

**Mr. Castorani's Classroom Guidelines**  
**George N. Smith Junior High**  
**American Studies I**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

**“All students who have turned out worth anything have had the chief hand in their own education.”**

**– Sir Walter Scott**

**Classroom phone: (480) 472-9968      E-mail address: eacastor@mpsaz.org**

My phone will automatically go to voice mail during school hours. Please leave a message and I will return your call as soon as possible. I have fourth hour prep (12:45 AM – 1:40 PM) and I can return calls at that time or before/after school. I try to return all e-mails and phone calls within 24 hours after I have received them.

**Course Description**

**American Studies I** will trace the history of the United States from 1846-1941. Seventh-grade American Studies will interconnect the study of Social Studies with that of Historical Research Skills, Geography Skills, Language Arts, Reading, and Writing. The class will strive to meet or exceed all state standards and district goals and objectives in preparation for the district semester final exams (Fall & Spring) as well as the AIMS Test (Social Studies will be added to the test in 2009).

**Course Objectives**

**First Semester**

- Use Geography Skills to analyze/interpret maps, graphs, and data
- Historical Research Skills include interpreting data, constructing timelines, and formulating question
- Language Arts Connection include acquiring/using new vocabulary, employ strategies and organizing skills, and analyze expository text
- Arizona in the World
- Civil War
- Reconstruction
- Industrial Era

**Second Semester**

- Use Geography skills to analyze/interpret maps, graphs, and data
- Historical Research Skills include interpreting data, constructing timelines, and formulating question
- Language Arts Connection include acquiring/using new vocabulary, employ strategies and organizing skills, and analyze persuasive text
- Western Expansion
- Progressive Era
- World War I
- The 1920s & 1930s
- The Rise of Dictators/Pre World War II

### Text

The required text for this course is **American History** by McDougal-Littell. A copy of this book **will not** be checked out to each student **unless the student specifically requests that this be done**. Each student who checks out a book will be entered into the bookstore computer. Textbooks should be handled with great care and should not be written in. This includes the class set of books under each desk. These books are MUS district property and it is each student's responsibility to return them at the end of the school year in or near the same condition that they were issued. The replacement cost for a lost or stolen book is **\$85.00!** Grades and yearbooks may be withheld if these textbook obligations are not accounted for by the end of the school year. If a student chooses not to check out a textbook, an online version is available at [www.classzone.com](http://www.classzone.com) (See attachment for further instructions.).

### Supplies

In addition to the textbook, it is recommended that each student have white, ruled notebook paper (not the spiral notebook paper that leaves fringes, but perforated is acceptable), several pencils, a highlighter, a box of colored pencils (for map work), and a blue or black pen (Please do not use other colored pens such as red, green, glossy, fluorescent, ink gel, etc.).

### Homework, Tests & Planners

I usually do not give homework assignments. My policy is for my students to complete chapter assignments by productively using their time in class. If an assignment is not completed, it then becomes homework. Most work will be graded in class. I expect all work to be turned in **neatly and on time**. Chapter tests are given about every two weeks and are all nearly identical in format. All homework and tests are posted on my side white board in "Coming Attractions (C.A)." C.A. lists all assignments, tests, and classroom events a full week in advance so that students can write this information in their planners on a daily/weekly basis. I check planners on a weekly basis (usually Friday), and grades will be written in at that time along with a student's behavior and missing assignments. A grade **will not** be written in a student's planner that is not completely filled out! Up to 100 participation points will be given each semester based on correct use of the planner, student effort, preparedness for class and participation. **Planner usage is mandatory in my class!**

### Films & Parent Permission

Over the course of the school year, I will show several full-length films, documentaries, and episodes from history-based television series. These films are edited for language and content. Films will be accompanied by study guide assignments. I do not show films for entertainment, but for educational value. All of the films, documentaries, and episodes will be tied directly to Arizona State Standards for Social Studies. **NOTE: If a parent has an objection to any of the films, their student may be "opted out" of that assignment and sent to another classroom with an alternative assignment that will be equal in length and value to the film study guide.** The films I intend to show this year include the following titles:

### First Semester

- “Broken Arrow” (1950)
- “Pharaoh’s Army”
- “Glory”
- “The Autobiography Miss Jane Pittman
- “Civil War Journal” (History Channel)
- Ken Burns’ “Civil War” (PBS)
- “Young Indiana Jones Chronicles (Documentaries) – Both Semesters
- American Experience (PBS) – Both Semesters

### Second Semester

- “Geronimo”
- “The Sinking of the Lusitania
- “All Quiet on the Western Front”
- “Seabiscuit”
- “The Great Dictator”
- Ken Burns’ “The West” (PBS)

### Grading Policy

American Studies is a required two semester class. Failure of a required class means it may need to be repeated in summer school or as an eighth grader. The class will include chapter study guides, chapter notes, quizzes, crosswords, word searches, projects, and tests that are all worth varying amounts of points. Chapter study guides will be the most important assignments as they are worth the most points. **NOTE: IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PASS AMERICAN STUDIES WITHOUT COMPLETING CHAPTER STUDY GUIDES!!** Tests will be of a higher value than minor assignments, usually 100 points. Points will be converted into percentages and follow the standard scale below. All work counts. I do not give “busy work.” Extra credit may be offered for academic work only. **It is the student’s responsibility to keep track of his/her grade!**

- A = 100% - 90%
- B = 89% - 80%
- C = 79% - 70%
- D = 69% - 60%\*
- F = 59% and below.\*

\*Students whose grade falls below 70% will automatically be put on the F’s Are Not Good (F.A.N.G.) Program. Students may be put on F.A.N.G. at teacher discretion. Failure is not an option in my class!

### Late and Make-up Work

All assignments are to be handed in early or on time for maximum credit. Every day that an assignment is late it loses 25%, and after the fourth day is worth 0%. The only exception to this rule is in the event of an **excused** absence. Parents should request make-up work through the counseling office as soon as it is known a student will miss at least three days of school. **It is the student’s responsibility to get missed assignments and make-up work from the yellow assignment folders located on the south wall. It is also the student’s responsibility to schedule a time to make up quizzes or tests.**

### Extra Credit

Extra credit will be given for academic work only. Volunteering to read aloud in class and having assignments **accurately completed early** will be eligible to earn extra credit points (10% of the total points of the assignment). I must stamp each assignment for you to receive extra credit. **No special assignments for extra credit will ever be given.**

### Tutoring Availability

I take my responsibilities as a teacher very seriously. It is my commitment to my students that determines my availability for tutoring sessions. I will be available every Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings from 8:00-8:45 AM. Students attending tutoring sessions at these times will have to get a pass from me **the day before** to get into the building in the morning. I will also make myself available by appointment **if a student approaches me with a time**, if I do not have a prior commitment.

### Classroom Rules and Expectations

1. **Accept responsibility for your own education.** This means: Try to act like an adult when you are in my class and I will treat you like an adult. **The effort that you put into my class will determine your grade.** I don't "give" grades, students **earn** them. My class is a "meritocracy." Any privileges given out in my class will be **earned** based on the **effort** put forth and the **quality** of work performed while in my class. I also have a "**No Excuses**" Policy. I'm not interested in why your homework is missing, why you didn't come in for tutoring, or why you didn't make up your test. Rather than think of excuses why something didn't happen, work on making things happen.
2. **Be punctual and prepared for each class.** This means: Be in your seat with your notebook, supplies, and any completed assignments before the tardy bell rings. Be prepared to read, work, and participate in class discussions in a positive manner. **Tardiness will not be tolerated! Each tardy earns an automatic detention!**
3. **Treat everyone in the classroom with respect.** No profanity or harassment of any kind will be tolerated. Disrupting the learning environment or other students who are trying to learn will not be tolerated. Raise your hand to be recognized, and **don't talk when the teacher is talking.** Use common sense and good manners at all times.
4. **Ethical Behavior and Academic Dishonesty.** Do your own work. Work that has been copied from others or plagiarized from any source (book, Internet, etc.) will **not** be accepted under any circumstances. Cheating on tests or any assignment will result in a **zero** on that test or assignment and **parental contact.** Students must list where they have found their information when doing any project where research is necessary.
5. **Keep the classroom (and desks) clean.** When entering the classroom, students should place their backpacks under their desk and **out of the aisle.** Check your desk to make sure it has no writing on it. Before leaving class check around your area. Pick up any debris on the floor and return desk to original place unless otherwise instructed. Put trash in the trashcan. It doesn't matter if it is yours or not. Class will not be dismissed until the room is neat and orderly.
6. **No food, drink, gum, or cell phones in the classroom.** Food and any drink except water (unflavored) cannot leave the cafeteria area. Gum should not be brought on campus! Breaking of either of these rules will result in an automatic detention. Water in clear, plastic bottles is acceptable in the classroom unless it becomes a distraction. If I **hear or see** a cell phone, it will be taken, given to Mrs. Laulumaa, and it will not be returned to you until a parent/guardian comes and picks it up at the end of the day.

7. **No bathroom passes will be given in the first or last 15 minutes of class.**  
Bathroom breaks should be timed between classes. Each student must be issued a signed pass by me, and sign in and out on the clipboard before leaving and after returning from the restroom. Only one student will be allowed out of the room at a time.
8. **Students, while in class, will comply with all school and district policies as well as the rules in the student handbook.**

**Consequences For Poor Choices**

1. Conference with teacher. Parent/guardian contact optional.
2. Logical consequence. Parent/guardian contact required.
3. Detention with parent/guardian contact (Verbal or signed detention slip).
4. Direct parent conversation required.
5. Administrative involvement.

-----**Please cut along dotted line, sign & return to class.**-----

**Students:** I have read and understand the rules and procedures for George N. Smith Junior High and **Mr. Castorani’s American Studies** class. I promise to follow these guidelines to the best of my ability. I further understand that any violation of these rules or guidelines will result in the immediate disciplining of the student by the consequences listed above. I look forward to a great school year with you!!

**Parents:** Thank you for taking the time to carefully read over these classroom guidelines with your child for any necessary explanations and for valuing education! This signature also acts as a permission slip that allows your student to participate in all films shown in American Studies for the school year. If you have any questions or concerns about my class, please call 472-9968. Your support is greatly appreciated!

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**Student (Print & Sign)**

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**Parent/Guardian (Signature Only)**

**“I do not open up the truth to one who is not eager to get knowledge. . . When I have presented one corner of a subject to anyone, and they cannot from it learn the other three, I do not repeat my lesson.”**

**– Confucius, Chinese philosopher**

## American Studies I Internet Book Directions

This will explain how to bring up the American History book online if you have internet at home.

1. Go to [www.classzone.com](http://www.classzone.com)
2. Select middle school social studies for your subject.
3. Select Arizona for your state.
4. Click “find your book” and pick the first choice, American History.
5. Go to the bottom of the page and click “online book.”
6. Click “create student account” for new visitors.
7. Fill in the information requested. The activation code is 2550902-10.

Congratulations, you should be able to access the book from home!