

# US HISTORY, 1865-1985

Grades 9-12

Two hour class, 34 weeks

Stephanie Vines

[vinesstephanie@gmail.com](mailto:vinesstephanie@gmail.com)

812.620.5948

- Material Fee – to be determined.
- Student will need access to the internet. Estimated no more than an hour a week.

**TEXTBOOK:** There is no book. I am using a college textbook from my own collection. I will provide copies of necessary materials they will need and I will also provide notes. Reading material on the class subject will be made available to the student the week before class. There will be in class notes. It is the student's discretion to copy them down during discussion.

**CLASS GOALS:** First, to instill my love of history and the importance of preservation to the next generation. Second, to provide students with the confidence and groundwork to understand the very complex, dynamic world they're soon entering as adults and responsible citizens. The political and cultural landscape appears overwhelming and frightens a good many of us, but the tools to understanding it lie in our past. Nothing happening now is the result of the last eight years, or sixteen or even twenty. It is, rather, all tangled together to create today. I want my students to learn how the government reflects and represents and restricts the people, and that even the will of the people- and their interpretation of the role of government in their lives - is a slow process, and not at all the result of overnight spontaneous will.

I hope they come to appreciate the relevance of our history. This will not be an exercise in memorizing dates and names and wars and treaties. There will be no multiple choice tests at the end. We will look at those events, certainly, but through the lens of culture and society and people. We will explore the complex path a law passed in the 1870s follows until it echoes down through today. Alongside these "events" I will introduce the class to the art and music, fashion, architecture, pastimes and popular culture at the time. It helps us understand what our ancestors were thinking and feeling, as well as an entertaining teaching tool.

**CLASS OBJECTIVES:** As the school year progresses more and more of the class notes will appear online before class (at least 72 hours in advance) as well as required additional readings, or pieces they might find of interest. I will encourage the students to contact me via email and the website I set up at any time they have a question. This will acclimate the students to college classes that are online.

I will be teaching from more than one source, relying heavily on internet research and my own collection. I will help the students learn to navigate internet research- what applies to the field of history holds true for any of the social sciences- by the end of the year the students will be confident identifying primary sources; evaluate their trustworthiness, and how to professionally cite internet research in an academic paper.

Students will submit a research paper at the end of the school year. We will devote time to subject choice and learn the structure and requirements of a successful research paper- including Footnotes and a Bibliography. I am available throughout the year to meet individually and help in any way I can.

**COURSE DESIGN:** Class will be two hours. The material will continue throughout the year. There are two reasons for that; firstly, I am forgoing quantifiable testing to focus more on reading and understanding source material; two, it detracts from the linear narrative - that events 150 years have tremendous influence on our lives today. Its erroneous to believe all of human events happen in a vacuum.

Class will consist of 10-15 minutes devoted to current events. This is not to start a student debate forum, nor is it a platform for me to correct their opinions, rather it's an opportunity to understand the government and how it operates, compared to how it should. The class will use this as an exercise in dissecting the government, to better understand the branches and their powers and limitations. After awhile the students will see how the media needlessly complicates many things.

45 minutes. The lesson. The subject of the day is provided on the syllabus handed out the first day of class. They will receive any supplemental reading materials on the internet by no later than the Friday before. I plan to have it posted the day after each class, giving each student ample time to acquaint themselves with the topic. I will lecture from various other materials during class. I will outline important points on a chalkboard or Smart Board, as provided.

30 minutes. Introduce the class to art, music, fashion, music or pop culture that ties directly to the time period. Having a touchstone helps bring the time alive. And it gives us a chance to have a good laugh at our ancestors sometimes. This will also give the students an opportunity to discuss "art" in whatever form, in an environment where it is not intimidating.

30 minutes. Discussion. Each lesson will have a key theme, during this time I will invite the class to see the similarities to their everyday lives. To question. To challenge what happened and what they think they know. I will guide the discussion only when absolutely necessary. This is an exercise for them to exercise their critical thinking skills and articulate their thoughts.

**HOMEWORK:** About 30 minutes of reading a week. That must be done before class begins.

Each student is responsible for four response papers- two in the first semester, two in the second. I will go over the requirements with the syllabus but they decide the subject and choose when to turn it in. A lot of university coursework requires responsibility and self-discipline, this is their training wheels.

Their greatest responsibility is the research paper. We will discuss it in depth the first day of class and I will carve out time in class once a month to touch on research and structure and what to do if they hit a dead end. Using myself as a guide, I would suggest the student allot twenty hours towards this, although not at once. This absolutely cannot be completed if they do not work on it a little at a time. I will share with them horror stories of those I knew who thought

they could pull it out in the ninth inning. I will be available to the student throughout the year, outside of class time to offer guidance.

**GRADES:** Because this is more of a discussion class, with the overall goal of teaching the students how their country's growth has not been left behind them, there will not be the multiple choice test always used in history classes. It's better for them as students, thinkers and citizens, that they learn the causes of WWII than it is they know what date shall live in infamy. They will pick up those facts while they're studying the events leading up to it, and fitting that into a larger context. WWII was not random, without cause, and only a few names, dates and places.

They will have four response papers and the research paper at the end of the year. And the class requires participation, especially if they are to get anything out of it. I give you my word that I will not force a child to communicate if that makes the class experience miserable for them, but they still need to pay attention while the others discuss. (If a student wants to take the course and requires an IEP-equivalent I am willing to respect the student's limits and the parents' suggestions, all are welcome here.)

I am choosing a Pass/Fail grading scale.

**ABOUT ME:** Thankfully my third grade teacher had a gift for kids like me. She never worked against my energy and imagination but rather fostered it. (And let me run- literally- errands up and down the hall.) She gave me tasks and assignments that played to my strengths that I enjoyed. And then she gave me Matthew Brady photography and changed my life.

She had seen that the topic of the American Civil War fascinated me. Almost thirty years later I still cannot explain what it was, in particular, that grabbed me and didn't let go- maybe because it was tangible- the battlefields are here; or the brother-against-brother that played out all over Kentucky. I think, then as now, it's simple - history allows me to think and explore the subject, using my imagination. I could place myself there, and I could ask what I would have done and said and thought. The other students complained of boredom but I didn't understand it. (I struggle to understand now, when people tell me they hate history because it's boring.) One afternoon she kept me after school to show me an old reel-to-reel filmstrip of Civil War photography. And there- as real as a physical blow- are people who lived through this- or died. Never again could history be nameless, faceless statistics.

By high school I knew I wanted to teach. I wanted to instill my passion for history as a living and breathing subject in everyone. Even then my closest friends, and people who just met me, I imagine, knew I loved to visit museums and parks and hang out with their grandparents absorbed with their "back in my day" stories (I still do that) and I had a five year plan. And then life happened and my five year plan was blown apart.

Let's just say it morphed into a seven or twelve year plan. And it's still growing.

By the time I walked into my first college class I was what they categorize as a "non-traditional." Looking back I am so grateful for that, I know I was a better student and more dedicated academic because of it. I'd also learned the secret to life- just roll with it. While in school I had the opportunity to shadow several teachers in different school districts and grades in Northern

Kentucky and I realized, with a broken heart, that I was never going to be a good fit for public schools. Their curriculum is designed with no other purpose than to bore a child to tears about their own country's history and the story of their government. I would not be able to inspire them fulfil their civic duty.

I chose the PhD track, arguing I would still get to teach. In order to compete for grad school positions you are encouraged to take on varying projects that give you experience, and an edge. It was in that spirit I reported to the William Howard Taft Historic Birthplace was a one semester internship. I found a whole new outlet for my driving passion- I could teach there, as well, creating educational programs for all ages and school trips and countless students needing help with their school reports. I was asked to stay on and I readily accepted. The National Park Service taught me all I know about hand's-on preservation and marketing and the layout of a museum. I can't say I wouldn't still don the uniform if the Civil Service Exam hadn't stepped in- to keep my position I would have to "nomad" (travel from assignment to assignment, sometimes every six months) but I had a six-year-old son and I wouldn't do that to him. (And no, I don't regret it- that's the question everyone asks.)

Another few years and I find myself moving back home with all my belongings packed on two pickup trucks. And it has truly been the most extraordinary journey from there to here. I've worked for the Washington County Historical Society for the last eight years. You can usually find me at The Depot Railroad Museum. I get to use everything I learned with the Taft, only better, because in a small town I know a lot of these kids and I see them year after year.

And now I'm hoping to have the opportunity to teach at the homeschool academy. The dream of sharing my all-consuming love of the events and people of the past has never died within me. I am truly blessed that I get paid for doing what I love, though public history was not my first love, though it's the perfect match, but now I look forward to a future where I can encourage the next generation to pick up the mantle and keep the stories and the myths.