ABOUT THE COURSE - SENIOR THESIS (1 credit)

At the Academy of American Studies, seniors are required to complete a Senior Thesis as part of the American history program. This course is designed to promote academic growth, independent learning, and enhance college ready skills. The Senior Thesis includes a research paper, a portfolio, and a presentation with an audio/visual component to a panel of judges.

The research paper: The students will develop, research, and argue a thesis in an area of interest related to the course themes.

The portfolio: The students will document their learning process from start to completion of the Senior Thesis.

The presentation: The students will present their argument and research, as well as, their growth and learning as a result of the Senior Thesis project to a panel of judges.

Over the course of the semester you will be involved in planning, preparing, and presenting your senior thesis. The Senior Thesis will require independent work outside of the classroom. In class, you will be provided with guidance and resources to assist you in completing your Senior Thesis.

The element of self-directed study is what really lends meaning to the Senior Thesis, and it is what makes it so unique. No one is going to “give” you a topic. Instead, you will be given continuous support and guidance throughout the semester to help you make your paper and presentation as excellent and rewarding as possible.

This course is specifically designed to utilize and strengthen a variety of your skills, but specifically research skills and writing. The ultimate goal of this class is to write an argumentative paper, on a topic that you are interested in. It must be a topic that has some foundation in the themes of politics, government, law, justice, etc. You will have to create an original thesis argument; one that will force you to think ‘outside the box.’ You will be expected to thoroughly research your topic by using various tools. Also, the goal will be to expose you to a variety of research techniques which will help you in your future academic endeavors. You will ultimately produce a work of research that will exemplify the skills that you have mastered throughout the semester.

Your chosen topic must be a contemporary issue and therefore as part of this course, there will be a regular current events reading and writing assignment.

More details about deadlines and assignment components will be distributed later this month.
Student Responsibilities:
The following is what is expected of all students in this class:

a. As a student, I understand that I am expected to follow all the rules that are stated in the student handbook for the Academy of American Studies.
b. I understand that this course is primarily discussion-based. My participation is NOT OPTIONAL, it is MANDATORY. A large portion of my grade will be based upon my participation in discussions and involvement in group work.
c. I understand that my opinion and contributions to the class are valued and important. However, insulting a classmate’s opinion will not be tolerated and will result in the lowering of my grade and possible disciplinary action.
d. I will only use language that is appropriate for class. Any language that is inappropriate will be dealt with accordingly.
e. I understand that I will have to take notes in class regularly. This requires me to bring the necessary materials to class: a binder, a writing utensil, and folder.
f. I understand that I will arrive to class on time, ready to participate in class. Lateness will result in the lowering of my grade significantly.
g. When I am absent, it is my responsibility to make up the homework or class assignments within THREE class days.

Classroom Procedures and Participation
1) Upon entering the classroom, the student should immediately sit down, copy the homework assignment and any other important information from the smartboard; and start any class assignment which may be noted on the smartboard.
2) Students will only gain permission to leave the classroom by signing out and requesting the hall pass.
3) Participation in class is more than physical presence. It means making a meaningful contribution to discussions and course activities. Satisfactory class participation and cooperation is defined as being present with all required class materials, answering questions, offering constructive opinions, and generally cooperating with the teacher and other students in the class.

PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

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<th>1. Prompt and regular attendance in class.</th>
<th>5. Initiates questions.</th>
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<td>2. Prepared for class with assignments and all required class materials.</td>
<td>6. Helps keep your group on task, especially if you are the group leader.</td>
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<td>3. Active and regular participation in all types of class discussions and activities.</td>
<td>7. Your comments add important facts and perspectives or you present outside information.</td>
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<td>4. Listens respectfully when others talk, both in class and in group.</td>
<td>8. Never portrays uncooperative or rude behavior in the class.</td>
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Attendance Policy
1) Every time a student is late to class, that will result in a one-point deduction from the marking period grade. After three cases of being late to class, a phone call will be made home and the situation will be submitted to the Deans. **Definition of Late: If you are not in your seat, when I am ready to begin the class.** Traveling from North to South is not a valid excuse for being late!
2) The student is responsible for any work he/she missed during his/her ABSENCE. If you miss an exam, you must contact the teacher and schedule to make up any assignments within one week of your absence. **If a student is absent on a test day, the student will only be able to make up the exam with a signed parent’s note explaining the reason for the absence.**

Required Materials
1) Every student is required to bring with them to class a notebook (3-ring binder is recommended) and pen. You will also be keeping an in-class portfolio of your key pieces of work and many of your writing assignments. More information to come about this requirement.
Cellphone Policy- Please consult the Academy’s Student Handbook for a clear explanation of this policy. If your phone rings during class, it is subject to confiscation.

Homework Policy- Homework is an essential part of learning success and although homework is not assigned everyday, it is assigned often. It will make up 25% of your grade.

1) All homework must be done in ink. (Black and Blue Only!) NO PENCIL!!! All homework must be written or typed and legible. The homework assignment must be submitted on 8 ½ x 11 paper. If an assignment is unreadable, it will not be evaluated for homework credit. If its looks like it was done on the train, bus, or at lunch, it will receive a zero!

2) All homework must be handed in for it to receive credit. Late or incomplete homework will be penalized and only receive partial credit.

3) Students who are found to be involved in copying of homework will receive no credit for that homework assignment and will not be given the opportunity to make it up.

Extra Help and Tutoring- I will be available every Wednesday from 12noon until 1pm for supporting you in this course.

Cheating & Plagiarism- Any student involved in the act of cheating on any type of assignment or exam will be penalized with an unchangeable zero. Any assignment that is proven to have examples of plagiarism will result in a failing grade. One sentence being copied constitutes Plagiarism!

Resources/Textbook- You will receive supplementary material in the form of documents and additional sources throughout the semester.

Writing Portfolio- Writing is a critical component of this course. We set out as a goal to improve your skills in writing for Social Studies to be college ready. To achieve this goal, you will maintain a Writing Portfolio over the course of the school year. This task is a component of overall grade for the course. You will receive more information and details about this assignment in the coming weeks. Students will engage in regular, meaningful formal and/or informal writing tasks in this Senior Thesis class and/or at home. The tasks will be based upon the following objectives to improve student writing:

1. Students will be able to engage in formal writing assignments that require utilization of all stages of the writing process.
2. Students will be able to choose and use a relevant pre-writing strategy that will help them to prepare for the assignment.
3. Students will be able to engage in revision in the following areas:
   a. fluent and precise transitions between sentences, ideas, and paragraphs
   b. appropriate organization and order of words, sentences and paragraphs within an essay
      i. specificity and relevance of topic
      ii. introduction that conveys the subject and purpose through a precise and well-maintained, tightly focused thesis statement
      iii. unified and coherent body that contains appropriate and adequate detail
      iv. conclusion that summarizes, restates the topic, or goes further to make a final statement on the topic
   c. addition of details and support
   d. use of teacher and/or peer feedback to improve the piece
4. Students will be able to engage in teacher and/or peer conferences during any or all stages of the writing process.
5. Students will be able to evaluate their own writing according to established criteria and rubrics.
6. Students will be able to maintain neatly organized writing portfolios for use in tracking their growth as maturing writers.
Grading Policy:
Full Length Assessments: Tests, Projects, Papers - 50%
Mini – Assessments: Quizzes, Classwork, Homework, Portfolio - 25 %
Student Engagement: Class Participation - 15%
Effort, Progress, and/or Growth – 10%

-Students will receive 3 marking period (benchmark) grades throughout the semester.
-These grades will indicate the student’s level of performance at that point in the semester.
-The student’s grades are cumulative. The grade is calculated by the evaluation of the cumulative work from February through each grading period.
-For example, the May report card grade reflects all assignments and assessments from February through April. The June report card grade reflects all assignments and assessments from February through June.
-Only the final report card grade (distributed at the end of the school year in June) will be recorded on the student’s permanent record. This grade will reflect the student’s overall performance from February through June.
-This final grade will also be the credit bearing grade. Upon successfully completing the course with a passing grade of 65 or higher, the student will earn one credit for the course for the Spring 2015 semester.

HOMEWORK #1 DUE:______________________________________________________________

Part 1: Sign Up For Engrade!

http://www.engrade.com/students
Part 3: Please return the following form signed, acknowledging that you have read and understand the above rules and regulations. Please address any questions or concerns to me as soon as possible. The proceeding pages should remain in the student’s notebook for the duration of the year.

Cut and return to Mr. Randle with all appropriate signatures and information

Student’s Name (Printed)_______________________________________________________________

Student Signature___________________________________________________________________

Parent/Guardian’s Name (Printed)________________________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Signature______________________________________________________________

Telephone Number(s) that Parent/Guardian can be reached at

____________________________________________________________________________________

Email Address that Parent/Guardian can be reached at

____________________________________________________________________________________

Does the student have access to the internet for school-related assignments? (Y or N) _____________