

American History, 1877 to the Present

Syllabus Part B: Classroom Policies and Expectations

The goal of these policies is to promote a focused, effective environment for the classroom study of history.

The aim is for our shared time together to be both relaxed and engaged, without distractions.

The model for these policies and expectations is a college seminar or a professional, adult business meeting. Learning to be both comfortable and productive in such an environment is an essential preparation for thriving after high school, both at college and in professional life.

All students are expected to be alert, focused, and arrive fully prepared for every in-person class session.

In accord with Indiana Academy policies, including as stated in the Student Handbook, attendance will be taken at the beginning of every class session, and the expectation is that students will be seated and ready for class to begin at the exact scheduled time. Students who are not present, seated, and ready to work with their class materials out and placed in front of them will be marked tardy.

During class, students are expected to be attentive to the work at hand at all times.

Students are not expected to eat or drink during class. If an exception may be warranted for medical or other reasons, please communicate those circumstances to the instructor.

Students are not expected to ask to leave the room to use the bathroom during a class session. While it is a courtesy to excuse a person who politely asks to leave the room, it is equally courteous – and an expectation of professional life – that a person uses the bathroom before a scheduled meeting, if there is any anticipated need.

Of course, in case of an emergency, a student should always be comfortable in politely asking to leave the room, and in case of an emergency any student will of course be excused and assisted as warranted.

Students are not expected to receive a phone call or similar interruption during class time. If an emergency interruption by phone call might be expected, please inform the instructor before class.

Unless otherwise directed by the instructor, before class begins, students should put away and out of sight any laptop, tablet, smart phone or other computer or communication device. Though students are expected to have access to a computer outside of class for reviewing the course Canvas site, including for accessing readings and other source materials for scheduled class discussions, students will not be regularly using computer devices during actual class meetings.

During class, students should only be working with the papers and materials necessary for that class session. Books, worksheets, assignments, and other papers or materials for other classes should be put away and out of sight. It is never acceptable to be doing work for another course once a class session has begun.

Lectures

One or two class sessions per week, on average, will be scheduled lecture sessions. The purpose of these lecture classes is to provide students with essential ideas and information, particularly to help students better understand and potentially respond to the critical historical questions and circumstances being considered. Lecture sessions

are also an opportunity for the instructor to model and demonstrate how a trained professional historian asks and answers historical questions. Finally, lecture sessions are intended to help prepare students to understand and put in context the source materials assigned for subsequent class discussion sessions.

For every lecture class, students will be provided with a hard-copy outline identifying the critical questions being considered and listing the most significant concepts, people, places, dates, events, etc. This outline will also include references to any associated textbook reading, including essential terms (concepts, events, people, etc.) from that reading. For students who miss a given class lecture, a pdf version of this outline will be posted to the course Canvas site, as well as an audio recording of the lecture itself.

All students will be expected to take notes by hand during lecture sessions. Note-taking is an essential skill for both college and professional life after college. Making your own transcript of a spoken formal presentation, such as a lecture – and including your own critical responses! – is a potentially powerful habit for later life. Notes for this class must be taken by hand with pen or pencil on loose-leaf paper (or a removable notebook page), and must include the student's name at the top of at least one side of each written page. (These requirements are because students will be able to use their lecture notes, but only their own, personal handwritten notes, for reference during class examinations. All such lecture notes will need to be attached to the submitted examination response. Any use of notes created by another person will be considered a violation of Indiana Academy academic integrity regulations.) Students who miss a class lecture session can make notes from the relevant audio recording posted to the course Canvas site.

Discussions

One or two classes per week, on average, will be scheduled discussion sessions. The purpose of these sessions is to give students the opportunity to explore and share their own, independent critical responses to the historical questions, sources, and circumstances under consideration. These discussion sessions are an excellent opportunity for students to develop their skills of preparing for meetings, and then speaking effectively and otherwise contributing to a decision-making group conversation. Students are reminded that meeting skills, including effective spoken communication, are essential for maximizing opportunities in college and later professional life.

Class discussion sessions will always be based on primary source materials, almost always posted to the course Canvas site. (Some materials may be distributed as hard copies in class, including during discussion sessions themselves.)

Students are expected to conscientiously read and otherwise consider all assigned source materials prior to a given discussion session. Students are not expected to have fully mastered any reading or other source material before the class session in which that text, image, or other source item is discussed. In many ways, it is the purpose of the discussion itself to identify meanings and clarify significance. However, if students find that they do not understand the basic intent and ideas in a text, image, or other source item, even after in-class conversation, then they have a responsibility to further work on that material – with the help of the instructor during office hours, perhaps – to be sure they are prepared for further classes and examinations.

Students are required to complete a Source Examination document for each assigned source for a given discussion, and will be expected to bring completed Source Examination documents to the relevant scheduled discussion session. This document, including any attached pages, must be completed by hand. Students may also bring printed hard copies of any relevant sources posted to the course Canvas site, but they are not required to do so. Students will also be able to bring any and all of their own, completed Source Examination documents to a relevant examination – though students will not be allowed to bring printed copies of the sources themselves to an examination. (All Source Examination documents used during an examination will need to be attached to the submitted response. Any use of notes created by another person will be considered a violation of Indiana Academy academic integrity regulations.) Blank Source Examination forms will be distributed in class, and a pdf version will be available on the course Canvas site.

Occasionally, students may be asked to turn in their completed Source Evaluation documents at the end of a scheduled discussion. These will be returned by the next class session, potentially with instructor comments. Any student who does not complete the expected Source Evaluation documents for a given discussion, or who submits inadequate Source Evaluation documents when asked, will be considered unprepared for that session. (Remember, discussion grades are evaluated on a basis of preparation, attention, participation, and leadership.)

Examinations

Scheduled in-class examinations will take place roughly every four weeks of the semester. Be sure to review the course calendar to anticipate and be prepared for each evaluation. These tests are an opportunity for students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the course material, and their ability to think independently to answer historical questions.

The specific format of each examination will be shared in advance, and may change over the course of the semester.

Students should arrive for an examination with pens or pencils to handwrite their responses, both short answers and longer essays. Paper for writing responses will be provided by the instructor.

Examinations will be open-notes, but not open-book. That is, students are free to bring and consult their own, personal handwritten lecture notes, handwritten Source Evaluation documents, and any similar notes on the textbook readings, as well as a copy of the official class blank map as supplied by the instructor, and annotated by the student. Students may not use or consult the textbook or actual printed copies of the discussion sources, or any other similar reference materials. If in doubt whether given papers or notes may be used during an examination, consult the instructor in advance. Any use of notes made by or copied from another student may constitute an academic integrity violation. Students will be required to attach all notes to their completed examination. (These notes will be returned with the evaluated examination.)