

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, 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 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 yearlong 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.

Senior Seminars

Senior Seminars provide students the chance to pursue focused study of selected topics, often 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. *The following elective 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 electives.***

Delhi: Then and Now (Fall and Spring; 1 credit)

It has been the capital of kingdoms, empires and sultanates. Today, it is the beating heart of the world's largest democracy. Situated in North India along the sacred River Yamuna, Delhi reaches back into the past to its legendary founding by Arjuna and his brothers, and strides into the future as a world-crucial city of some 26 million people. While we will focus on the megalopolis and its environs, this course will explore Indian culture in toto including religion, social status, food, sex/gender, language, literature, and even that most recent of Indian contributions to world culture, Bollywood cinema. Covering both semesters, the course culminates with a trip to India in the spring of 2020. Space in this class is limited; please see Mr. Apple with any questions, or for a copy of the course syllabus.

Note on the Spring 2020 Trip to India for the course Delhi: Then and Now: In order to make this course open to all students, there will be a fundraising component to allay the cost of the trip to Delhi and Agra. As a result, some class

time (and time outside of class) will be devoted to brainstorming and working toward making the trip more affordable for all concerned. The trip will be fundamental both to understanding Delhi and to fulfilling the aims of the course itself. The trip will be an additional cost, but the cost should not be a barrier to a student enrolling in the course. That is, because of the fundraising component, the cost of the trip to India should not be a factor in whether or not a student takes this class.

Criminal Law (Fall; ½ credit)

"When I was your age they would say we can become cops, or criminals. Today, what I'm saying to you is this: when you're facing a loaded gun, what's the difference?" - Frank Costello (*The Departed*). To answer this and many other questions, our course will focus on historical and contemporary issues in American criminal law. We will first explore general issues in substantive criminal law, including the purposes of punishment and the appropriate limits of the criminal sanction. Specific crimes will be deeply considered, with a particular emphasis on murder. Finally, we will learn how Constitutional freedoms guard against the overreach of government police power.

Climate Change: An Activist's History (Fall; ½ credit)

This class will consist of three interwoven sections: the history of climate change, the current and future consequences of climate change, and the options for action. For the history and consequences, we will be leaning heavily on David Wallace-Wells and his book *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*. Though the title may sound dire, he provides the reader with realistic hope based in science. As far as concrete action is concerned, we will be participating in the project led by the UNFCCC, a commission set up by the United Nations to educate and spur citizens around the world to act. The course will require a short research paper, participation in a carbon footprint assessment and a DAILY journal.

Black Women in America, 1800-present (Fall; ½ credit)

This course might alternatively be called "The Lemonade Syllabus" after the reading list theologian and essayist Candice Benbow developed in response to Beyoncé's video for "Lemonade." It traces the experiences of Black women in the United States from the 19th century to the present using fiction, film, and music in addition to traditional histories. The course will focus especially on Black women's contributions to feminist theory and activism, the civil rights movement, and popular culture and recurring themes in Black women's lives, including sexuality and respectability politics, the carceral state, and educational inequity. Students will read conventional histories as well as historical documents and contemporary cultural criticism. They will hone their skills in critical analysis, reasoning, argumentation, and written expression through regular reading annotations and discussion and a semester-long research project.

Babylon (Fall; ½ credit)

This course provides an introduction to the history and legacy of the ancient city of Babylon. Topics include Babylonian society under King Hammurabi, what we know about such landmarks as the Tower of Babel and the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and how the city became a symbol in the West for all things wicked. The last part of the semester looks at the recent history of the site, within the context of war, looting, international law, and the cultural heritage of the Iraqi people. The course integrates archaeological, art historical, textual, and other data to explore these topics.

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