



Plainfield Central Middle School

75 Canterbury Road, Plainfield, CT 06374

Mr. Chris Rusaw
Orange Team
8th Grade American History
(860) 564 – 6437 EXT 2208
rusawc@plainfieldschools.org

Welcome to Eighth Grade Social Studies on the **Orange** Team!

“I’m a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work the more I have of it.”

~ Thomas Jefferson

I am looking forward to an exciting and successful year as I'm sure you are! Our team and I have high expectations for your child, and we will be doing all that we can do to help him/her achieve those expectations. Below you will find information on my classroom, coursework, and expectations, and as the year unfolds, I will send out updates as needed.

Course Description: 8th Grade American History:

-The main focus of this course will be the first half of American History, starting with the inhabitants, exploration, and settlement of North America, and concluding with the Civil War and the Reconstruction following that. Students will gain knowledge of the events and people of our past and understand their significance in our history. We will reflect on, interpret, and analyze the actions of America's growth as a Nation and the Americans who shaped the growth using the class textbook, primary resources, informational texts, and literature.

-Our goal is for students to gain a clear perspective of how the events of the past have shaped our world today, and how we can apply it to our lives today.

-We will partner with Language Arts to implement cross-curricular writing strategies while mastering all of the standards put forth by the Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks for the 8th grade.

Scope and Sequence:

The topics covered in this course are as follows:

1. Early Encounters (Beginnings-1650)
2. English Settlement (1585-1763)
3. A New Nation (1763-1791)
4. The Early Republic (1789-1844)
5. Pushing National Boundaries (1821-1860)
6. Civil War and Reconstruction (1846-1877)

Textbook used as initial source material:

National Geographic: American Stories; Beginnings to 1877

Materials:

- 1 inch blue binder with a pocket folder (You may share this binder with Science)
- 3 tabbed dividers.
- Pens and pencils. (I strongly recommend pencils!)

Class Requirements:

1. *Warm-ups:* On most days when students enter the classroom there will be a Warm-Up Activity on the display/front board. Students will be required to complete the task (generally a short-answer question about something we've previously learned, or a starter question for an upcoming topic). Often, there will be additional directions for what to do when done with the Warm-Up. If done with everything, they are required to take out a book and read quietly.
2. *Reading:* I am a strong proponent of reading, and studies have shown that reading for pleasure increases scores across several different content areas. With this in mind, if students experience down-time in my class, I require that students read. Our library will be available to the students, and I'll have a selection of books in the classroom as well for students to choose from. The key is that it's a book/subject the student is interested in, be it computer programming, fantasy, graphic novels, history, science fiction, how-to books, etc.
3. *In-Class Assignments:* Students will often have one-day or multiple-day activities that they must complete in class for a grade. They will range from short answer questions to worksheets, to map activities or computer assignments, and they will vary between individual, partner, or group work. These assignments must be completed on-time and legibly for full credit.
4. When absent, students will check the "absent" folders hanging in my room, and extra assignments along with a list of the assignments we did that day will be on/in that folder.
5. *Homework:* We will not have homework often, but when we do have homework, it can be found on the whiteboard at the back of the room, on the Orange Team Homework page on the school website [here](#), as well as posted on my Google Classroom and Class Dojo.

Grading:

Grading will be based on:

1. **Participation/Class work: 30% of your grade**
 - a. Contributing to the classroom is one of the most essential aspects of learning and to have a successful year. Assignments that will be used to evaluate the are: Warm-Ups, Class work, and other activities.
2. **Homework: 10% of your grade**
 - a. Homework is used to reinforce material learned that day or to prepare students for more learning. Students who do not complete this will be unprepared and future learning could be negatively affected. Homework will be given as-needed, and be posted on all locations previously stated.
3. **Quizzes/Short Writing 25% of your grade**
 - a. The purpose of a quiz is to help you maintain recently learned material, and to check for understanding of the content. There will be routine, announced quizzes, and students will be doing short writing assignments frequently.
4. **Tests/Projects/Essays 35% of your grade**
 - a. Tests, projects, and essays are summative assessments of a recent unit or concept. Generally, you can expect 1-2 tests per quarter, and a few long term projects/ essays throughout the year.

I will be posting grades most frequently on Aspen, even though grading will take place on paper or in Google Classroom. Please check Aspen for the most up-to-date grades.

Makeups: Makeups on quizzes and tests will be allowed; with up to half of the credit earned back on missed questions. To attain the credit, students will need to correct the wrong answers, and using complete sentences and proper grammar, explain why their answer was incorrect, and why their new choice is correct. Corrections need to be completed shortly after the quiz/test, and not right before the end of the marking period.

Class Dojo:

Class Dojo will be the primary way students can assess their standing in terms of class participation and class behavior. Students can earn positive points by taking positive actions, and they will earn negative points for taking negative actions.

Examples of Positive actions (but not limited to):

1. Contributing to class discussion
2. Volunteering to read in front of the class
3. Helping a classmate
4. Being consistently on task

Examples of Negative actions (but not limited to):

1. Disrupting class
2. Rude/unkind conduct towards others
3. Tardiness to class
4. Being off task
5. Not working hard
6. Missing classroom materials (materials check will occur weekly for an easy grade!)

Earning points will allow students to receive certain rewards, including but not limited to:

1. Candy
2. End-of-quarter fun activities

In the first few days, Mrs. Bessette or I will be sending a form home asking for contact information for Class Dojo. This is an online/app tool that allows for easy communication between parents and teachers, and allows us to monitor the behavior of students and arrange for rewards for outstanding work! Please return that form as soon as possible.

Contact:

My preferred method of contact is email. You may email me at any time at the email below and I will get back to you as soon as possible. Please ensure to include your name and your child's name in the email. Google Chat and Google classroom is not a reliable source of communication as I don't check private messages on schoolwork, so if there are any questions on assignments, please have you or your child reference the assignment title so I can look at the issue in question.

I am very excited to be your Social Studies teacher this year! Here are some tips to make this year as great as it can be:

The DO's of Room 2208

DO arrive on time and fully prepared to learn and grow!

DO treat others with respect and honesty.

DO listen to the ideas of others and share your ideas.

DO go through each an every day with integrity

DO be a positive force of good in our school and community

Here's to a great school year!

Mr. Rusaw, ext. 2208
8th Grade Social Studies
Orange Team
rusawc@plainfieldschools.org

"Success is walking from failure to failure with no loss of
enthusiasm."

Winston Churchill