



2024-2025 COURSE SYLLABUS

US HISTORY

Damian Harmony, Instructor

E-mail address: damian-harmony@scusd.edu

“I love America more than any other country in the world and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually.”

-James Baldwin

“Unless we know ourselves and our history, and other people and their history, there is really no way that we can really have positive kind of interaction where there is real understanding.”

-Yuri Kochiyama

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed as a survey of US history from roughly 1877 forward. Anyone can pass this class provided they participate meaningfully, write critically and analytically, and make sure they complete all assignments with a passing grade or higher. Writing is a large part of this course, as it develops and maintains the essential skills of evaluation and critical thinking. It is a skill that we develop the entire year, so immediate success is not required for scoring a very high grade by the end of the semester. Students will be expected to work at a high school eleventh-grade level by the end of the year. This course is required for graduation.

PEDAGOGY

There will be a mix of cooperative learning opportunities, direct lectures, document analysis, and a large focus on essay-writing. This is to ensure that students of all learning styles will be able to access the course material. There will be several essays due in the course of each semester. All will be explained in class. Writing is a skill that requires development and honing, and I will help you get there in a number of ways. All that this requires is a good-faith effort on your part every time. If you approach every assignment with good faith, regardless of the result, you will improve.



MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS

Students will be required to bring the following to class daily:

- their own pens (blue or black ink only)
- papers & handouts
- binder
- charged chromebooks - this is vital, as there are no spares this year, and a majority of the in-class work we do requires a chromebook

BEHAVIORAL REQUIREMENTS

The following behavioral requirements are non-negotiable for one seeking to pass:

- be kind
- be honest
- work hard
- write essays
- bring their charged materials (listed above)
- work in good faith, both in groups and alone
- write up an evaluation of their group-mates when in groups
- discuss history with the class and the instructor
- *attempt and complete* everything we do, regardless of result
- respect what we are trying to do here

ESSENTIAL CLASS RULES

- Be kind. This means being respectful of everyone in the room, respecting their space, their limits, their differences, their safety, and their rights. Assume good faith.
- Be honest. This means doing your own work, being clear and specific in your evaluations of classmates' work, owning mistakes and successes, and telling the truth about where you're going and what you're doing. Act in good faith.
- Be conscious of your choice, and own it.
- Have good phone discipline. I don't mind your checking your phone on occasion. If you need, step outside with it for a few minutes. But do not let it dominate your activity in my class. It doesn't help.



CONTACTING MR. HARMONY

Email is the best way to get a hold of me. I respond within a day, pending emergencies. I do not respond over the weekend. Parents - this is the best and easiest ways to clarify any questions you may have as well. My email is located at the top of this document, as well as right here:

damian-harmony@scusd.edu

PLAGIARISM POLICY

Plagiarism is the deliberate use of another's work to pass off as one's own, be it copying from someone else's work or finding other people's work online. It is rarely difficult to spot. You need to do your own work.

Plagiarism at John F. Kennedy High School includes but is not limited to:

The act of incorporating into one's own work the ideas, words, sentences, paragraphs, or parts thereof, or the specific substance of another's work without giving appropriate credit thereby representing the product as entirely one's own. Examples include not only word-for-word copying, but also the "mosaic" (i.e., interspersing a few of one's own words while, in essence, copying another's work), the paraphrase (i.e., rewriting another's work while still using the other's fundamental idea or theory); fabrication (i.e., inventing or counterfeiting sources), ghost-writing (i.e., submitting another's work as one's own) and failure to include quotation marks on material that is otherwise acknowledged.

Using an essay generator, an online plagiarism tool (commonly referred to as "AI," despite not being such), or anything of the sort, to generate your essay in part or in whole constitutes plagiarism. As it is increasingly easy and tempting for students to generate essays using an AI generator, an essay-writing website, or other sources that aren't students' own research and thinking, any essay that raises suspicion that it is a product of an AI generator, an essay-writing website, or any other source of writing that isn't a student's own, will require a verbal defense by the person claiming it as their own. Said defense will be by appointment. Failure to adequately answer questions about the essay in question, or failure to adequately explain the meanings and uses of words used in the essay, or failure to adequately identify the concepts and arguments used in the essay, or failure to follow through on an appointment for a defense will result in the essay being marked as plagiarized; and the essay be treated as such.

To copy/plagiarize/cheat is to disrespect the efforts we are making in here. If you are caught doing so, you and anyone else involved will receive a zero on that assignment. A second instance will result in possibly failing the entire course. Don't do it.



TARDY POLICY

Tardies are unacceptable. They mean you are missing valuable time for learning, creating a cascade effect of falling behind. The school has an active tardy policy, and you should familiarize yourself with it. Don't be tardy.

CELL PHONE POLICY

Practice good phone discipline. In general, keep your phone on silent, and put away, so that you are not distracted. Learning takes enough energy without distractions. Having a phone as a distraction will only add to that difficulty. **Unless I specifically tell you to have your phone out, please don't have it out.** I prefer to treat you with dignity and like a person learning to be an adult. Exhibit good phone discipline, and I can do that. If you need to step outside to handle something, do so by quietly going to the door, waving your phone at me, and standing just outside of my room. I trust you to get it handled, and then get back to work.

EVALUATION

Classwork. They will be assigned throughout the term, including but not limited to position papers, policy papers, debates, and simulations. These will account for 25% of your grade.

Essays. You will be required to write essays throughout the year. I will recommend libraries and useful websites. I will teach you how to write essays during class. We will work toward the proper structure and approach together. These will account for 75% of your grade. You can redo - for up to full credit - any essay that I've given feedback to, after discussing that feedback with me and before the next one is due.

GRADE SCALE

I will refer you to this section of your syllabus frequently to answer questions about your grades. It's probably best to highlight this section for yourself. The most equitable system of grading that I've found to work for students is what we'll be using. It also more closely mirrors the standard GPA scale.

A	80% - 100%	Excellence
B	60% - 79.99%	Proficiency
C	40% - 59.99%	Working Toward Proficiency
D	20% - 39.99%	Needs Improvement and Help
F	00% - 19.99%	Not Turned-In; Inadequately Addresses the Subject Matter



Infinite Campus will be the only place to find your grades reliably - I cannot trust Google Classroom to do what we need them to do fully.

Look only at the percentages on Infinite Campus, and compare them to the letter grade on this syllabus - do not look at the letter grade until I post grades for progress reports, quarterly report cards, and semester grades. Look only at the percentages, and then use the grade scale that I've just listed for you above.

There will be a spreadsheet on your google classroom that will break down the numbers to show why this is a more equitable and upwardly-mobile system for students. I strongly encourage you to examine it.

Parents - *do not hesitate* to reach out to me via email to clarify this grading policy, as it is often scary to see a low percentage, given what we grew up with those percentages meaning.

MAKE-UP WORK

I will allow make-up work if the following conditions are met:

- You email or tell me ahead of time about a planned absence, and we arrange for you to make up the work
- You contact me after an unplanned absence, and we arrange for you to make up the work

BINDER

Keep your binder in three sections, in this order (with the syllabus at the very beginning):

1. Lectures/Class Notes
2. Written work and assignments
3. Essays

I *strongly recommend* you put the date on anything I give back to you in the upper right hand corner, to keep things in order. If this needs to be part of another binder, that's fine. Make more dividers.

FINAL INFORMATION

This syllabus, and all of the information contained therein, is subject to change at the teacher's discretion, and need to clarify/rectify.



MOVIES AND MUSIC

At times, we will watch movies and listen to music in this class. Some words and images can be considered adult themes, including language, violence, and brief partial nudity, as seen in the context of the history being explored. Your parents/guardians must sign this slip if they do not want you to see these movies. If they do not have a problem with this, then this does not need to be signed. I assure you and your parents/guardians that the movies are picked with the utmost educational value in mind, not for entertainment value.

By signing here, I affirm that I DO NOT want my child to watch movies in Mr. Harmony's US History class. I understand that his choices are educationally-minded, but I do not find them acceptable for my child/ward to watch. I understand that my child will not suffer any scholastic pressure to watch these movies, and that a fair and alternate assignment will be given.

parent/guardian signature

date

printed name

printed e-mail address



I have read and understood Mr. Harmony's syllabus for his US History class. My signature at the bottom of this page signifies my active agreement to abide by Mr. Harmony's requirements. Failure to turn in this signature sheet signifies my tacit consent to abide by Mr. Harmony's requirements.

student signature

date

printed name

printed e-mail address

I have read, and though my child may not want me to, I also agree to help hold my child to the high standards they deserve to be held to. I fully understand Mr. Harmony's intentions and policies, as laid out in his syllabus, and know where to reach him should I have any questions. Not signing is my tacit recognition of and consent to these terms.

parent/guardian signature

date

printed name

printed e-mail address

night-time phone number to contact

daytime phone number to contact