

**Teacher: Michael Ditmore**  
**mjditmore@comcast.net**  
**Maybeck High School**

## **Syllabus: US History**

### **Course Description**

US history is a two-semester course designed to acquaint students with the major themes and issues of the history of the United States. After a brief review of events leading to 1776, US History covers the period between the founding of the Constitution to the present. Units within each of our two semesters will focus closely on the following: the creation of the Constitution and the situation of the US at the time of its founding; US foreign relations; the African American experience of slavery and reconstruction; the growth of industry; class struggle and the labor movement; the struggles over immigration; US foreign policy during and after the Spanish American War; the boom and bust of the 1920s; the Great Depression and the New Deal; the wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; transformation of the US during and after WW II; foreign policy from the Cold War to the present; the Civil-Rights struggle; and the legacy of all of the above in the current situation in which the US finds itself.

In all of our studies, we will undertake special focus on the role of geography, ecology, technology, religion, race, and gender when each becomes appropriate and germane. We will also always give attention to the roles of government, Supreme Court decisions, presidential policy and the struggle between the three branches of government as well as the evolution of political parties.

### **Course Goals.**

- Students will be expected to engage in an active, critical inquiry into the nature and role of history and the writing of history.
- Students will come out of the course with a stronger grasp of US and world geography and the role played by geography, ecology, and topography in global politics and development.
- Students will emerge with a broader understanding of the interconnectedness of the US and other nations, our role in global politics, and the nature of global politics by having engaged in a study of the origins and development of the United States into a world power in a densely, increasingly interconnected web of nations.
- Students will gain an increased understanding of the nature of, and of the interpretation of, primary and secondary historical sources.
- Students will improve their understanding of the federal and state institutions which affect their lives, their role in an electoral democracy, of the Constitution and its role in our government, of the relationship between political events and their own lives.
- Students will learn about the many conflicts—religious, cultural, racial, regional, and political, which have roiled our society and shaped us as a people.
- Students will learn about the growth of technology, industry, and consumerism and about the effects of technology on the US economy, but also about its effects on people, on politics, and on the land.
- Students will have read and engaged intellectually with the essential primary texts of US history including the *Constitution*, the *Declaration of Independence*, and many others.

### **Required Readings:**

- Appleby, Joyce et al. *American Vision*. Glencoe McGraw-Hill.
- Course handouts including, a variety of primary and secondary sources: historical essays, journalism contemporary to events we will discuss, political cartoons, diaries, poetry, art, and short stories.

### **Final Grade components:**

- 25%: In-class participation, homework, and discussion of assigned readings
- 25%: quizzes, in class exams: quizzes and tests
- 25%: written assignments and/or research paper
- 25%: comprehensive final exam