

AP US History Letter of Commitment

Mr. Hodgins & Mrs. Schultz

Thank you for signing up for AP US History for the 2021-2022 school year. The AP US History course is an intensive college-level study of American History. The content of the course is in a survey format, covering 1491 to the present. Included in this study will be an examination of the social, political, international, and economic events, which have in the past, and continue to, transform and define the American experience. This course is designed to provide students with the analytical skills and factual knowledge necessary to deal critically with the problems and materials in United States history. AP US History prepares students for college by making demands upon them equivalent to those made in an introductory college course. Students will be asked to assess historical materials – weigh their relevance to a given problem, their reliability, and their importance- and to weigh evidence and interpretations presented in historical scholarship. The focus of the course will be for students to develop the necessary skills to arrive at conclusions on the basis of informed judgment and to present reasons and evidence clearly and persuasively in essay format.

In order to be successful in AP US History students must put in the time and effort above and beyond regular courses at Oak Ridge. Students who are able to make such a commitment have the strong potential to earn the benefits of a weighted grade and college units through passing the AP US History Exam. Due to the large number of students interested in the program it is critically important for you to understand the requirements and expectations for the courses and the effort necessary to be successful. Review the requirements listed below for the course:

- You are required to acquire a copy of the book *Thomas Jefferson: Author of America (Eminent Lives)* by Christopher Hitchens to read, understand, and assess the book before the start of the 2021-2022 school year. To help your understanding of the book I have included a study guide on the second page of this document. You will be assessed on your understanding of the book during the first week and throughout the year. The book is available from all major online bookstores including in audio and ebook forms and available in limited numbers by local libraries. If you wish to support a local bookstore *Face in the Book* in Town Center will also have copies of the book for purchase.
- During the first week of the 2021-2022 school year you will also be assessed on your ability to identify the major political and geographic features of the United States including the following:
 - All 50 states on a map
 - The following locations on a map: Cahokia, Philadelphia, Boston, New York, Richmond, Atlanta, Birmingham, Detroit, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Pearl Harbor, Tenochtitlan/Mexico City, Seneca Falls, Gettysburg, Chicago, Washington D.C., Little Rock, Montgomery, Dallas, Salt Lake City, Nashville, New Orleans, Omaha, Santa Fe
 - The following geographic features on a map: Appalachian Mountains, Rocky Mountains, Coastal Range, Great Basin, Great Plains, Mississippi River, Missouri River, Gulf of Mexico, Chesapeake Bay, Plymouth Bay, Bering Strait, Mason-Dixon Line, Erie Canal, Great Lakes, Rio Grande River, Sun Belt
- AP US History is a college-level class, and as such requires that you take the individual responsibility for your own learning. You are expected to be an active participant in class, show the individual initiative to utilize or seek out feedback to improve your skills, and to bring a sincere sense of curiosity and intellectual interest to class each day.
- Assessments in the form of quizzes, exams, and essays will cover a significantly greater body of information than you may be accustomed to. Some information on class tests will be covered in the textbook and supplemental readings not in class.
- Homework in AP US History consists of 1-2 chapters of required reading each week, take home essays, and a course message board. You are responsible for the mastery of the factual information, chapter identification, and the skills required to be successful on the AP US History Exam.
- Responsibility for mastering material rests with you. Self-advocacy is the sign and responsibility of a mature, serious student.
- All assignments are expected to be completed conscientiously and on time
- Grades will be largely based on test scores, writing, and the quality of work completed

Advanced Placement courses such as AP US History are taught at the college level and are difficult and demanding for many high school students. Please keep this in mind in terms of class expectations. The primary objective of these courses are to improve students' information processing skills, with an emphasis on your ability to analyze and evaluate the significance of various kinds of evidence, and to foster a corresponding ability to express those ideas through the written word.

Parents please have high expectations of your son or daughter and understand they are being asked to perform at a higher level than they may have been accustomed to in the past. If you have any questions please feel free to email me at mhodgins@eduhd.net.

Thomas Jefferson: Author of America Study Guide

- 1. Who is the author of the book? What special insights does the author have in approaching the subject? What biases does the author have in approaching the subject?**
- 2. When was the book written? How did events occurring at the time influence the writing of the book?**
- 3. What is the central argument of the book? What specific evidence is provided to support that argument?**
- 4. What is Jefferson's point of view? (Stated differently, What ideology was the basis of Jefferson's beliefs about the world around him?) Who were Jefferson's heroes (or biggest influences) related to that point of view? How did his point of view influence his decisions?**
- 5. What were Jefferson's greatest accomplishments?**
- 6. What contradictions stand out about Jefferson?**
- 7. What were Jefferson's greatest shortcomings?**
- 8. How did Jefferson's life and accomplishments relate to the following:**
 - a. Economic Class:**
 - b. Native-Americans:**
 - c. Women's Roles:**
 - d. African-Americans and Slavery (including Sally Hemmings):**
 - e. The American Revolution and its Ideals (Declaration of Independence):**
 - f. The Northwest Ordinance:**
 - g. Serving as the first Secretary of State during the Washington Administration:**
 - h. Political Parties**
 - i. Minister to France:**
 - j. French Revolution:**
 - k. Haitian Revolution**
 - l. Freedom of Speech (including the Alien & Sedition Acts):**
 - m. Religious Freedom (including the Virginia Statute on Religious Freedom, his letter to the Danbury Baptists, and the Jefferson Bible):**
 - n. The Election of 1800:**
 - o. Role of the Presidency:**
 - i. Westward Expansion (Louisiana Purchase & Lewis and Clark):**
 - ii. War (the Navy and the Barbary States):**
 - iii. Embargo Act:**
 - iv. Supreme Court (*Marbury v. Madison*):**
 - p. Jefferson's inventions:**
 - q. Related figures:**
 - i. George Washington:**
 - ii. Alexander Hamilton:**
 - iii. John Adams:**
 - iv. Thomas Paine:**
 - v. James Madison:**
 - vi. Aaron Burr:**
 - vii. Daniel Shays (Shay's Rebellion):**
- 9. What does Jefferson's famous quote, "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants." mean? What are its implications?**
- 10. What are the three accomplishments listed on Jefferson's gravestone? Why those accomplishments? What is missing? Why?**
- 11. Why is Jefferson still important today?**