American Studies
Summer Work 2026

Google Code: nq6wjoy4



Thomas Hart Benton's *The Sources of Country Music*
1975

Mr. Cehovsky - History
mcehovsky@fairfieldschools.org
mcehovsky@fairfieldschools.net

Mr. Pollex - English
mpollex@fairfieldschools.org
mpollex@fairfieldschools.net

Codes for other sections in case of summer schedule change:
Murphy/DelSole- **omjkrmxz**
Puskar/Novick- **Gz7grfyt**
Flynn/McLoughlin- **ilaboapc**

Summer Reading / Creating / Collaborating 2026-2027

All assignments have Sites and/or posting locations on the Classwork tab in Google Classroom.
You can decide the order you wish to complete the assignments, but meet these deadlines:
Friday July 17th : - 2 assignments complete
Friday August 14th : - 2 additional assignments complete
Friday August 28st : - 2 remaining assignments complete (6 total)

Objectives:

- Instill a critical thinking approach to society and culture
- Develop a collaborative learning community for American Studies
- Expand creativity and freedom of expression

Overarching Question:

- What is the idea of America?

Required Reading:

- **Give Me Liberty*: first three chapters--*assessed in the opening week of class.*
  Chapter 1 ***https://ilearn.gavilan.edu/courses/2300/files/63079***
  Chapter 2 ***https://ilearn.gavilan.edu/courses/2300/files/63072?module_item_id=41453***
  Chapter 3 ***https://ilearn.gavilan.edu/courses/2300/files/63088?module_item_id=41457***
  Chapter 4 ***https://ilearn.gavilan.edu/courses/2300/files/63071?module_item_id=41460***
- **Educated*, Westover: a memoir, and a page turner, for the written response

*check these books out from bookroom before leaving for summer

Assignments:

***Educated,* Westover: Essay**

Critically read and evaluate the Tara Westover memoir (pickup from school bookroom before leaving for summer). In your response, consider:

> *What aspect of* Educated *relates to your life? Using some of the situations or characters in the memoir that parallel (or contrast) your life, reflect on the broad question: What does this book reveal to me about myself and my country?*
>
> Select pivotal passages (three?) that help develop your positions and read them closely as you respond to the prompt. As a bonus, describe how writer's craft contributes to the meaning you discover.
>
> Format: (four-page maximum, Times New Roman, 12pt, double-spaced, MLA format)
> *"Submit" to the Google Classroom assignment and bring in a hard copy on the first day of class.*

***A Voyage Long and Strange*: Emulation**

> Step 1: Read the Prologue, Chp 1 "1492:", Chp 13 "A Tale of Two Rocks"
> Step 2: In a single page, single-spaced response, describe the thesis/purpose/aim of this book. Choose a passage or two that best illustrates Horwitz' purpose, analyzing how your selection is central to the argument of the text. *Submit that page as a doc to its Classroom Assignment.*
> Step 3: Write a Horwitz inspired fragment from one of your summer journeys, this year or last. (Emulate how Horwitz moves from narrative to commentary and his mode of lifting a facade to reveal an inner truth. For example your site could be a NJ boardwalk, an Appalachian cabin, or a summer scene on Post Rd in Fairfield. Choose something that interests you personally. (Around a half page, single-spaced response, with accompanying image.)
> *Post your blog with accompanying picture to a page you create on the shared Google Site.*

A New Memorial: response to Loewen

Step 1- Read James Loewen's analysis about monuments depicting historical events across the United States. Identify 5 key points you discovered from these readings. https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/search?q=james%20loewen
Post this page to the assignment in the Classwork Tab
Step 2 - In and around the Fairfield community (although you can do this in any part of the United States if you are traveling this summer); photograph/record 5 (+5 per member if working with partners) historic monuments on public display. What does each monument communicate to the public at large? Discover what evidence you believe should each of the monuments you studied also include. Simply, what other parts of the history should be known? **YOU MUST BE IN THE PHOTO OF THE SITES YOU HAVE CHOSEN. EITHER TAKE A SELFIE OR HAVE SOMEONE CAPTURE YOU IN IT.**
Step 3 - If you were given the task of designing a monument that was to be erected at Sherman Green or Town Hall, describe in detail what that monument should be in 2026/2027. Write what the plaque/inscription would say.
Post Steps 2 and 3 on our shared .net Google Site: 'A New Memorial'

"A People's History" vs. "A Patriot's History: " Zinn vs. Schweikert et. al.: Investigate Bias.

Step 1: Read the excerpts and in a brief response of one page, describe the greatest differences (use specifics) between these two versions of history and explain how the same facts can be evaluated so differently. What are the different motives of the writers, and are both legitimate in your opinion? Explain.
Step 2: What major news story over the summer interests you? Choose one story and find a contrast of opinions from credible news organizations (i.e. Peggy Noonan *WSJ* vs. Maureen Dowd *NYT*). This should be two arguments presenting differing views on the same story.
Cut and paste both stories (with links) into a google doc. In a single page response at the end, investigate: how do the same facts lead to different conclusions? Where does the truth lie?
Post your document to our shared .net site-- 'Investigate Bias'.

Differing Perspectives

A. Read Howard Zinn's A People's History of the United States Chapter 1 Columbus, the Indians and Human Progress.
http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/zinncol1.html

B. Read Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen's A Patriot's History of the United States Introduction and Columbus material in Chapter 1 found in the following link: (roughly page 6 to page 19) *Patriot's History*

Do a Rhetorical Analysis of a Social Media Artifact you find poetic and worthy of analysis:

We'll define "rhetorical analysis" in class but don't be scared off by the term: it just means taking apart any text to explain how the creator's/writer's tactics give it meaning and power over its audience. For this task, find a recent meme, tik tok clip, or other social media creation that you think has poetic beauty or thematic power or both and analyze how it works. For an example, here's a 60 second vignette I found on tik tok, and here's my rhetorical analysis which I had a lot of fun writing.As another example, here's a student piece from last year. First step: select a text that you find engrossing or meaningful.

Post your link and your analysis on the Classwork Assignment "Social Media Artifact", on a page you create (with your name). Please make sure the link to the source works. I had to download the tik tok and move it to my .net drive to get it inside school . . .

A Film Critique/Close Reading: of a summer film release (or streaming TV show)

Choose a film or TV series you see over the summer that you think has interesting societal relevance. Take a screenshot from this film/streaming show that you think expresses an insight or argument about life/culture. Follow this link for an example of a professional writer decoding the imagery of "overexposure" and "eyes" in the Michael Bay film *The Island*. Explain the artistry in the still image you chose (in terms of the overall film), and what its creators are attempting to portray about our culture. Write this as if it's for an online film criticism site and you are a 'film critic'. (A "critique" in this sense means an insightful analysis/evaluation, not that you are criticizing the film.) Write for an audience that is educated, literate, some are members of the Academy . . . they know of your show but they may not have seen it (so some intense summary is needed.) Post on our .net site: 'Film Critique'