

US History

Course Syllabus

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Conference Periods: 1st and 7th

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Course Description

Studying history is about discovering and learning from our past so that we might act more humanely in the present. This year we will focus on 20th century US History along with current events. Issues concerning race and civil rights, women and gender, labor and social class, immigration and war, will feature prominently. Our primary focus will be on developing our own historical insights and a critical consciousness that will equip us to use what we learn about our history to act with more compassion and empathy today.

Supplies Needed

- You may need a notebook and writing utensils to take notes and complete assignments.
- You will need a folder or binder in which to keep reading materials and assignments.
- You are expected to keep all materials, all semester, for your end-of-semester portfolio (see grading procedures for more information about this).
- I will keep a class set of textbooks. You will not need a personal textbook.

Class Policies

- “Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.” – *The 14th Dalai Lama*
- For our grading procedures, please see the detailed information on the following pages.
- No cell phones are allowed in the classroom. Ever. If I see your phone I will mark you absent.

Most Importantly

Our goal is to better understand our world and ourselves so that we might be more *critical, empathetic, and compassionate* human beings. If we cannot or do not apply and act according to what we learn and experience, with the goal of making the world more just for all, there is no point to any of this. With that in mind, I want us to learn, grow, and have fun.

CALVIN AND HOBBS

By Bill Watterson

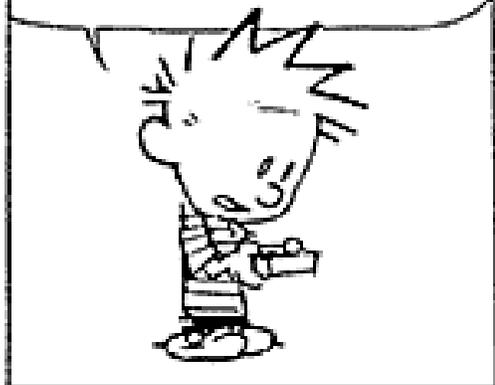
TODAY FOR SHOW AND TELL I'VE BROUGHT A TINY MARVEL OF NATURE: A SINGLE SNOWFLAKE.



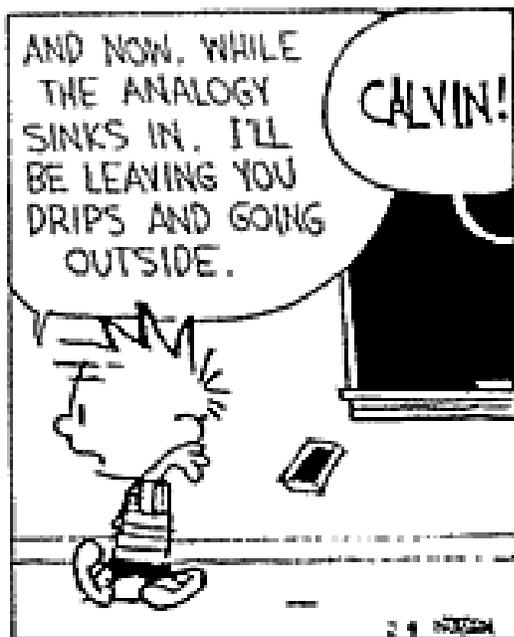
I THINK WE MIGHT ALL LEARN A LESSON FROM HOW THIS UTTERLY UNIQUE AND EXQUISITE CRYSTAL...



...TURNS INTO AN ORDINARY, BORING MOLECULE OF WATER, JUST LIKE EVERY OTHER ONE, WHEN YOU BRING IT IN THE CLASSROOM.



AND NOW, WHILE THE ANALOGY SINKS IN, I'LL BE LEAVING YOU DRIPS AND GOING OUTSIDE.



Grading Procedures (Note: my “grading procedures” are not traditional or Standards Based Grading)

Learning to make mindful and responsible decisions and to examine their impact on your learning and actions are central goals of this class. Thus, neither letter grades nor points nor reference to, so-called, standards, will be used to assess individual assignments or daily work in this course. Rather, together we will look at evidence demonstrating what you have learned and the work you have done, while also examining why you make the decisions that you do and how you use what you are learning to guide your actions.

Your work in this class means much more than a grade, but as a high school course, a grade must be assigned. So, your final grade will be determined through a holistic process using the *3P grading system*. This system is designed to look at your overall development in the course rather than taking an average of individual grades. Specifically, it looks at your **participation, progress, and performance** throughout the entire semester.

Individual assignments, daily work, and tests will be assessed through a variety of methods including feedback from myself and/or your peers, as well as through self-reflection. In addition to written commentary, I will use the **plus (+), check (√), and minus (-)** system, where a plus (+) means you have exceeded the requirements for this assignment, or in other words, you’ve not only met the requirements, you’ve surprised me, or you’ve done something unique and interesting beyond what is expected; a check (√) means you have met the requirements; and a minus (-) means you have not yet satisfied the assignment requirements. *If you earn a minus (-), you must revise your work until you earn at least a check (√).* **I accept late work and multiple revisions unless otherwise noted for specific assignments.** Your ability to complete work on time will count positively toward your participation grade while repeatedly completing assignments late will have the opposite effect.

Feedback and assessment for individual assignments will not be communicated via Infinite Campus. I will not be posting any assignments, feedback, or assessments on Infinite Campus. All assignments, feedback, and assessment will be shared in-person, in writing, through Google Classroom, or via email.

Your final grade for the course will be determined by your participation, progress, and performance using the following definitions of each letter grade:

- "A" means "Above and beyond"
- "B" means "Basically fine"
- "C" means "Could've done better"
- "D" means "Didn't try"
- "F" means "Forget about it!"

Please note that most of us are "B" and "C" performers in most of the things we do. Most employees are "B" and "C" workers. Most of us attain "B"- and "C"-level skills in our favorite hobbies. A grade of "A" is reserved for excellence "above and beyond" the norm. My “basically fine” expectations regarding your participation, progress and performance are high and are explained below. Consider how you can go “above and beyond” these expectations if you desire an “A.”

Participation – 50% of your final grade:

Participation is the biggest factor in achieving success in this class and in life. Engaged students can’t help but learn. So, to reach a rich understanding of the content we will be studying, you must be well-prepared for class and participate as an active learner. This means that I expect you to:

- Come to class every day; don't be late! You can't participate if you are not present.
- Follow directions the first time they are given. If you have questions, check the resources available to you before you ask me for assistance.
- Turn in work in a timely manner, both your original assignments and revisions.
- Share regularly. Give good feedback. Ask good questions.
- Take ownership of your results; be accountable; don't blame.

- Use the texts we read and content we study to help inform your decisions and actions.
- Ask for help when you need it; use the advice I give you.
- Engage in ideas outside of class when required.

Progress – 30% of your final grade:

Progress is most simply defined by what you have learned over the course of the semester. I expect you to leave the class at the end of the semester with ideas and skills you did not have when you entered the class.

Otherwise, why bother taking the class? This means that progress will be assessed differently for every student because each of you enters this class with your own sets of experiences and skills. I will be looking at how well you can articulate what you are learning, as well as how your skills have progressed.

Performance – 20% of your final grade:

Performance is the quality of the work you do for this class. Obviously, this means that at the very least, you meet the criteria set forth for each assignment. High quality work demonstrates your willingness to try out new approaches to learning and engagement with the content, and to try out new ideas, take risks, and thoughtfully explore the ideas behind the purpose for each assignment. It should be apparent that assignments you submit are thoughtfully created. Work should not be rushed at the last minute in an effort to just get them done. Proof read your work. Ask for help when you need it. Turn in error-free, polished assignments. Cite your sources when you reference a text or other sources. *Plagiarism is a serious breach of trust and will not be tolerated.*

The Process for End-of-Semester Grades:

You will be an active participant in assigning your final grade. This means that **you need to keep all of your work, as well as the feedback provided by your peers and me.** You will write reflections that address your participation, progress, and performance. You will be asked to assign yourself a letter grade for each of 3P categories and to provide evidence to back up your grades. In turn, I will review your collection of work and reflections, and I will also assign a letter grade for each of the three categories. I will then calculate your final grade by averaging the two scores in each category, weighing each category according to the above criteria, and adding each of the scores to arrive at your final letter grade. The following chart demonstrates what this might look like:

| | Participation (50%) | Progress (30%) | Performance (20%) |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Student Grade | A (4.0) | B (3.0) | B (3.0) |
| Teacher Grade | B (3.0) | A (4.0) | B (3.0) |
| Average | $(4.0 + 3.0) / 2 = 3.5$ | $(3.0 + 4.0) / 2 = 3.5$ | $(3.0 + 3.0) / 2 = 3$ |
| Multiply by Weight | $3.5 \times .5 = 1.75$ | $3.5 \times .3 = 1.05$ | $3 \times .2 = .6$ |
| Final Overall Grade | $1.75 + 1.05 + .6 = 3.4$ (B) | | |

Using the traditional 4.0 grading scale, an A would fall between 4.0 – 3.67; a B would fall between 3.66 – 2.67; a C would fall between 2.66 – 1.67; a D would fall between 1.66 - .67.

You will be immediately eligible for an F, and lose all rights to negotiate your grade, if you:

- Are absent 15 or more times.
- Are missing 5 or more assignments at the end of the semester.
- Have received a minus (-) on 5 or more assignments and have not revised and improved them by the end of the semester.

For more information on the 3P Grading System, check out the Teaching That Makes Sense website:
<https://ttms.box.net/shared/static/9mz5bkrdze.pdf>