

World Studies, 2018-2019

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CURRICULUM

Fall Semester

Students will spend the first two quarters of the year learning to analyze texts from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. At the center of the course will be *MS. PIGIE*. Each letter represents a particular “bucket” lens, or perspective, within the field of Social Studies. Students will investigate sources, synthesize claims, and produce justification through the lens of each conceptual bucket.

- Morals and ethics
- Society and institutions
- Politics and government
- Intellect and learning
- Geography and human-environment interaction
- Innovation and technology
- Economy and development

Spring Semester

Having broadened and deepened their conceptual understandings, students will spend the 2nd semester in a collaborative and competitive simulation. They will “do” history by creating and managing civilizations. Each *CivTeam* will evaluate and select a settlement site, build an economy, and organize a government. Teams will confront challenges that human civilizations have historically faced – whether to rely upon or prohibit slavery, whether to prioritize education over defense, whether to form international pacts or stay self-reliant, whether to intervene in others’ affairs or remain isolationist. Students will collaborate to make important decisions, and they will have to defend each one, often through exercises in argumentative writing.

ASSESSMENT & GRADING

Professionalism (10% of quarterly grade)

- Students will earn professionalism grades for maintaining well-organized classroom binders [discussed on the next page] and for complying with classroom agreements and school norms (ex. refraining from cell-phone use, avoiding off-topic side conversations, staying alert, etc.).

Homework (10% of quarterly grade)

- Homework assignments for this course are *generally* (but not *always*) “finish-the-work-you-started” tasks. When a classwork assignment stretches beyond the period of our meeting, then students are required to complete the task at home. Assignments are collected and evaluated using the following rubric: A (complete, on time, and impressively accurate); B (complete, on time, and mostly accurate); C (diligently attempted and partially accurate); D (half-attempted); or F (not yet attempted).

Summative assessments (80% of grade)

- Summative assessments are challenging end-of-unit performance or product tasks. They may include unit tests, map assessments, current events quizzes, document analyses, ACES essays, projects, etc.
- If a student’s summative assessment grade is higher than his/her homework grade for the unit, then the homework grade will be dropped and replaced with the assessment grade.
- Assessments will usually occur every 2-3 weeks. Students will often receive test items in advance, along with rubrics. Additionally, many assessments will invite students to use their notes/materials.
- Re-take and revision opportunities will be available to help students boost assessment scores. BUT, in order to be eligible for a re-take or revision a student must have earned an advanced professionalism grade for the unit (an A or B).

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MATERIALS

Binders

I would appreciate it if students came prepared with basic necessities – pens/pencils, paper, and maybe a folder to carry materials to and from school. That said, I will always have a supply of writing instruments and paper for students to use. I will also provide new in-class binders for every student. If a student is absent, then I will place the materials of that day's meeting in his/her binder. There will be a *model binder* in the room. I expect students to keep their materials organized in accord with the *model binder*. I will randomly select binders at different times for evaluation. Binder evaluation score will factor into professionalism grade.

Website

Assuming it continues to operate smoothly, I will keep an updated class website (www.prather.yolasite.com) where students and parents may access documents, assignments, and announcements.

Video-clip disclaimer and justification

Much of the content of this course is strengthened by film clips and documentary footage. Video clips will be shown purely for instructional purposes, not for entertainment. That said, I want you to know that some clips – as well as some texts and speeches – do present the harsher realities of history (i.e. oppression, war, injustice, anger). Some of those presentations include profanity and difficult imagery. The clips, documents, and speeches are part of the investigation of history. They help students gain a more authentic understanding of the past when that past feels foreign or inaccessible. I hope you will trust my professional judgment in selecting these materials and in helping students to process the difficult content therein. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this further.

BEHAVIOR PLAN

Guidelines for success

- *Build belonging.* Accept that everyone in the room has dignity and value; act in a way that makes them know it.
- *Choose kindness.* Civility is always in our power, even when agreement, fondness, or friendship is not.
- *Work hard.* Smart is great, but hard work is greater. Be obsessed with improvement, and put in the work.
- *Fall forward.* You can fail backward by giving up, or you can fail forward by *learning from struggle*. Do the latter.

Decompression spaces

We all have moments and circumstances that pull us away from our responsibilities or block our concentration. When a student feels blocked from the lesson – or when teachers observe that a student is pulling away (talking too much, sleeping, ignoring directives, or disengaging from the work), even *after* a series of polite redirections—then there are two steps to take to help the kid “unblock” and refocus.

The first is the 5-Spot. The 5-Spot is a desk in the corner of the room. Kids can spend 5 minutes there away from the lesson. They can sit silently, write reflections, draw, or read from materials related to social-emotional learning. In this space a kid needs to consider whether he/she is able to re-focus, rejoin the lesson, and comply with directives. There are no lectures or conferences at the 5-Spot, but each trip there *is* documented.

If a student determines or shows that he/she cannot re-commit to the lesson, or if a student really needs some decompression (cool-down, reflection) time outside of the classroom, then the Bridge will be used. The Bridge space is simply a chair in the neighboring classroom. Same deal: When a kid is sent to the Bridge, he/she needs to make a re-engagement decision – either “I can re-enter and re-focus” or “I don’t have it today.” If a student is unable to re-commit to the class norms and tasks, then the student will be dismissed with a referral.

Immediate referrals

There are some circumstances in which a student will be dismissed immediately with a referral *rather* than spend time in the 5-Spot or Bridge : a) physically confronting another student; b) aggressively berating, insulting, or threatening another student in the room, such that removal is in the best interest for all individuals; c) indicating a sincere intent to fight or cause harm to another student later in the day; d) showing up to class under the influence of drugs or alcohol; or e) outbursting by throwing furniture or classroom items that could cause harm.