**Advanced Placement United States History**

**Introductory Information**

May 29, 2013

Dear A.P. Parents,

 You are receiving this letter as your son or daughter has registered to take the Advanced Placement United States History course during the 2013-2014 school year. I will be the teacher of that class, and I want to let everyone know what is expected of the students taking it. Advanced Placement courses are intended to be taught at a college level, and give students an opportunity to take the A.P. exam in May of 2014. The students need to earn a three or higher on a five point scale on this exam to receive A.P. credit at most colleges or universities (some require higher – check the websites of colleges that are being considered). The A.P. exam is a college level exam and is administered and evaluated by the College Board. Additional

information about the exam will be provided to you as the school year progresses.

 To get a head start on this class (and to see who is willing to put in the extra effort needed to do well) there are summer assignments. Each student is expected to read the first three chapters of the textbook. They are then to take detailed notes on chapters 2-3. I have copied off the first four chapters into binders, and a binder has been given to your son or daughter. The summer assignment for this assignment will be collected in 2 phases. The first phase will be the collection of the notes for chapter 2, which is due in my mailbox in the main office at school by the last day of July. The second phase will be the collection of the notes for chapter 3, which are due on the first day of school. Check the Waterford High School webpage for summer office hours. Students need to take care of these binders and should not write in them. A lost or damaged binder will result in a $5 fine. Even by starting these first chapters early, the class will

still need to work through about a chapter a week in order to be ready for the A.P. exam in May.

 Good notes should be taken as there will be tests on these chapters when school starts. These notes need to be hand-written and taken on loose-leaf paper. Staple notes for chapter 2 together with your name and a valid e-mail address that you check on the front page in case I have questions or comments for you. Similarly, staple the notes for chapter 3 together when you turn them in. The A.P. exam tests your knowledge of the general themes of U.S. History, but also your knowledge of specific, detailed information. As such, your notes should be similarly organized. Write all chapter and subsection headings on your notes. Then for every paragraph or two you should have a general note on what those paragraphs were about. Your notes should also include definitions of important terms. Please underline these terms in your notes to help you study from them. A sample of what good notes should look like is posted on my teacher webpage, which can be found under my name on the staff pull-down menu of the Waterford High School webpage. The sample notes are for the beginning of chapter 2, and you will not need to complete this part. Some notes checks are completion grades, and some are quality checks to see if you have defined the most important terms for the chapter. Students who fail to complete either half of the summer assignment by the date it is due, will be dropped from the class.

The work demands and the rewards of A.P. classes are significantly greater than in regular high school classes. In order to be successful, students should expect that at times they will need to spend an hour a day outside of class studying and working on homework. I have made great efforts to lower the outside of class responsibilities of students who take this class, without creating a negative impact on the passage rates on the A.P. exam in May. I will continue to make strides in this direction next year. However, there will still be a great deal of work that will need to be done. If a student is not prepared to put that kind of time and effort into this

course he or she should consider not taking it.

It is important to remember that A.P. U.S. History students are exempt from the one semester American Government course requirement for graduation. If a student makes the decision to drop A.P. U.S. History this summer, he or she will need to be rescheduled into American Government for one semester, and an elective or study hall will need to be selected for the other semester. Also, students who take A.P. U.S. History will not be able to transfer to another class once the drop deadline passes. Students who drop the 2nd semester of A.P. U.S. History will then need to take American Government in the second semester. Due to these reasons, it is important for students to seriously decide if this is a class they are prepared to work hard in. Please take the time to discuss this with your son or daughter and make the best decision possible, considering his or her ability, effort level, and time constraints this coming

school year.

This is as close to a college level course as we can present at this level. To prepare for the A.P. exam, we will emphasize reading, writing, and analytical skills. These skills are important for any student who plans on attending college, regardless if college credit is earned on the A.P. exam in May. For some students, this is the first time in high school that they have really been challenged to think and work hard. Students who have done well in the past without studying hard for tests often struggle in this class. Be advised that grade point averages sometimes suffer depending on a student’s effort and ability. It is important to maintain a minimum of a “C” for the first semester. Students who earn lower 1st semester grades will be asked to transfer to American Government for the second semester. On the other hand, some students see their grade point averages go up due to this class. Advanced Placement classes are graded on a 5.0 scale, rather than the standard 4.0 scale. For example, a “B” semester grade counts as a 4.0 in G.P.A, and an “A” grade would be a 5.0. Up to this point, all students who have earned semester grades of “B” or higher have earned a passing grade of three on the A.P. exam, and over 80% of all of those who have taken the exam in the past several years have passed with a score of 3 or higher (which is significantly higher than state and national averages for this difficult exam). Also, you should know that extra credit does not exist in this class, and

the average grade tends to be a “B” or 4.0.

Parents and students should feel free to contact me at any time with questions about the class or the summer assignments. I will try to check my messages frequently this summer, but will not be able to do so every day. I have two children under the age of 5 to keep me busy and we will be taking a couple vacations away from home. I do promise to get back to everyone who contacts me. My e-mail address is as follows:

*jvogt@waterforduhs.k12.wi.us*

I hope to make this a challenging experience for students, but also one that is enjoyable and one that builds skills that will be helpful in subsequent high school classes and in college.

Sincerely,

Joe Vogt

A.P. U.S. History Teacher

Waterford Union High School