

# **Modern American History**

## **Updated 5/2020**

### **Course Description:**

Modern American History is a one semester class that offers an in-depth study of US History from the end of World War II to the present. Topics include the Cold War, JFK's Assassination, the Vietnam War, the Forgotten War, the Civil Rights Movement, Richard Nixon and the Watergate scandal, the Persian Gulf War, 9/11 and the War on Terror, and the presidential election of 2016. Projects and activities will include a mock election and trial, music project, historic artifact scavenger hunt, social issues debate, and others that will require students to collaborate within small groups.

### **Big Ideas:**

- How different political ideologies contribute to late 20<sup>th</sup>-century conflicts
- How does the issue of "equality" in America change from post-WWII to the present

### **Essential Questions:**

- Why does America become involved in foreign conflicts?
- How does America promote democracy after the Cold War?
- How does the end of the Cold War change America's role in the world?

### **Essential Learner Objectives:**

1. Students will analyze the causes, events and policies of the Cold War between 1946-1968
  - Describe the response of the US to communist expansion in Europe and Asia
    - Detail the effectiveness of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan
    - Describe why the US and Britain conduct the Berlin Airlift
    - Summarize the achievements of the North Atlantic Trade Agreement (NATO)
  - Analyze the role of the US in the United Nations
    - Discuss why the effectiveness of the UN is reliant on US participation
    - Evaluate the historical significance of the state of Israel being established
    - Assess whether or not the UN is effective as a peacekeeping body
  - Analyze the impact of Cold War events in Cuba
    - Explain why the Bay of Pigs escalates tensions between the US and Cuba
    - Identify countermeasures taken by the federal government to protect US citizens from the nuclear threat created by the Cuban Missile Crisis

- Evaluate the extent to which Cuban influence permeated the Western Hemisphere
- Examine the causes and escalation of US involvement in the Vietnam War
  - Outline how the domino theory relates to the communist threat worldwide
  - Illustrate how the Tonkin Gulf pulls the US into Vietnam
  - Compare and contrast military strategies and tactics employed by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), Viet Cong (VC), and US armed forces
- Analyze the competition and the consequences of the space and arms race between the US and Soviet Union
  - Conclude why the successful launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik raises tensions between the Soviet Union and the US
  - Explain why Nikita Khrushchev ends peaceful negotiations with the US after Francis Gary Powers' U-2 incident
  - Indicate what superpower is widely considered to have won the Space Race, as well as what event signals the final triumph

**2. Students will analyze the major developments, controversies, and consequences of the Civil Rights Movement**

- Describe the efforts to enforce school desegregation and local reactions to these efforts
  - Describe how does the ruling via the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas Supreme Court decision affect major cities throughout the US
  - Examine the trials and tribulations that The Little Rock Nine are forced to endure
  - Explain why the enrollment of James Meredith at the University of Mississippi sparked outrage within the state and the country at large
- Describe various activities that Civil Rights activists use to protest segregation
  - Identify reasons why the Montgomery Bus Boycott is highly successful for the Civil Rights Movement
  - Critique why Freedom Riders believe that sit-ins at predominantly white establishments will further their cause
  - Describe why protest marches are a popular method of nonviolent resistance
- Compare the philosophies of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X and the Black Power Movement
  - Define Martin Luther King Jr.'s "soul force," and explain how the SCLC utilize it to protest against discrimination and prejudice
  - Evaluate the influence of Islam on the Civil Rights Movement, specifically relating to the philosophy of Malcolm X
  - Examine why the Black Panthers believe that violent resistance is more effective than peaceful protest
- Describe the goals of Civil Rights legislation in the US

- Explain why the 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment is added to the US Constitution
- Evaluate how the The Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968 changed relations between African Americans and dominant white society
- Examine whether or not The Voting Rights Act of 1965 encouraged more African Americans to exercise their civic duties
- Analyze why urban violence and race riots escalate during the 1960s
  - Rampant and ongoing discrimination
  - Slow pace of Civil Rights advances
  - List various influential leaders who are assassinated in 1968, and describe how the American public responds to each event

**3. Evaluate the impact of government politics and domestic and foreign policy on American society from 1968 to 1980**

- Analyze the significance of key events during the Vietnam War
  - Draw conclusions as to why The Tet Offensive draws the US into Vietnam
  - Give reasons as to why The My Lai Massacre occurs, and what does it say about soldier morale as a whole
  - Explain why the publication of the Pentagon Papers damages the credibility of the US government and casts doubt on American involvement in Vietnam
- Explain the development of the anti-war movement and its consequences for US society
  - Compare and contrast citizens' reactions to the military draft and the treatment of returning veterans
  - Identify how Woodstock and the Counterculture Movement positively and negatively affect the home front during the Vietnam War
  - Make connections between the Kent State shootings and civil unrest around the country
- Evaluate the changing US relationship with the Soviet Union
  - List reasons why the US and Soviet Union make numerous arms control agreements throughout the Cold War
  - Explain how the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan affects the relationship between the Soviet Union and the US
  - Develop a logical argument to defend America's decision to boycott the 1980 Olympic Games
- Analyze the impact of the Watergate crisis on American attitudes toward the government and the office of the US President
  - Analyze why Richard Nixon's presidential tenure is considered a failure, specifically focusing on crime, political affiliation, and character flaws
  - Make connections between Nixon's crimes and resignation as US President to the public's negative attitudes toward national politics and the country's leaders

**4. Analyze modern economic, political and social influences, and foreign policy on American society from 1981 to the present**

- Evaluate US policies and actions in response to international terrorism
  - Explain how the US embassy bombings in East Africa lead to the creation of Al-Qaeda and how it influences American politics up to the present day
  - Discuss how the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York City galvanize the country toward solidarity and The War on Terror
- Explain how developments in the Middle East have affected US foreign policy
  - Analyze why the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait leads the US into the Middle East
  - Connect American fears of radical Islam to public policies and security measures passed by the federal government
- Describe the political and social issues that polarize US political culture after 1980
  - Compare/contrast the ongoing arguments between Democrats and Republicans over judicial appointments
  - Discuss the difference between the popular vote versus that of the electoral vote that elects the president, citing the controversial election of 2000 as an example
  - Explain the difference between conservative and liberal ideology

ELO #	ELO	State Standard
1	Students will analyze the causes, events and policies of the Cold War between 1946-1968	T6S5C, T6S5A, T5S5E, T5S5B, T5S5A, T5S4C, T5S4B
2	Students will analyze the major developments, controversies, and consequences of the Civil Rights Movement	T6S5C, T6S5A, T5S5E, T5S5C, T5S5B, T5S4C
3	Evaluate the impact of government politics and domestic and foreign policy on US society from 1968 to 1980	T6S5C, T6S5A, T5S5E, T5S5C, T5S5B, T5S5B, T5S4B
4	Analyze modern economic, political and social influences, and foreign policy on American society from 1981 to the present	T6S5C, T5S5E, T5S5B, T5S5B, T5S4B