

American Studies Course Syllabus EN3120/30, SO3120/3130

Course Description: This interdisciplinary course pairing meets during two blocks, one with an English teacher and one with a Social Studies teacher, who work together to blend the curriculum and skills from both departments. The course explicitly connects U.S. history to American literature, and engages students by connecting the reading and the writing assignments to the real world. The course addresses two guiding questions: **What is the story of America?** and **How did we get here?** American Studies will be offered for both regular BHS credit as well as for Honors credit, as the course benefits from the perspectives of a wide range of students. Depending on credit requested, assignments will vary in difficulty.

Learning Objectives: Successful students will improve their ability to...

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| * Answer in Social Studies class: | * Answer in English class: |
| <i>What happened?</i> | <i>What is the story?</i> |
| <i>What are/were people thinking?</i> | <i>What is the author trying to show us?</i> |
| <i>Why then and there?</i> | <i>How is the author doing this?</i> |
| <i>Why do we care?</i> | <i>What do we think about this?</i> |
- * Tell a story about each major theme
 - * Identify & explain change over time
 - * Understand chronology & key events
 - * Use evidence to argue
 - * Understand & resolve conflict
 - * Synthesize events into a narrative
 - * Identify, compare, & contrast narratives
 - * Identify & tell a story about change over time
 - * Contextualize the story
 - * Identify & employ point of view & audience
 - * Identify & employ rhetorical & literary devices
 - * Identify & create great stories

Learning Experiences: Students in this course will...

- * Read diverse texts and connect them to thematic narratives about America
- * Learn about current events and understand their relationship to the past
- * Practice seeing and making connections across English and Social Studies course content
- * Make connections between big themes in America and their own lives

Course Outline: Students will begin by researching, writing, and sharing their own “Family Narrative” about how they “got here.” The first quarter will then be a kind of “Bootcamp” of key events in American history and key works of American literature. This quarter will lay the foundation to do thematic American Studies work for the remainder of the year. After first quarter, the course will move thematically, one major narrative at a time - from early America to the present. These units center on broad themes such as:

- Economy:* “Money”
- Immigration:* “Coming to America”
- Domestic Politics:* “Who is in Charge?”
- International Politics:* “War & Peace”
- Identity:* “Who Are We?”

For each thematic unit, we will examine key people, events, texts, and ideas that have created the narratives by which we understand the United States. We will use a variety of texts and resources to help us understand the broader stories of our country. These resources will include literature, nonfiction, primary and secondary historical texts, music, art, film, geography, maps, infographics, current news sources, and personal experiences. All of these sources contribute to the big story - the main narrative - by which we approach our world. In the final quarter students will write an American Studies research paper that focuses on a theme of their own choosing and develops their own narrative of that theme using a variety of texts across time periods.

Course Texts: American Studies will include core texts for junior English, such as *The Great Gatsby*, *The Bluest Eye*, *Fences*, *Song of Solomon*, *Huck Finn*, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, *Walden*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Ragged Dick*, *Outliers*, contemporary short stories, the history textbook *American Adventures*, *Race Reels* films and other documentaries, current news sources, and popular media.