

Greetings Future Historians,

My name is Zachary Creech and I will be your AP World History: Modern teacher this school year! I am looking forward to a great year and am excited to get started. In AP World History: Modern we focus on the world from 1200 to the Present and how patterns of human interaction have changed as well as changed the same. In fact it is important you and your parents to understand that this history class isn't about remembering random dates or knowing specific Empires, although those things may help, this class is about identifying patterns and connecting what you observe to what you know! This type of critical thinking is something that is becoming increasingly important in the workforce and in colleges. In the past it was enough to simply know some information, in this course I will want you to know some information, identify a pattern in some information you don't know and then make a connection between the two and clearly state that in writing! If this sounds like a challenge, well it very well might be. AP classes are designed to make you think; you can't just memorize a bunch of stuff and do well in an AP class. Think about this; AP students were allowed to use google, their notes, and any other resource available on the last AP Exam! Even with all of those advantages a majority of students really struggled! This is because this course truly will test your ability to think, not your ability to memorize! I think it is important to realize a lot of what students experience in school is more memorization based, and so many students have consistently made A's throughout their school career. I want students to be aware of the fact that memorization is an easy skill; anyone can master memorization with enough review. The reason students struggle in this class is typically because they use study techniques like memorization to study for their exams. Memorization can be a tool but simply knowing facts will not force you to think! I have a bigger memory for random facts than most people and even I can't use that alone to do well on these essays and assessments, I have to think, and it can be difficult! With all this said I want everyone to realize that if you give this course your best effort you will improve! Every student I teach this year will be a better student for taking AP World History! It will help them in future classes and help them develop their writing, and thinking skills. I am excited to get started!

I am not assigning summer reading this year but I am providing a reading list! This is optional so do not feel obligated. If you want something interesting to read though that could help you in this class here are some great suggestions!

Non-Fiction

A History of the World in Six Glasses by Tom Standage

This book is the one I used to assign for summer reading, short, enjoyable, relatable, and covers a ton of useful information! Standage uses the international importance of specific beverages and their impacts of world history. Beer in the ancient world, wine in the classical era, spirits in the colonial era, coffee in the enlightenment, tea in era of imperialism, and Coca-Cola in the 20th century. This is a truly enjoyable read!

Salt by Mark Kurlansky (Would also highly recommend Paper and Cod, honestly anything by this guy!)

Mark Kurlansky likes to take a mundane object that no one really thinks about much and then give you the fascinating history of it. Cod was the first book I read by him and I loved it, while it is the shortest of his books, it is also the one that requires a lot of knowledge to truly appreciate. Because of that I would recommend Salt or Paper for a high schooler. These books are way better than they sound!

The Silk Roads: A New History of the World by Peter Frankopan

I love this book! This is one of the best books for explaining the Post-Classical world and does an excellent job of challenging the post 1450 European dominant viewpoint of the world. This is truly a world history book that has helped revolutionize the field of world history and help with understanding the world pre-Exploration. This book really sets up what we will be covering at the start of the year so if you wanted a leg up this would be a good one to read!

Ghengis Khan and the Making of the Modern World by Jack Weatherford

In 10 years of teaching history one this has always held true, students love learning about the Mongols! And why wouldn't they? The Mongols are cool! This book does an excellent job of covering the Mongols from multiple angles and explaining why they have been so important long term. This is a great book to follow up the Silk Roads with.

King Leopold's Ghost by Adam Hochschild

This is another awesome book! I know I keep saying they are all great but this one really is amazingly well written and easy to read! King Leopold's Ghost tells the story of the Colonization of the Congo and the atrocities committed there. It is the best book I have read for truly explaining the motivations, and the brutality of Imperialism in Africa. I highly recommend this book!

Guns Germs and Steel by Jared Diamond

I would be remiss if I didn't mention Guns Germs and Steel. This is one of the most important books ever written and lays forth theory that is most accepted today for why Europeans dominated the world. Diamond asks a simple question, why did Europeans and their descendants end up conquering large parts of the world and spreading their influence and not the other way around? The simple answer is geography but his book lays out perhaps one of the most important theories in modern world history for the processes involved. I'll be honest, while it is well written this book is over 1000 pages so I wouldn't really expect a high school student to read it. That said, I would encourage you to check out the documentary series that National Geographic did on it. Parents may enjoy this book as well. I base a lot of my teaching on this book and think it incredibly important for us in understanding the roots of power in the modern world!

Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin by Timothy Snyder

I haven't read this book but the reviews are good and the subject matter is interesting. If you are a big fan of WWII this might be a good read for you. Often people overlook what Stalin was doing during this time because of Hitler's actions; this book sheds light on the people caught in the middle.

The Ascent of Money by Niall Ferguson

Published in 2008 as the world economy collapsed (same year I graduated from college, that was super fun!) this book covers economic history over time. If you are interested in finance or economics I would highly recommend this book. It does a good job of showing how many financial ideas that we view as modern have roots way back in history.