



Woodstock Community Unit School District 200

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Woodstock North High School students learn from professors on ‘University Days’

Once every few weeks, a Woodstock North history teacher transforms the school’s library into a college lecture hall where dozens of students gain a deeper knowledge of subjects like the French and Indian War from a real university professor.

Colin Strader said he was thrilled to see 53 students from AP and Dual Credit history classes attend the first after-school lecture by Northern Illinois University professor Natalie Joy on Sept. 11.

For high school educators, AP and dual credit classes are about more than just earning college credit; they help prepare students for the rigors of higher education.

“Through exposure to higher-level thinking and collegiate dialogue, I hope to better prepare our students for the academic expectations of college after high school,” Strader said.

Strader, an NIU graduate, contacted his former professors, who were willing to volunteer their time to share their expertise. Strader has scheduled four University Days sessions this semester.

Strader and his colleagues also hope that the sessions will improve course grades and AP exam scores, ensuring that students receive college credit.

“By engaging in discussions about historical topics and spending time outside of class with experts, I anticipate meaningful academic growth with our students,” Strader said.

Fellow WNHS history teacher Emily Bowman said she was very excited about the turnout for the first University Days event.

“It shows there’s a real interest among students to engage with history beyond the classroom and to seek out new perspectives. Students were really interested to hear from a real professor and see what a college history class might be like,” Bowman said.

“This session offered students the opportunity to see how a real historian thinks through sources, which is a big skill they need when they write their final research paper,” Bowman added.

Woodstock North Principal Josh Segura said he believes the seminar-style discussions will spark curiosity and prepare students for college.