

**Plano East Senior High School**  
**American Studies**

**Welcome to AMSTUD!**

We are so excited that you are here with us for the 2022-2023 school year. We think it is more important to let you know who we (your teachers) are and what this class is about. You will find lots of information below, but the most important thing for you to know is that our class is a place of kindness and mutual respect. It is true that we have high expectations for your success, but respect for one another so that our room is a place where everyone feels welcome is our highest expectation of all.

**Course Description:**

American Studies combines AP US History and English III AP Language to create a daily two-hour cultural experience that enables students to simultaneously investigate the connections between literature and history. Students will explore the history of the United States with special emphasis placed on the study of rhetorical styles and structures of important historical documents and readings. The course focuses on cultural accomplishments as manifested in art, architecture, literature, music and other visual media. Students will learn and practice the craft of writing through various products, eventually focusing on the essay formats necessary for success on both the AP US History and AP English Language exams. American literature of all genres will be incorporated into the curriculum within the structure of historical study and will be used as a method of enhancing the depiction of historical time periods. At the culmination of the class, students may choose to take both the AP US History and/or the AP English Language and Composition exam to possibly earn college credit.

**Curriculum:**

The American Studies curriculum requires independence and self-discipline. Assignments are often long-range, without daily monitoring by the teacher. Tests are multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay format. Students should also expect reading checks as well as individual and group projects with an emphasis on creativity and depth of thought. The level of required reading ranges from on-level textbook copy to challenging works by such writers as Hawthorne and Salinger. For their study of US History, students will read the textbook for information and other primary and secondary sources to learn the skills of analysis and synthesis. The literary emphasis is on American literature – fiction and nonfiction, drama and poetry. Students may choose to buy their own copies of novels to be studied in class, but a copy will be provided for them.

**Grading**

Plano ISD secondary schools work on a nine-week grading period. The semester final examination for students in grades 9–12 will count 20% of the semester grade. The semester final grade will be calculated using a weighted average of 40% of 1st nine weeks + 40% of 2nd nine weeks + 20% of the semester exam. Major grades (essays, tests, projects) are worth 60% of the nine weeks' grade; daily grades (outlines, quizzes, etc) are worth 40%. Grades throughout a grading period can be viewed in a single teacher's gradebook, but the final grade at the end of each grading period will be reflected in the gradebook for each teacher. For example, if you make an 88 in the course, you receive an 88 for your History grade and an 88 for your English grade.

## **Google Classroom**

Each of you should sign up for the Google Classroom that corresponds to your schedule:

Alexussell 1/2: bsh366u

Alexussell 3/4: ez4pm7h

Alexussell 5/6: bcvsz46

Bower/Rooke 1/2: 3gazbbo

Bower/Rooke 3/4: wfjg3u6

Bower/Rooke 5/6: jgkoxi2

Most of our course materials can also be accessed on our American Studies Website:

[www.americanstudiespesh.weebly.com](http://www.americanstudiespesh.weebly.com)

## **Sustained Silent Reading**

A wealth of research indicates the benefit of student choice when it comes to reading. In American Studies, time to read will be honored with an hour a week of class time provided for students to select their own reading material and read for pleasure. Again, studies show that the balance of guided reading instruction paired with student-selected reading prepares students to become life-long readers as well as successful college students. Please contact us for access to this research, and please discuss reading with your student – and read along with them!

## **Plagiarism and Academic Honor**

We find it helps to address the issue of plagiarism from the outset. Plagiarism, as defined by the [MLA Handbook for the Writers of Research Papers](#), consists of “us[ing] another person’s ideas or expressions in your writing without acknowledging the source...A writer who fails to give appropriate acknowledgement when repeating another’s wording or particularly apt term, paraphrasing another’s argument, or presenting another’s line of thinking is guilty of plagiarism” (26). Plagiarism can be inadvertent, such as a misattribution, or a brief paraphrase that is unacceptably close to the original.

## **Controversial Topics**

Aristotle says that it is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain an idea without necessarily adopting it. That has always been a guiding principle of learning in our program when we deal with controversial topics, sensitive subjects, and/or deeply held beliefs. When that happens, know that we will adhere to all state laws and district guidelines around such matters. Most important to us is that our students feel loved and accepted in our class. Kindness, mutual respect, and empathy are usually the best principles to live by when dealing with other human beings, kids.

## Syllabus—Fall Semester

### Genesis of a New Nation (1491 – 1783)

Students will explore the birth of the American identity by studying the foundational mythology and how it develops through the course of European exploration and early colonization. Students consider multiple, often conflicting definitions of identity, and examine how community is developed through environmental factors. Students will also examine how the creation of cultural myth creates a shared identity which gives purpose to a community.

*Students will be able to independently use their learning to...*

- Analyze sources and impacts of the American identity.
- Define and evaluate the role of myth in developing national identity.
- Analyze works of the humanities as representations of American character and identity.

### Foundation of a Nation (1781-1848)

Students will understand the challenge of establishing a new nation by analyzing the process from multiple perspectives. Students consider the balance between individual sovereignty and larger groups. Close reading of foundational documents and culture reflected through the Humanities will provide an understanding of how an American identity emerged.

*Students will be able to independently use their learning to...*

- Demonstrate the role of the individual in a free society.
- Analyze works of the Humanities as representations of American character and identity.
- Recognize and explain the development of cultural myth as manifested in the humanities.

### American Exodus (1820-1877)

Students will evaluate the causes and effects of the Civil War in this unit, examining issues such as the struggle for the balance of power and the fallout of conflict. Students examine the struggle that comes with an expanding nation and the relationship between the individual and community. Students will also view the Humanities as a catalyst for reinforcing or challenging the status quo.

*Students will be able to independently use their learning to ...*

- Recognize and explain the evolutionary nature of change and its impact on society.
- Identify and analyze issues of civil war and its effect on society.
- Analyze works of the Humanities as representations of American character and identity.

## Syllabus—Spring Semester

### A Busy America! (1865 - 1919)

Students will analyze the impacts of the rising wealth dichotomy on the social, economic, and political systems of the United States during the Gilded Age. Students explore the effect of movement on the development of the American identity. In addition, close reading and study of the Humanities will lead to an evolving understanding of how individuals define and communicate place and cultural myth.

*Students will be able to independently use their learning to...*

- Analyze the causes and effects of societal shifts.
- Explain how the American Dream is a continually evolving concept.
- Analyze works of the humanities as representations of American character and identity.

### **America Goes Global (1890 – 1929)**

Students will explore the evolving role of America, both at home and on a global stage during this time period. Students will understand how the closing of the Western frontier and evolving global involvement led to a redefinition of American identity. In addition, students will understand the use of the Humanities to provide an outlet for the expression of American diversity.

*Students will be able to independently use their learning to...*

- Evaluate and explain the role of expansion in the redefinition of American Identity and cultural myth.
- Analyze the evolution of increasingly diverse American voice.
- Analyze works of the Humanities as representations of American character and identity.

### **A World in Crisis (1929-1945)**

Students see the impact of change in this unit, both domestically and globally, as they study the impact of both the Great Depression and World War II. Students will also examine the effect of change on political, social, and economic systems as well as the impact of emerging technology. Students continue to examine the impact of societal changes on cultural myth.

*Students will be able to independently use their learning to ...*

- Recognize and evaluate the impact of global interaction on both the individual and society.
- Evaluate the role of crisis in the redefinition of American identity and cultural myth.
- Analyze works of the Humanities as representations of American identity.

### **Living Generationally (1945-Present)**

Students will analyze America's role on the global stage as well as generational definitions of right and wrong and the impact of these differences on American identity. The role of media is evaluated in addition to the responsibility of individuals to society.

*Students will be able to independently use their learning to ...*

- Recognize and evaluate the impact of individuals on the evaluation of society.
- Evaluate when conflict is just and/or necessary.
- Analyze works of the Humanities as representations of American identity.
- Analyze the impact of continual change on the multi-faceted American identity and cultural myth.

**We look forward to working with the American Studies students this year and wish everyone a successful, thought-provoking experience. If a parent needs to contact his or her child's teachers, the most efficient way to do so is through email. Those wishing to speak directly to the teacher may call the school at (469) 752-9000 and leave a voicemail for the teacher who will return your call as soon as possible.**

**Thank you!**

[Kristy.Alexander@pisd.edu](mailto:Kristy.Alexander@pisd.edu)

[Caryn.Rooke@pisd.edu](mailto:Caryn.Rooke@pisd.edu)

[Joseph.Russell@pisd.edu](mailto:Joseph.Russell@pisd.edu)

[Janessa.Bower@pisd.edu](mailto:Janessa.Bower@pisd.edu)