



RANGER COLLEGE  
STEPHENVILLE, TEXAS

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**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**American History: Beginnings to Reconstruction**

**HIST 1301**

**3 credit hours**

**INSTRUCTOR:**

**Meghan Clark**

INSTRUCTOR: Meghan Clark  
EMAIL: [mclark@newcastleisd.net](mailto:mclark@newcastleisd.net)  
OFFICE: Room 211, Newcastle ISD  
PHONE: (940) 846-3531  
HOURS: Conference Period, 1:00 – 1:50 PM

### **I. Texas Core Curriculum Statement of Purpose**

Through the Texas Core Curriculum, students will gain a foundation of knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, develop principles of personal and social responsibility for living in a diverse world, and advance intellectual and practical skills that are essential for all learning.

### **II. Course Description**

This is a course in United States history stressing the planning and development of the English Colonies in America, the struggle for independence and the establishment of the Constitution, national territorial expansion, the rise of Jacksonian Democracy, the slavery controversy, the Civil War and Reconstruction.

### **III. Required Background or Prerequisite**

Successful completion of required placement testing.

### **IV. Required Textbook and Course Materials**

Brands, Breen, Williams, and Gross. *American Stories: A History of the United States*. Pearson Publishing, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2018.  
ISBN: 0135233143

### **V. Course Purpose**

Students will, via examination of primary and secondary sources, develop a deeper understanding of U.S. history from the early modern period through Reconstruction.

### **VI. Learning Outcomes**

[Include the course's Learning Outcomes as listed in the ACGM.]

### **VII. Core Objectives**

This course meets the following of the six Core Objectives established by Texas:

- Critical Thinking Skills (CT)** – Creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis; evaluation and synthesis of information
- Communication Skills (COM)** – effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication
- Empirical and Quantitative Skills (EQS)** – The manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions
- Teamwork (TW)** – The ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal
- Social Responsibility (SR)** – Intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities
- Personal Responsibility (PR)** – The ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making

### **VIII. Methods of Instruction**

Instruction will occur via lecture, group discussion, individual projects, and team projects.

### **IX. Methods of Assessment**

Your grade in this course will be earned as follows:

1. There will be three unit exams (not including the final). Each exam will have objective and narrative sections, which will include multiple choice, matching, maps, identifications, and short essay questions. I will administer make-up exams if necessary, but only in instances of excused absences. Make-up exams may have a different format than the original test.
2. I will assign weekly discussion readings from a variety of primary and secondary sources during the course of the semester. You are responsible for turning in a short response to each of the readings. Formatting will be as follows: one to two pages, double-spaced, in Times New Roman 12-point font, standard margin settings. These may be submitted in a hard copy at the beginning of class or via Google Classroom.

I will give you the primary source material you are responsible for reading at least one week before the response is due. I will

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also give you a sample document in order to help you understand what I am looking for in your responses. In essence, I want you to accomplish three things in each reading response: briefly summarize the reading, relate the reading to what you have learned during the class lectures and discussions, and give me your opinion of the reading/author (this does *not* mean your opinion on whether or not this was a good assignment).

You will not have weekly readings on weeks when an exam is given.

3. You will complete a research project over a topic related to the subject matter of the course. See the “Research Project” section for specific information.
4. The final exam is required. Be there.
5. I expect you to participate in class. We will have discussions over the course material during class, and I will also have you do some work together in small groups. I expect you to listen attentively, ask thoughtful and meaningful questions, and participate fully in any group assignments. In order to ensure full participation, you should complete all assigned readings *before* class.
6. Late work is unacceptable. I expect you to turn in all assignments on time, and therefore will deduct 10 points from your grade for each day an assignment is overdue. If you are having issues that prevent you from completing your work promptly, please come talk to me before/after class or after school. In the event of an excused absence, you must let me know you will be absent ahead of time, and we will work out an alternate due date for your assignment. You may tell me about excused absences before/after class.
7. All work in this course must be your own unless otherwise specified.
8. The grading scale for this class is as follows: A= 100-90%, B= 89.9-80%, C= 79.9-70%, D= 69.9-60%, F= 59.9% and ↓. Any rounding of grade averages is at the instructor’s discretion.

9. The point total is as follows:

3 unit exams	100 points each	300
10 primary source readings	50 points each	500
1 research project	200 points	200
Class participation	50 points	100
<u>Final Exam</u>	<u>150 points</u>	<u>100</u>
Total possible points		1200

### **X. Course/Classroom Policies**

#### **A. ATTENDANCE/LATENESS:**

Classroom attendance is checked at the beginning of class. Regular and punctual attendance in all classes is considered essential for optimum academic success. It is the responsibility of the instructor to keep an accurate and comprehensive record of attendance.

All work and/or assignments missed because of an absence must be completed within two weeks. An official absence during the two-week period does not extend the deadline for the completion of assignments.

#### **B. CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION:**

Class participation will include daily work and other assignments as required.

#### **C. MISSED MAJOR EXAMS/MAKE-UP POLICY**

If the student has to miss a major exam for circumstances beyond his/her control, a make-up time will be scheduled with the instructor or facilitator at that campus. No make-ups will be given during class. A grade of zero (0) will be given for any missed exam that is not made up. A maximum grade of 70 will be given to all make-up work not completed within 2 weeks after the student returns to class. It is the sole responsibility of the student to acquire lecture notes or any other class materials covered during his/her absence.

D. ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

Any student caught cheating, whether by the instructor, facilitator or another student, on any exam, report or project, whether in the classroom or elsewhere will earn a grade of “0” in the assignment without opportunity to retake the test or re-do the assignment.

E. STUDENT BEHAVIOR:

I am delighted to have you in my class, and I will do my utmost to treat you with respect. I expect the same consideration from you. Please treat me and your fellow students with courtesy at all times. Anyone who exhibits disruptive behavior that prevents his/her fellow students from learning will be asked to leave the classroom. Disruptive behavior includes obvious inattention, using electronic equipment inappropriately, and talking during lectures or when someone else is speaking during group discussions. Finally, during class discussions, remember to remain courteous even if you disagree with a fellow student. As in all academic disagreements, the conversation may become spirited, but should always remain civil.

Please remember that when any activity of an individual in the class impedes the learning process of any other individual in the class, the individual causing the disruption is subject to immediate dismissal from the class and may be dismissed from the course. Once dismissed from the course by the instructor, either for excessive absences or for disruptive behavior, there is no reinstatement.

F. CLASSROOM POLICIES

1. Cell phones are to be turned off before class. Other electronic devices are not permitted with the exception of a laptop/tablet for note-taking and other classroom activities.
2. Profanity and derogatory remarks will not be tolerated in class.
3. Students are expected to keep up with their textbooks, handouts and other materials.
4. All make-up work must be completed before the last class.

G. AVAILABLE SUPPORT SERVICES: ADA STATEMENT:

Ranger College provides a variety of services for students with learning and/or physical disabilities. The student is responsible for making the initial

contact with the Ranger College Counselor. It is advisable to make this contact before or immediately after the semester

begins. Tutors and/or tutorial assistance will be provided as needed.

### **XI. Course Outline/Schedule**

*Please note that this may be changed at the discretion of the instructor. You will be informed in advance of any changes to due dates.*

Week 1, August 20-24

Introduction of Syllabus (on Friday, 8/17)

Subject: Early Modern Europe

Central Question: How did the Renaissance and the Reformation affect change in the religious and political structures of Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries?

Week 2, August 27-31

Subject: Early Modern Europe, continued

Central Question: How did the English Civil War and the rise of absolute monarchies lay the groundwork for a new form of government in England?

**8/31: Reading Response #1 due**

Week 3, September 3-7 (off Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup> for Labour Day)

Reading: Chapter 1, New World Encounters – Preconquest-1608

Central Question: What factors influenced Spanish and Portuguese exploration of the New World?

**9/07: Reading Response #2 due**

Week 4, September 10-14

Reading: Chapter 2, England's New World Experiments – 1607-1732

Central Question: What religious experiences shaped the diversity of English colonies in the New World? What other factors were prominent in the development of English colonies?

**9/14: Reading Response #3 due**

Week 5, September 17-21

Reading: Chapter 3, Putting Down Roots: Opportunity and Oppression in Colonial Society, 1619-1692

Central Question: Which groups most stood to benefit in colonial society and why? Which groups were most marginalized?

**9/17: Exam 1**

Week 6, September 24-28

*Pivotal Moment - Salem Witch Trials*

Central Question: What familial and social structures in Puritan New England led to the dramatic tensions of the Salem witch trials?

**9/28: Reading Response #4 due**

Week 7, October 1-5

Reading: Chapter 4, Experience of Empire: Eighteenth-century America, 1680-1763

Central Question: How did the duelling forces of the Enlightenment and the Great Awakening influence the American predilection towards revolt?

**10/05: Reading Response #5 due**

Week 8, October 9-12

Chapter 5: The American Revolution: From Elite Protest to Popular Revolt, 1763-1783

*Pivotal Moment: Hamilton - Musical and Man*

Central Question: How did issues of class and economic opportunity affect the development and outcome of the American Revolution?

**10/12: Exam II**

Week 9, October 16-19

Chapter 5, continued (Staff Development Week)

**10/19: Reading Response #6 due**

Week 10, October 22-26

Reading: Chapter 6, The Republican Experiment, 1783-1788

Central Question: What competing visions of America arise during the struggle to create and maintain a stable and lasting government during the Constitutional Convention and subsequent ratification?

**10/26: Reading Response #7 due; choose group project topic by Friday**

Week 11, October 29 – November 2

Reading: Chapter 7, Democracy and Dissent: The Violence of Party Politics,

1788-1800, and Chapter 8, Republican Ascendancy: The Jeffersonian Vision, 1800-1814

Central Question: How do the early years of the Republic and the actions of its Founding Fathers shape the nature of American government and society?

**11/02: Reading Response #8 due**

Week 12, November 5-9

Reading: Chapter 9, Nation Building and Nationalism, 1815-1825, and  
Chapter 10, The Triumph of White Men's Democracy, 1824-1840

Central Question: What groups are excluded from the American promise as a result of a growing U.S. economy, immigration to the frontier, and Jackson's ascension to power?

**11/09: Exam III**

Week 13, November 12-16

Reading: Chapter 11, Slaves and Masters, 1793-1861

Central Question: How did the societal restrictions of the South create a closed system in which race, gender, and socioeconomic status defined and limited roles/stations?

**11/16: Reading Response #9 due**

Week 14, November 19-20

Reading: Chapter 12, The Pursuit of Perfection, 1800-1861

Central Question: How do the twin powers of revival and abolitionism shape the religious and social landscape of antebellum America?

**No assignment due this week**

Week 15, November 26-30

Reading: Chapter 13, An Age of Expansionism, 1830-1861 (skip p. 290-292), and  
Chapter 14, The Sectional Crisis, 1846-1861

Central Question: What are the primary factors that push a divided nation towards civil war? Which factors centre around slavery, and which centre around an

alternate vision of the federal system?

**11/30: FIRST DRAFT OF GROUP PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE**

**11/30: Reading Response #10 due**

Week 16, December 3-7

Reading: Chapter 15: Secession and the Civil War, 1860-1865

Central Question: How do the action and motivations of leaders (i.e., Lincoln, Jefferson, and Lee) contrast with the ideals and rationales of soldiers in the trenches on both sides? Is there a coherent rationale on either side?

**No reading response due - work on group projects**

Week 17, December 10-14

Reading: Chapter 15, Secession and the Civil War, 1860-1865, continued

Central Question: In what ways does the Civil War tear apart the fabric of the American republic? How are many of these effects long-lasting or even permanent?

**12/13: GROUP PROJECTS DUE**

**12/13: Final Exam Reflection Paper Due**

Week 18, December 17-19 (Newcastle only)

Watch Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln* and discuss

## **Group Project**

For the fall semester, your project grade will come from a group project. (You may work individually if you choose, although most students in the past have enjoyed working on this in a group setting.) You may have 2-3 members in each group. The group project will build off of what we have learned about the American Revolution and the difficulties of building a national structure from the ground up (so to speak). In order to fulfill the project requirements, your group will create and describe a society that you make up (no cheating—i.e., you can't base your society off of sixteenth-century France and just rename it). You will create a constitution for your society and detail how its government is structured and maintained, including all three main branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial. Finally, you will describe how your society came to be—are they indigenous to the area, a colony of another nation, etc.—and how their origins have affected their government's development. Your description *must* be at least four pages long. Samples of successful projects will be provided for your perusal.

## **XII. Non-Discrimination Statement**

Admissions, employment, and program policies of Ranger College are nondiscriminatory in regard to race, creed, color, sex, age, disability, and national origin.

## **XIII. ADA Statement**

Ranger College provides a variety of services for students with learning and/or physical disabilities. Students are responsible for making initial contact with the Ranger College Counselor, Gabe Lewis (glewis@rangercollege.edu). It is advisable to make this contact before or immediately after the semester begins.

