Are you ready for Honors American History?

My greatest concern at this time of year is ensuring that students know exactly what to expect when they begin an honors-level class. Honors American History is a challenging course that will teach you the skills you need to be a successful high school and (later on) college student. That said, I don't want anything to surprise you or your parents and cause you to struggle unnecessarily. So, use this sheet as a checklist of sorts. If you understand and accept each of the following, then I feel confident you are ready for this advanced course.

NOTE WELL: Before you can take this course, each of these items must be checked, you and one of your parents must sign on the back, and you must return this form to me.

- ☐ Do you understand that this is an advanced course and that you will be expected to act like a mature high school student? Putting your head down, doing homework for another class, using your cell phone, and other misbehaviors are not tolerated in my classroom. This class functions best when it is filled with mature, hard-working, and enthusiastic students.
- ☐ Are you willing to work hard for the grade you want and can you accept that you might not always get the grade you are accustomed to receiving? I view this course as a process, an ongoing effort by teacher and student to learn and develop important academic skills (such as reading, writing, participating in class discussions, analyzing sources, etc.) I see grades as a measure of your progress and not the ultimate measure of your achievement. And because this is an honors-level course, few students will find this course to be an "easy A." You must be willing to accept that this course will be a struggle at times as you learn and develop new skills.
- ☐ Are you prepared to take personal responsibility for your individual academic success? Let me be clear about what this means. I will work very hard to help you improve in any way I can; I will make myself available to you before/after school, during my lunch and planning periods, and from home via email. You, however, must seek that help. I will not approach you. If you are not satisfied with your performance, you must come to see me or email me for help. If I don't hear from you, I will assume you are content with your progress. Likewise, as a mature high school student, I expect to hear from you before I hear from your parents.
- ☐ Do you realize that learning in this course comes from many sources? These include but are not limited to: reading the text and assigned articles in preparation for class, taking notes as you read and in class, using websites, participating in optional activities (like reading books or watching videos), asking questions in class, listening to me and other students in class, engaging in class discussions and debates, attending review sessions and seeking additional help from me in one-on-one or group sessions, using online and text-based study aids, attending optional activities and events outside of class. While no student is expected or required to do all of these things (although all students should do most), you must realize that all of this is designed to help you learn and you cannot expect to succeed if you only choose to engage in one or two.
- ☐ Do you understand that this course requires you to read and comprehend sections from the textbook several times a week and to come to class prepared for a quiz and/or discussion of that reading? As mentioned above, learning in this class comes from many sources; the textbook is a major source. I cannot teach you everything you need to know in the limited time we have together. My job is to help you understand what you have read. However, to ensure you are prepared for class, I will often quiz you on the assigned reading material. Failure to be prepared each day will be detrimental to your grade.

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- ☐ Do you understand that assignments submitted late will only have the possibility to earn 50% of the assigned grade and that NO assignment will be accepted for any type of credit after three (3) days? You need to learn to manage your time more effectively in order to prepare you for the realities of collegiate standards. Expectations and due dates for all assignments will be clearly communicated to you well in advance.
- ☐ Do you know that this course evaluates your participation and I consider it an integral part of your assessment? All students are trained in school to read and write; however, most careers require you to communicate verbally as well. If I can assess a student based on his/her writing or test-taking ability, it seems only fair to evaluate his/her ability to participate in class. I have a very broad definition of participation. It is excerpted here from the course syllabus:
- ☐ Participation is defined as any constructive contribution to the overall learning of the individual student or his/her classmates. This includes answering and asking questions, arguing, debating, commenting, complimenting, sharing stories that relate to course content, teaching, cooperating, and helping others. In addition to one's own contributions, an important part of participation is listening to and engaging the contributions of others. As a general rule, each student must participate in class each day, by asking or answering at least one question.
- ☐ Participation is assessed every two weeks and constitutes 10% to 20% of the course grade. The highest scores are earned by those students who participate frequently in each class and in a variety of ways, whose comments are thoughtful and reflective and demonstrate a sincere interest in and understanding of the subject matter, or whose questions reflect a desire to understand the subject more fully. While no student will fail solely for lack of participation, you must understand that active participation helps improve your comprehension, which in turn, benefits you on other assessments. Failure to participate significantly will prevent you from achieving the highest grade possible.
- ☐ Do you realize that any question or concern you or your parents have is very important to me? Please do not hesitate to contact me with your questions and concerns at keplingerbrandi@greenlocalschools.org
- ☐ And lastly, do you understand that my greatest goal is to make you a better student, to educate you in this subject matter, and to prepare you well for more honors-level courses in high school and college beyond? Whatever I can do to help you in these respects, please let me know. It will not always be easy for you and, at times, you may see me as anything but a "friend." However, I hope you realize we are doing this as a team, and I am just as eager to see you succeed as you are.



Before signing below: Did you read and check each item above? Do you understand each item and do you accept the extra challenges of this course? If so, please sign below and return.

Student's Name (please print) _____

Student's Signature (and date) _____

Parent's Signature (and date) _____

Parent's E-mail Address _____