

# RIVERSIDE | BROOKFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

Social Studies Department  
160 Ridgewood Road  
Riverside, IL 60546  
11 May 2010

Dear Advanced Placement U. S. History student,

Welcome to AP United States History! We, Mr. Gibbons, Mr. Fields, and Mr. Gouwens, are very much looking forward to working with you next school year, and we trust that you are excited about taking this unique and challenging course. The following letter contains some information for your consideration; please read it carefully and come to any of us with any questions you might have – we are here to help, and we are 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 U. S. will place demands on you that *far outweigh* any regular- or honors-level class you have ever taken. Whether this is your first AP course or not, we hope and expect that it will be among the most intellectually-challenging courses 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 is one that offers many potential benefits! It is designed to provide you with the analytical skills and factual knowledge necessary to understand United States History on an extremely advanced level. We expect you to come to this class in September ready to work hard, every day! If you do not enjoy taking notes, analyzing decades- and centuries-old documents, engaging in challenging discussions, speaking up about controversial historical issues, and asking questions, then this course is likely not for you. If you signed up for this course in anticipation of watching movies, filling out worksheets, and completing your homework in twenty minutes a day then you are in for quite a surprise indeed. In this course, we will make a great effort to learn how to analyze historical materials. The sources we examine will range from maps to statistical tables, from political cartoons to historical articles, from diary entries to works of art! We will refine our writing, note-taking, and discussion skills, and will enrich our understanding of, and appreciation for history along the way. We are looking forward to a great year of learning with you.

In anticipation of the year ahead, we expect that you spend a part of your summer in preparation for this course by engaging in a two-part summer reading and outlining assignment. This is a **REQUIRED ASSIGNMENT** that will help us gauge your reading, writing, and analytical skills. You may consider the successful completion of this assignment as your final “admission ticket” to the class. In addition, you

MUST stop by one of our classrooms (Room #230, 215, or 237) before the end of the school year (Friday, 11 June 2010) to pick up copies of the first two chapters of the textbook, which you will outline as part of your summer assignment.

There are two options for the book that you will be reading this summer. The first option is Nathaniel Philbrick's widely acclaimed work *Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, of War*. Penguin Press published this book in 2006, and it received rave reviews by newspapers from the New York Times to the Chicago Tribune, the San Francisco Chronicle, the Washington Post, and many more. This work was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in History. It covers America's 17<sup>th</sup> century origins, examining common myths and realities about that period. *Mayflower* focuses on New England and the Puritan settlement, from the first arrivals through King Philip's War (1675-1677). The second summer reading option is Sarah Vowell's *The Wordy Shipmates*, published in 2009. While a bit more irreverent and colloquial in style than Philbrick's book, Vowell's work also covers the Puritans of 17<sup>th</sup> century New England, and still conveys plenty of information on the era. No matter which book you choose, while reading, look for major themes, characters, and important historical events covered in the text. We recommend that you buy a copy of the book that you select, so that you can annotate it and refer back to it. Pay careful attention to the role of religion in the English settlements. 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. This will help us determine how carefully you read, and understood your summer selection.

The second part of your assignment will involve completing a detailed outline the first two chapters of our textbook, *Inventing America*. These chapters are: "Men Prone to Wonder: America Before 1600" and "The European Settlement of North America: The Atlantic Coast to 1660." Together, these two chapters are about 75 pages in length. Since you do not yet have copies of our text, we have made photocopies of these chapters for you to use. You may either outline the chapters as you read them, or highlight or gloss them 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 a 9-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 outlines is

recommended, but not required. These outlines will help you know the text, after all. The outlines are due the first day of class. Messrs. Gibbons, Fields, and Gouwens reserve the right to give assignments on the content of these chapters, or to test on them, soon after school begins.

Finally, we 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 we know that all of us will enjoy the coming school year. We look forward to seeing you soon - please find Mr. Gibbons in Room #230, Mr. Fields in Room #215, and Mr. Gouwens in room #237. We wish you the best of luck in all your classes and activities. Remember that we are most

Sincerely Yours,

Mr. Adam D. Gibbons

Mr. John Fields

Mr. Mark D. Gouwens  
AP United States History Teachers