

History and Social Sciences

History Department Curriculum Overview

The goal of the History Department is to encourage thoughtful reflection and independent thinking about historical events through the study of geography, social conditions and categorical contexts. Our focus is global, and as a result we emphasize connections more than isolated facts. In addition, a continuous effort is made to meaningfully connect the past to the present and the present to the past: thawing frozen history and making sense of the contemporary world.

In accordance with the above goal, and unlike any other school in the region, St. Francis requires students to take four years of history. During the first two years of the curriculum, students are introduced to civilizations, cultures, and socio-religious traditions in the ancient and medieval worlds, respectively. In addition to providing a cultural and geographical base, the Culture and Civilization courses in the freshman and sophomore years stress basic research techniques, primary-source textual analysis, and effective written expression. Most classes are conducted in the discussion format, emphasizing respectful interaction.

In the junior year, students take U.S. History or Advanced Placement European History. Seniors take Advanced Placement U.S. History and/or 20th Century elective seminars, which focus on relevant current issues such as law, race, gender, and politics both domestic and international. This culminating year prepares students for college academic work by covering a demanding curriculum that stresses independent reading and research as well as lively and informed classroom discussions.

History Department Course Offerings

Culture and Civilization I (Ancient World) (1 credit)

This is the first part of a two-year World History sequence required for all 9th graders. In this course students begin with an overview of cultural anthropology. Using this as a basis for exploration, students survey world history from its beginnings in Africa and Asia to the advent of the Middle Ages in Europe. Main themes include the borrowings from and blending of cultures, the characteristics of empires, and the reasons for the declines of civilizations. Students will be introduced to several historical tools, including document analysis, religious texts, archeology, and literature. Geography – using many types of maps – is a course component throughout.

Culture and Civilization II (Medieval World) (1 credit)

This course for 10th graders will apply critical thought to the concepts and historical records of cultures and civilizations in medieval global history. Different strands of Christianity, Islam, Vedic theism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, as well as identities associated with ethnicity and socio-economic groups, will be addressed in context. The object is to provide students with tools to act and communicate meaningfully in an interdependent world community. Students will complete two research papers in the course.

United States History (1 credit)

This course will use a chronological narrative approach to examine our nation's past, in order to provide students with a necessary base as they assume the mantle of adult citizenship. The

parameters of the instruction will be from the European contact up until the present day, and students will examine common themes (government, economics, religion, war, society, and culture) across time to gain an understanding of how the past impacts the present. Skill development will stress coherent written and oral expression, researching in a time of technological change, and clear reasoning and interpretation. Class requirements will include a significant amount of reading and formal writing assignments.

AP United States History (1 credit)

Prerequisite: AP European History; permission of the department

Enrollment in this class is contingent upon successful completion of a summer reading assignment

AP U.S. History covers the spectrum of American history from pre-Columbian days to the present. Using chronological and thematic approaches to the material, this course exposes students to extensive primary and secondary sources and to the historiographical interpretations of various scholars. Thoughtful class participation and written assignments will be crucial to success in this course. Students are expected to take the AP U.S. History exam in May.

AP European History (1 credit)

Prerequisite: permission of the department

Enrollment in this class is contingent upon successful completion of a summer reading assignment

This year-long course is designed to be a rigorous survey class of modern European history from the Renaissance to the post-World-War-II period. Political, social, and cultural dimensions of the complex that is European history will be analyzed, with particular emphasis on the French Revolution, the rise of the bourgeoisie, the Industrial Revolution, war and revolution, and the response of artists and intellectuals to events and trends. This course demands sophisticated reading and writing skills and the willingness to engage difficult material energetically. Preparation for both discussion and written presentations will demand time and efforts. Students are expected to take the AP European History exam in May.

20th Century Senior Seminars

Senior Seminars provide students the chance to pursue focused study of selected topics in 19th- and 20th-century history and will include intensive reading, involved discussion and presentation of papers. Proficiency in world geography is a requirement of the courses. **Seniors not enrolled in an AP History course must take one Senior Seminar each semester.** Juniors may enroll in these courses as electives. Each is offered for ½ credit. *These courses are being offered to gauge student interest; they will actually occur subject to sufficient enrollment. Students are advised to put second and third choices for all Senior Seminars.*

History of Gender Studies in America (Fall, 1/2 credit)

Gender is the core of identity; to imagine a world without it is to challenge the framework of social, political, and historical constructs. How does gender govern our lives? Who would we be, genderless? This course invites students to critically examine the ways in which gender shapes experience: students will engage with both academic and experiential modes of learning. The course reader will provide a historical context within which to begin investigating gender this semester, from a chronological study of gender in America since 1840 through the 21st century. Activities and class discussions will encourage students to interact with gender on a more

personal level; by the end of the semester, all should be able to thoughtfully answer the question, "What does gender mean to me?"

Constitutional Law: First Amendment Freedoms (*Fall, 1/2 credit*)

This course will examine many aspects of United States constitutional law from both a legal and historical perspective. This semester we will focus on the First Amendment, with particular emphasis on freedom of expression. Students will read actual case law, learn how to thoughtfully digest legal opinions, and develop the vocabulary and tools necessary to understand how the Constitution shapes American life and serves as a useful reflection of American history. In completing this course students will: increase their understanding of how judicial decisions reveal constitutional law doctrine; see how lawyers and nonlawyers can advocate for changes in constitutional law; further develop their research and writing skills; understand current events more richly; and, be better equipped to become informed, involved citizens.

The History of Racist Ideas in America (*Fall, 1/2 credit*)

For much of American history, racist ideas have subtly, and not so subtly, directed American discourse. Oftentimes, the origin of the ideas is forgotten, the womb of discriminatory policies and systemic injustices ignored. This class will follow the roots of racist ideas in America. As a group, we will discover that these ideas are not on the periphery, but rather at the center of American thought. Such a process should lead to a clearer reflection in the American mirror and a more informed discussion about race in American society. The main text for this class will be *Stamped From the Beginning* by Ibram X. Kendi. A journal that will contain the student's reflections on the readings, along with a short research paper, will also be required. I look forward to exploring this history, our history, together.

Visible Language: Writing and Literacy in the World Today (*Fall, 1/2 credit*)

While our brains are hard-wired for speech, writing is a technology that can only be learned with considerable time and effort. Yet it's difficult to imagine our world without writing, or even to go a day without experiencing it in some way. This is a recent development, for until a few centuries ago, most people in most societies could not read or write. How did writing become so pervasive, and, for that matter, what is writing? What relationship does writing have with speech, and what are the cognitive processes involved with reading and writing? This course seeks to answer these and other questions through an examination of the major writing systems of the world. How did they develop, and what does their future hold in this digital age?

**Spring Senior Seminars will be announced in November, and students will sign up for them then.*