

# RIVERSIDE | BROOKFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

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13 May 2010

Dear European History student,

Welcome to AP Euro! I am very much looking forward to working with you next year, and I trust that you are excited about taking this unique class. Over the past decade, I have worked hard to create and refine a very challenging yet enjoyable course, and I hope you will be pleased with the (ongoing) results. The following letter contains some information for your consideration. Please read it carefully and come to me with any questions you might have – I am here to help, and am looking forward to getting to know you (or getting to know you better!) in the very near future.

If this is your first AP-level course, please be aware that AP Euro will place demands on you that *far outweigh* any regular- or honors-level class you have ever taken, and may indeed be the most intellectually-challenging course you take in your years at RB. It is of course important that you approach this class with the proper mindset and motivation. Remember, this is a college-level course, but it is one that offers many potential benefits. It is designed to provide you with the analytical skills and factual knowledge necessary to understand European History on an extremely advanced level. I expect you to come to this class in August ready to work hard, every day! If you do not enjoy taking notes, analyzing centuries-old documents, engaging in challenging discussions, speaking up about controversial historical issues, and asking questions, then this course is not for you. If you signed up for this course in anticipation of watching movies, filling out worksheets, and completing your homework in fifteen minutes a day, then you are in for quite a surprise indeed.

In anticipation of the year ahead, I expect that you will spend part of your summer in preparation for this course by engaging in a two-part summer reading and writing assignment. This is a *required assignment* that will help me gauge your reading, writing, and analytical skills. You may consider the successful completion of this reading and writing assignment as your final “admission ticket” to the class. You must stop by my classroom (Room #230) before the end of the school year (Friday, 11 June 2010) to pick up a copy of Chapter 12 of your textbook, which you will outline as part of your summer assignment. A description of the assignment follows.

You have two options for the summer reading book. The first option I have selected is called *1453*, by Roger Crowley. It was published in 2006, by Hyperion Press. It has received rave reviews, and it is a perfect introduction to the material of this course. The book concentrates on events of the 14<sup>th</sup> through 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, and highlights the “fall” of Constantinople in the year 1453, a major turning point in European history. The second option is entitled *The Artist, the Philosopher, and the Warrior*, by Paul Strathern. This work was published in 2009, by Bantam Press. This

book covers the intersecting lives of Leonardo Da Vinci, Niccolo Machiavelli, and Cesare Borgia in Renaissance Italy. The narrative focuses on the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century, and also has Pope Alexander VI as a central player. While reading either book, look for major themes, characters, and important historical events covered in the text. I recommend that you buy a copy of your book so that you can annotate it and refer back to it. Many new and used copies are available on various Internet bookstores. To enhance your comprehension of the text, you may want to take some notes as you read, either in the margins of the text itself or on a separate sheet of paper. There will be a challenging series of multiple choice, True/False, and short answer questions on the text the week that we return to school. There will also be a very small oral component of the reading evaluation. This will help me determine how carefully you read and understood your summer book selection.

The second part of your assignment will involve completing a detailed outline of Chapter 12 of our textbook, *A History of Western Society*, by John McKay. This chapter is entitled “The Crisis of the Later Middle Ages.” Since you do not yet have copies of our text, I have made photocopies of this chapter for you to use. You may either outline the chapter as you read it, or highlight or gloss it first, and then compile your outline. Your outline should be hand-written, and should aim to be in a 7-to-1 ratio with the text. That is, for every seven pages of text, you should have one “page” (one side of a page, actually) of outline. Outlines should not exclusively be single spaced – leave spaces between major headings, and you may wish to leave spaces between sub-headings as well. Do not exceed a 5-to-1 ratio, please! This will make for too detailed an outline (yes, there is such a thing!). On the other end of the spectrum, do not go under an 8-to-1 ratio with the text. This will make for too “skimpy” of an outline. By the way, you may use abbreviations in the outline, and you may use different styles of writing (all caps, cursive, regular print, etc.) to distinguish different types of information. Highlighting the outline is also required to receive a top score. This outline will help you know the text, after all. The outlines are due the first day of class. I reserve the right to give assignments on the content of this chapter, or to test on it soon after school begins.

Finally, I hope you will take this course seriously, and will put forth your absolute best effort on a daily basis. Although it will be a great challenge, you are probably a student who thrives upon such challenges, and I know that we will enjoy the coming school year. Talk to a former Euro student or look at our website (go to [www.rbhs208.org](http://www.rbhs208.org) and look at the curriculum pages) for more advice about the class. I look forward to seeing you before too long – again, please find me in Room #230 to pick up your chapter pages. I wish you the best of luck in all your classes and activities. Feel free to contact me ([adamdgibbons@hotmail.com](mailto:adamdgibbons@hotmail.com); phone – 630.208.9272) with any questions or items of interest over the summer. Remember that I am most

Sincerely Yours,

Adam D. Gibbons, M.A.  
AP European History Teacher