AP World History
Materials: *History: A Very Short Introduction*
History: A Very Short Introduction Reading Guide.
ISBN 978-0192853523
Assignment: Attached please find the question set that will be used as a basis for our discussion of the summer reading text.

Please read and follow the directions carefully. All questions should be answered in complete sentences. You will be turning in a printed or handwritten hard copy at the beginning of the first full day of class. Electronic copies will not be accepted. This assignment will receive two grades: a participation grade related to the discussion (100 points) and a 35-point test grade representing your written answers.

Late work is penalized as per the course syllabus.

A. Theme questions to think about:
1. What is history?
2. How is it researched? How does one "do" history? What are the role of a) sources and b)interpretations?
3. What is history for?
4. Why does history matter?
● You don't have to answer these on paper. They are just to frame the more specific questions from each chapter and give a bit of coherence to what we are looking for from this book. We'll come back to them at the end.
B. Annotation Guide
For each chapter of the book, you should do the following:
-keep a running vocabulary list, with definitions, of all words unfamiliar to you. Be prepared to ask about words that you've looked up and the meaning of which is still unclear.
-make a list of at least 3 important quotes. These can be something that the author quotes, or something that he writes. Write down the quote, its source, and why you think it is interesting/important/thought-provoking, etc.
-answer the following questions for each chapter and be prepared to discuss your answers in class!
*NOTE 1: Don't just re-write gobbets of the book for your answers to these questions. Make sure your answers are in your own words, and that you understand what you are writing! Keep in mind that you may be called upon to share and discuss your answer to any question with the class.
*NOTE 2: Trigger warning for Chapter 7, use of racial slur in direct quote from 19th-century primary source.
Chapter One

1. “A true story of something that happened long ago:” is this an adequate definition of history? Why or why not?
2. “History both begins and ends with questions; which is to say it never really ends, but is a process.”
Discuss.
3. What are the two meanings of the word historiography?
4. How is history different from the past?
5. “The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.” (Hartley)
“The past is a foreign country; they do things just like us.” (Adams)
Why does Arnold think that there is truth in both these statements?
6. What are some of the reasons why people find the study of history attractive?
7. “Historians can’t tell every story from the past.” What determines whose stories get told, and whose get forgotten? What things “can or should be said?” Do the criteria change over time, and if so why?
8. What does Arnold mean that we have to interpret history, not just present it? Why is that important?
9. In what ways could the story of Dejean’s murder be used to fill in larger historical pictures? What does this tell us about the methods by which histories are written?
10. In the end, is history about the teller or the told: about us, or them?
11. “In a sense, historians always get things wrong.” Discuss.
12. “History above all is an argument.” Discuss.
13. How is history both “true” and a “story?”
14. “When the past re-enters the present, it becomes a powerful place.” Discuss.
Chapter 2
1. Why is Herodotus considered the “father of history” but also the “father of lies?” What did he do differently than earlier writers like Homer?
2. How does Thucydides provide a critique of Herodotus and his methods? (note: this isn’t mentioned until the end of the chapter, even though the two men are nearly contemporaries in ancient Greece!)
3. What things Herodotus that might seem modern to us, and which seem suspicious or outdated?
4. How does Christianity change the Western concept of time? How did this influence the “purpose” of history for Christian writers like Eusebius and/or Augustine?
5. Why would you compose a history using Classical models of rhetoric? What is the purpose of rhetorical writing?
6. How is William of Malmesbury a model of historical objectivity for his time (the early Middle Ages)?
7. How is Renaissance history-writing different from what had come before? What is the “seismic shift in the idea of the past” that occurs in this period, and how does it affect concepts of history and historical writing?
8. How was history used during the Protestant Reformation as a weapon?

9. “(Jean) Bodin places ‘truth’ back on the agenda.” Discuss.
10. What are some possible problems with confining all of historical writing, as Thucydides does, to the events of political history (wars, state-building, kings and queens, etc.)

Chapter 3

1. Why is von Ranke considered the “father of modern historiography?”
2. How did antiquarians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries develop tools for dealing with the past?
3. How did Lorenzo Valla use philology, or the study of language to uncover an historical truth? What were some of the contemporary social/cultural implications of his discovery (how did it affect or potentially affect the people of his time)?
4. How are the works of people like WIlliam Camden different from Ciceronian history (what are they trying to do that is different)?
5. “History up to the Renaissance was something that one composed….after the Renaissance, history was something that one did.” Discuss.
6. What were the competing models for causation (what makes things happen) that arose during the Enlightenment in the 18th century to replace Divine Providence?
7. How did Edward Gibbon’s massive work The Fall of the Roman Empire, bring together antiquarian methodology as well as a more philosophical approach to history?
8. Ultimately, how does von Ranke change the nature of a historian’s work?

Chapter 4

1. What is the importance of archives for the historian? How do archivists and historians work in tandem?
2. How has the definition of “source” changed over time for historians?
3. Discuss three different ways that original documents or sources can be tricky for historians.
4. Is there such a thing as an unbiased source? Why or why not? Are biased sources still useful to the historian?
5. “At some point, the sources fall silent, and the historian….must begin to interpret the documents.” What is the interpretation of documents? How does it occur?
6. What does Arnold say on page 78 is the “possibility and impossibility of history?” What does he mean by this?

Chapter 5

1. Who does Arnold refer to when he speaks of “Great Men?” Do you agree with that definition?
2. “Practically all historians writing today are marxists (with a small ‘m’);” discuss.
3. “Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please.” Link this quote to the above question.
4. What is the work of a cultural historian?
5. “Synthesis is useful and unavoidable - but it is still a ‘true story’ and not the whole truth.” What does Arnold mean?
6. How did the nineteenth-century “grand narrative” of human progress get blown up by the events of the twentieth century?

7. Are origins and outcomes of historical events fixed and objective truths?

Chapter 6

1. Arnold divides all historians into two groups: those who believe people in the past were essentially like us, and those who believe they were essentially different. Which group do you agree with and why?
2. How can documents show us not just what people think, but how? Give a specific example of how a historical document does this.
3. How was the approach to history of the Annaliste movement different from what had gone before?
How has it influenced historical research and writing that has come after?
4. How is the word mentalité used in reference to historical writing?
5. What does it mean to "read against the grain?"
6. Arnold posits that the writers of the US Constitution "were not complete" hypocrites, even though their actions did not reflect the ideals of their writing. Do you agree or disagree, and why?
7. Why can it be dangerous to use modern labels to describe the past?

Chapter 7

1. Compare and contrast the two accounts of Sojourner Truth's speech. Why are they different? Which, in your opinion, probably more accurately reflects the actual speech, and why?
2. Is every generation's concept of truth the same? Does the idea of what makes up truth change over time?
3. For two accounts of one event to both be true, do they have to match exactly? Why or why not? Are we richer for having multiple accounts of an event which may be "less true?"
4. How do historians use the lenses of feminism, race, and/or sexual orientation to recover lost voices from the past? Why is it important for our understanding of the past to do so?
5. "History with a capital H remains tremendously attractive - and tremendously dangerous." Why?
6. Why does Arnold feel that to give up the idea of " Truth and one history" will not lead to absolute relativism (or the idea that every story is just as valid as every other story and no objective truth can ever be known)?
7. How does history function as the "collective memory" of a people, in the same was that personal memory does for an individual?
8. What are Arnold's final three reasons for "doing history?" Are they convincing to you, and why or why not?