

Modern America

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Course Introduction:

Welcome to Modern American history!

While American history may not be everyone's cup of tea, there are a lot of good reasons to study American history (besides the fact that we require you to do so as a graduation requirement.)

#1 Studying American history can help you better understand the society we live in today. If you keep up with the news, it's hard to make sense of current events without having some background knowledge of history and how government works. If you've been following the news over the past few months, having some background on the history of immigration policy, health care, race relations, trade, or U.S. relations with countries like Russia, Iran or North Korea are really helpful to understanding many of the events we're currently navigating in our world today. Studying American history can help you make sense of what YOU think about the world today.

#2 As we will see this year, American history has more than its share of violence, injustice & discrimination. Yet the struggles and triumphs of people and groups to overcome injustice are pretty inspiring and have a lot of continued relevance today. Studying the efforts of progressives determined to help bring about reforms in early 20th century America or Civil Rights activists of the 1960s can help us better appreciate the rights that all Americans have today. If you follow the news in any way, the heated discussions about border enforcement and immigrants' rights, the rise of the #metoo movement, the violence in Charlottesville in the summer of 2017 and many examples of conflicts with the police over the past few years are not new conflicts - they have their roots in earlier American history.

#3 Studying history will give you skills you need in life. Interpreting primary documents, distinguishing between fact and opinion, identifying cause and effect, and drawing conclusions based on evidence are skills that all educated people use, not just historians. Learning how to effectively communicate your thoughts in writing or orally are other vital skills you'll develop further that will help you wherever life takes you.

And while we're working on all of these important life skills, we are going to try to do it in a way that is interactive and fun. Welcome to Modern American history!

Reading and Texts:

We do not use a textbook for this class. Over the course of the year, we will be using a number of different sources. Many of these readings will be posted on the course website or Google classroom.

Class Websites/Technology:

- **Google Classroom:**
 - Class code is [1nk2g2](#)

- **The class website:** <http://melisashen.weebly.com> The course syllabus, weekly syllabi, and links to all readings, handouts, Powerpoints, etc. are on this site. The link to the class website is at the top of this page and it's also linked to your ipass schedule.

The majority of information for class can be found on the two sites mentioned above. There is no reason to "not know" what assignments are due or for "losing" a handout/assignment. You can also always email me if you have a question about what's due.

Assignments/Tests:

Most **homework** will be turned in and graded. I expect that you turn in all assignments *before class through Google classroom OR at the beginning of class (if they're printed)* on the day they are due.

In general, you'll have homework 1-2 nights each week with more on units in which we're writing an essay and less on other non-essay units.

There will be a test, paper or project assigned at the end of each unit. **Tests** will typically consist of matching, fill-in-the-blanks, and short answers. Before each test, there will always be a review day.

You should always have a copy of your weekly syllabus (it's also posted on the website and assignments are posted in ipass as well), therefore it is your responsibility to be clear about due dates and expectations.

Papers:

It is important that you develop strong writing skills and possess the ability to make clear arguments. To that end, we will be writing 4 essays this year, one each quarter. You will be expected to complete outlines for most papers. I will give you deadlines for outlines well before the paper is due; this is not designed to make your life miserable, rather to give you the time and feedback you need to create a well-written essay.

Re-Writes:

The opportunity to re-write papers is offered at the discretion of the teacher. If you would like to do a re-write, you need to meet with me one-on-one outside of class within a week of receiving the paper back to discuss your paper and set goals for the re-write. It is up to YOU to initiate and set up a paper conference.

Late Work:

Late homework will be docked a point for each day that it is late (e.g. a homework assignment worth 10 points will lose one point for each day it is late) and papers will be also be assessed a late penalty for each day they are late. *Saturday & Sunday count as one day.*

Just because class does not meet does not mean that you can not and should not hand in late work. The same policy applies if you are not in class for some reason but are in fact in school. Google classroom allows you to submit work any time and from anywhere.

I realize that you all lead busy lives and that you are taking five other classes. I am also aware that my class is not necessarily always on the top of your priority list. Recognizing that work and extracurricular activities can make life seem unmanageable at times, you will each get FOUR "Late Passes" which will permit you to hand in an assignment one day late without loss of credit. *You get four passes for the ENTIRE year, so you need to be wise about priorities and time management.* The pass does not work for tests or group projects. You may use them one at a time or save them and use all 4 on one assignment. You may NOT hoard them and trade them in for extra credit at the end of the year. They are yours to use as you need so please use them. When you'd like to use a pass, simply write "LATE PASS" at the top of the assignment when you hand it in or add a comment in Google Classroom to that effect when you hit submit.

Extra Help:

I am available for extra help during most of my planning blocks (Blocks 1, 3, 4, and 7) or before or after school by appointment.

Class Participation:

Class is more productive and fun when you all participate. Participation doesn't have to mean talking 24-7; participation also includes offering opinions, asking questions about material that you don't understand, helping others, and leading in small groups. For those of you who are chatterboxes, your responsibility is to work on your listening skills and to give others the chance to talk. For you non-talkers, please know that you cannot escape talking. If you are terrified of speaking in class, please come speak to me privately and we can come up with a plan together.

While day-to-day participation is NOT graded officially, this is the work that helps to weigh into your grade should you be on the cusp at the end of the grading period. There will also be a number of graded class discussions throughout the year and I will let you know beforehand which discussions are being graded. Everyone will be expected to participate in those graded class discussions.

Academic Integrity:

Any written work that is copied or plagiarized will automatically earn a failing grade. Please refer to the L-S Code of Conduct for the consequences of subsequent occurrences of cheating.

Classroom Expectations:

1. I expect you to be respectful to me and to one another. Be respectful of other peoples' opinions and be open-minded toward others' differences. **MORE TO COME ON THIS...**
2. I expect you to be on time to class. "On time" means in your seat and ready to learn at the official start time of class give or take a minute. Your bag does not get credit for being on time – *YOU* physically need to be in the classroom. Please bring a note from a teacher if you are coming late from another class.
3. In case of an absence, it is *YOUR* responsibility to ask about work you may have missed and to make arrangements to make up the work. If you have an excused absence on the day a major assignment is due, you should submit it through Google Classroom or give it to me on the day of your return (NOT the next class day!) If you miss a test or a quiz due to an excused absence, you have 2 days to schedule a make-up. If you cut class on the day a major assignment is due (i.e. test, quiz, project, or paper), you will get a ZERO for the assignment—no exceptions!
4. I don't want to see your cell phones out during class. Please make sure that during class it is silenced & put away. I will take it if I see you using it inappropriately during class.

Grading Policy:

You will be graded on a point system. Each assignment will be given a point-value and at the end of the term, your total points will be tabulated and divided by the total number of possible points. (Note: each quarter's overall grade distribution will vary according to the type and number of assignments that are given.)

The following is designed to give you an idea of the point value of various activities and assignments:

Homework – 10-25 pts

Tests and Essays – 100 pts

In-class assignments – 25-50 pts

I'm looking forward to a great year together!