. A series of bold moves by Hitler and weak countermoves by other leaders triggers World War II in Europe. Hitler's plans for conquering the world include the killing of Jews and other ethnic groups, which is carried out with frightening determination. The United States provides aid to nations resisting Hitler and enters</p>	About 5.5 weeks

	<p>World War II after the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan. The United States enters the war and mobilizes its citizens and resources to give its allies unprecedented military and industrial support. The US, Great Britain, and Soviet Union cooperate in the fight to defeat Germany and its allies. America wages an aggressive military campaign against Japan, including the use of the atomic bomb in the Pacific islands and finally ends the war. Americans begin to adjust to new economic opportunities and continuing social problems after World War II.</p> <p>Skills Intensive/active reading political philosophies Contextualization interventionism vs isolationism Map analysis of war progression Connecting historical conflict with consequence Analysis of steps leading up to and impact of the genocide/crimes against humanity</p> <p>Possible secondary resources: <i>The World Wars, Saving Private Ryan, Band of Brothers, Tora! Tora! Tora!</i></p>	
1950'S: COLD WAR & CULTURE	<p>The Allied coalition falls apart after WWII as the United States and the Soviet Union find themselves in conflict with each other. The Soviets made major sacrifices during WWII and this leads to anger and resentment towards the US. The state of Israel was created post-WWII by the Allied powers. There were many differences with regard to styles of government and leadership between the US and the Soviets after WWII. The Cold War kindles a fear of communist influence in the United States. President Truman is elected and begins to lead America forward in the post-war period. US containment policies and communist success in China and North Korea lead to the Korean War. President Eisenhower is elected and with his presidency ushers in an era of prosperity and economic strength. As Americans try to put the nightmare of WWII behind them and begin rebuilding their lives, the economy booms and the American dream is defined. Mass popular culture booms, largely because of television. Many Americans suffered from poverty and racial discrimination, despite unprecedented economic prosperity in the nation. Tension mounts between the United States and the Soviet Union as both try to spread their influence around the world.</p> <p>Skills Intensive/active reading of post-WWII America Contextualization of progression from WWII to Cold War international relations Understanding historical bias by analyzing multiple viewpoints Cold War Political Cartoon analysis 50s Cultural Impact</p>	About 4 weeks

	Verbally supporting an argument from provided resources by participating in Cold War debates Engaging in diplomacy simulation	
1960'S: COLD WAR, CIVIL RIGHTS, AND VIETNAM WAR	<p>Foreign affairs dominate the presidential campaign of 1960 and the administration of John F. Kennedy. "The New Frontier," Kennedy outlines a broad vision for progress and inspires a new generation, but Congress enacts few of his initiatives. He addresses the nation regarding confrontations over civil rights issues and supporting equal rights. His efforts are ended by his tragic assassination. Lyndon B. Johnson drives the most ambitious legislative agenda through Congress since the New Deal to engage in the "war on poverty." The landmark decisions of the Warren Court. African Americans use strong organization and the nonviolent tactics of Dr. King to confront the South's policies of segregation and racial inequality, giving rise to the Civil Rights Movement. America slowly involves itself in the war in Vietnam as it sought to halt the spread of communism as it had done in the past. The United States sends troops to fight in Vietnam, but the war quickly turns into a stalemate. An anti-war movement emerges in the United States, pitting those who oppose the government's war policy against those who support it.</p> <p>Skills Intensive/active reading key documents from Civil Rights Movement & Pentagon Papers Contextualization of de jure vs de facto segregation Current event analysis Speech analysis of various perspectives on Civil Rights Movement and Vietnam War Research & analysis '60s culture</p>	About 8 weeks
SOCIAL CHANGE & THE CONSERVATIVE TIDE 1960-1980	<p>The nation's Latinos and Native Americans demand greater equality through protests and greater participation in government. A new feminist movement emerges during the 1960's as women fight to improve their opportunities and status in society and propose the Equal Rights Amendment. President Richard M. Nixon attempts to move the country in a more conservative direction and to ease Cold War tensions throughout the world. Richard Nixon's involvement in the cover-up of a campaign burglary forces him to resign from office-the only president to do so. In the wake of Watergate, Presidents Ford and Carter try to restore faith in America's leadership as they battle the worst economic crisis in decades. Americans, struck by their sense of limitations, begin to address a growing number of environmental concerns. The new conservatism begins with the election of Nixon in 1968 and triumphs with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. President Reagan puts in place conservative</p>	About 3 weeks

	<p>policies that affect the nation's budget and the federal government</p> <p>Skills Intensive/active reading on political philosophies of US Presidents Contextualization political ideologies Current event analysis Speech analysis of US presidents 60, 70, 80s Cultural Impact Economic Philosophies/Reganonmics</p>	
THE UNITED STATES IN TODAY'S WORLD 1990-Present	<p>Bill Clinton is elected and moves the nation's politics towards the center. The second Clinton term is marred by scandal and an impeachment. George W. Bush wins the presidency amid controversy over balloting in several states. The House passed two articles of impeachment - for perjury and obstruction of justice. At the trial, the Senate did not find Clinton guilty. The 2000 election was close involving a third party candidate named Ralph Nader; the US Supreme Court decided the election 2000; television networks announced Al Gore's victory prematurely; Bush won the Florida election; victory triggered a recount; Gore's campaign requested a manual recount; the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional; Bush was elected. The Service-sector and high-tech industries grew; manufacturing and agriculture declined. Workers face new challenges to their economic security as the US economy evolves. The internet links people to government agencies, library databases, news media, entertainment, and global information. New opportunities and challenges arise from technological developments in many industries, especially computers and communications. The political landscape changed after the September 11th terrorist attacks. In October 2001, Bush signed an anti-terrorism bill into law. In October 2001, coalition forces led by the United States launched an attack on Afghanistan who was harboring Osama Bin Laden.</p> <p>Skills Intensive/active reading of modern US issues Contextualization regarding the War on Terror & impact on American Democracy Current event analysis Speech analysis of US Presidents 90s Cultural Impact Current Foreign Relations analysis</p> <p>Possible secondary resources: <i>102 Minutes</i></p>	About 3.5 weeks

****Depending on the needs of the class or changes in the school year, the course outline is subject to change.***