

History and Social Sciences

History Department Curriculum Overview

The History Department's goal 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. Group work, visiting speakers, field trips in the city, and creative presentations of historical information help involve the students in an interactive and engaging way. Interdisciplinary activities also enrich historical understanding.

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 US History or one of the Advanced Placement History offerings. Seniors take an Advanced Placement History course and/or 20th Century Seminars and electives. 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 (Ancient World) *(Marshall; 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 (Medieval World) *(Apple; 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.

United States History (*Miron; 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 (*Apple; 1 credit*)

Prerequisite: AP European History; permission of the instructor

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.

AP European History (*Miron; 1 credit*)

Prerequisite: permission of the instructor

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.** *Each is offered for ½ credit.*

Senior Seminar on the Causes, Practices and Effects of 20th Century Warfare (*Miron; Fall; ½ credit*)

This seminar will start with a survey examination of the history of warfare, with an emphasis on how the 19th century von Clausewitz concept of war as “a continuation of policy (politics) by other means” evolved into the horrific era of total war which characterized the conflicts of the first half of the twentieth century (World War I / World War II). This will be followed by a unit on

the Cold War and the proxy wars that it spawned, and a final unit that will exam the asymmetrical wars of the post-Cold War era. Students enrolling should anticipate a varied reading load commensurate with expectations for a senior at St. Francis, and should also be ready to contribute to class discussions from an informed position. There will be a final research assignment for the class in lieu of a semester exam.

History of Gender Studies in America (*Buck; Fall; ½ 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?”

Criminal Law (*Apple; 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--including the death penalty--and the appropriate limits on the use of the criminal sanction. Specific crimes will be deeply considered, including burglary, kidnapping, and especially murder. Finally, we will learn how Constitutional freedoms guard against the overreach of government police power.

The Worldview of Vladimir Putin (*Marshall; Fall; ½ credit*)

Who is Vladimir Putin and what is he up to? Western media outlets often present his annexation of the Crimea as an isolated incident, somehow beyond historical memory and identity. By examining the history of this fascinating piece of real estate, we will meet some of the main players in this area of the world (i.e. France, Russia, The United States, Turkey, Britain, Ukraine, etc.), understand the cultural ties between Russia, Ukraine, and the Crimea, and examine its strategic importance for Russia's trade and national security. We will be using Hall Gardner's *Crimea, Global Rivalry, and the Vengeance of History* to help put Putin's annexation of the Crimea in historical context. It is my hope that by looking at this one area in depth, the worldview that informs Putin's approach to his neighbors and to the U.S.A. will become more clear. The main criteria for success in the class will be presentations, class participation, and a short research paper.

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