

Upper School History Course Description

As a history teacher, it is my primary goal to help produce a society of educated people able to preserve their intellectual freedom amid the complex pressures of the outside world. Examining the past is one way to continually encourage critical thinking skills, and my students should come away from my classroom with improvements in three main areas: an understanding of change over time; sharper powers of reason and analysis through careful research and evaluation of evidence; and improved articulation of historical arguments and counter arguments in their writing and class discussion.

My goal is to show students that history is more than memorizing facts and dates, but a forum for debate and reinterpretation of sources. I think students learn history best when they:

- discuss and enter into historical debates with the primary sources in mind
- write frequently
- research and have confidence they can tackle new subjects for themselves
- have a teacher who is able to explain material in a variety of ways and emphasize the relevance of the material to students' lives outside the classroom

To engage my students, I prefer using a variety of active learning methods. One such method is contrasting conflicting primary accounts of familiar events and leading the class in a close examination of the texts that highlights how different authors' perspectives lead to different accounts. My students will often take different sides of a historical issue and debate it, increasing their verbal and analytical skills. I also incorporate a vast array of audio-visual aids into my lessons. I have used everything from maps, videos, historical monuments, images of old historical dresses, costumes, parchments, coins, postage stamps, statutes, sculpture, and art, to field trips to historical sites where appropriate. I find that this combination of discussion, debate, and audio-visual cues help make the students more active participants in the learning experience.

5th grade

In Grade 5, students study the history of the United States from the early colonial period through Reconstruction. Historical content focuses on the political, economic, religious, and social events and issues related to the colonial and revolutionary eras, the creation and ratification of the U.S. Constitution, challenges of the early republic, the Age of Jackson, westward expansion, sectionalism, Civil War, and Reconstruction. Students analyze the various economic factors that influenced the development of colonial America and the early years of the republic and identify the origins of the free enterprise system. Students examine the American beliefs and principles, including limited government, checks and balances, federalism, separation of powers, and individual rights, reflected in the U.S. Constitution and other historical documents. Students evaluate the impact of Supreme Court cases and major reform movements of the 19th century and examine the rights and responsibilities of citizens of the United States as well as the importance of effective leadership in a constitutional republic. Students evaluate the impact of scientific discoveries and technological innovations on the development of the United States. Students use critical-thinking skills, including the identification of bias in written, oral, and visual material.

6th grade

Students in the sixth grade build upon their understanding of history by studying the people and events that led to the beginning of the major Western and non-Western ancient civilizations. During each unit of study, emphasis will be placed on the everyday lives, problems, and accomplishments of people, their role in developing social, economic, and political structures during that time, as well as in establishing and spreading ideas that helped transform the world. Students will learn, synthesize, and discuss the similarities and differences between the world then and the world we live in now.

7th grade

In seventh grade, students study the social, cultural, and technological changes that occurred in Europe, Africa, and Asia in the medieval times through the early modern times. After we review the ancient world and the ways in which archaeologists and historians uncovered the mysteries of the past, students will study the history and geography of great civilizations that were developing concurrently throughout the world during the medieval and early modern times. Additionally, students will uncover the growing economic interaction among civilizations as well as the exchange of ideas, beliefs, technologies, and commodities. Furthermore, students will learn about the resulting growth of Enlightenment and the concepts of reason and authority, the natural rights of human beings, etc. Finally, seventh grade students will assess the economic and social patterns of these cultures, examine the influence of these ideas and archaic cultures, and relate them to our world today.

8th grade

In Grade 8, students study the history of the United States from the Civil War to the present. The content in Grade 8 builds upon that from Grade 5 but provides more depth and breadth. Students will participate in the examination of; the Progressive Era, The Jazz Age, world wars and cold wars, depression, civil rights, Watergate, and America today. An in-depth investigation of historical events and periods, the fostering of multicultural awareness, the recognition of ethical, civic, and democratic values present in American history, and the development of a historical perspective in relation to contemporary events represent the major aspects of the course. Literature, music art, primary readings, videos, simulations and other activities will be used to enhance the subject.