

# Mrs. Strand's 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Social Studies Class

Mrs. Strand

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## **Course Description**

In 8<sup>th</sup> grade we explore the history of the United States from colonial America to the Civil War. Not only will we focus on important historical facts and the cause and effects of those facts, but we will also be examining different cultures, people and their various historical perspectives, geography, politics, and economics, which continue to shape the United States today. It is important to cover these topics, so we can better understand who we are, how we fit in this modern world, and develop civic responsibility.

Throughout the year, we will be engaged in hands-on and simulation activities, where we experience history. Students will often be cast in roles, work with groups, or individually, as they “live” through historical experiences.

I will also place major emphasis on developing reading, writing, and discussion skills, which align with the Common Core State Standards and are necessary for student success throughout your academic career. We will also focus on the skills of critical thinking, research, debate, “thinking like a historian,” and geography.

## **Themes/Units**

Colonization

Revolutionary War

Government

Westward Expansion/Economic Growth & Development/Slavery

Civil War & Reconstruction

United States Geography

## **Grading**

### **Assessments/Graded Work**

**Assessments**—At the end of each unit students will be tested on the objectives and learning targets of the unit. Unit tests have both multiple choice and short answer/essay questions. Students will also have map tests throughout the year as we grow in our knowledge of U.S. history, starting with the 13 original colonies and ending the year mastering all 50 states. **(20 pts.)**

**Projects**—Nearly every unit includes a project. These projects either are collaborative group projects, partner projects, or individual projects. Students will be assessed on meeting participation expectations, research skills or application to historical content, and fulfilling the project objective. **(20 pts.)**

**Bell Work/Exit Tickets**—Regular informal writing tasks on content we have learned in class allows for me to check the students' understanding and inform my teaching. As bell work and exit tickets are administered in class, if absent, students will be excused. I expect all students to participate in bell work and exit tickets when present. Both allow for students to practice utilizing their notes or reading assignments as reference, which in turn can prepare them for writing assessments and unit tests. **(4 pts.)**

**Essays**—Students will have several essay assessments throughout the year where they will demonstrate their ability to meet Common Core Writing Standards by completing persuasive or informative essays. Students will either use research skills to investigate their own sources or use provided primary or secondary source materials as supporting evidence in their essay. **(10 pts.)**

**Socratic Seminar**—We will have formal academic discussions in class, which allows students to express their thoughts and opinions with classmates, using supporting evidence used in class. Seminars allow for

students to practice public speaking, using supporting evidence for their opinions, and to be assessed on their ability to construct an academic argument with essential Social Studies skills. (4 pts.)

### **Assignments/ “Not For Grade” Work**

**Primary/Secondary Source Assignments**—We will be looking at many primary and secondary sources in our journey through U.S. history. Students will be investigating using Social Studies skills, Document Based Questions, and Close Reading strategies in reading and analyzing primary and secondary sources. These assignments are essential and are used on assessments, essays, projects, Socratic Seminars, and bell work/exit tickets. (4 pts.)

**Cornell Notes**—When reading informational text, following a teacher-led or student-led presentation, doing independent research, and watching video, students will be taking notes using the Cornell Note format. Cornell Notes are a great way for students to interact with notes and show comprehension. Taking good notes can determine success on assessments. (4 pts.)

**Discussion Assignments**—Through Google Classroom students will be participating in class discussions to help practice independent thinking, collaborative learning, using evidence to support their thinking, and respectful academic discussion. Students will respond to a teacher written prompt and student responses in these assignments. (4 pts.)

**Maps**—Students will label and color code maps of the United States as we progress through our learning of U.S. history. Neat, completed maps will help students understand geographic context, practice geography skills, and prepare for map tests. (4 pts.)

### **Test Retake Policy**

Test retakes will be allowed, unless in the case of an open-note test (score will reflect on whether you take effective Cornell Notes or not). Students will not be allowed to retake tests if they are missing any work from the unit. I will always accept a student’s best score as the final test score. Retakes are only allowed by scheduling time before school and after school. I am also available to schedule time for study sessions and assignment help.

### **Unarranged/Prearranged Absent Policy**

Students with unarranged absences are given a grace period for due assignments. For each day you are out, you will be given 1 extra school day to complete and turn in your assignment. This does not mean if you can, you do not do your work while you are out of class. Please keep up with the class by checking the class website. Students with prearranged absences do not have a grace period. If you have an assignment/project due while you are gone, it **MUST** be turned-in prior to the absence or your first day back in class. The **ONLY** exception is assessments, which **MUST** be—at the latest—scheduled to take upon the student’s return and within the first week back.

### **Grading Scale**

- A 87% - 100%
- B 74% - 86.9%
- C 61% - 73.9%
- D 48% - 60.9%
- F Below 48%

## To the Parents

Jennifer Strand  
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Dear Parent or Guardian,

Welcome to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade! I am looking forward to teaching your child throughout this upcoming school year. I appreciate everything you do to make your child's education possible. I would like to have an open dialogue, in which we talk about everything we need to do in order for your student to succeed, so please feel free to call or email me. As your child's teacher, I want to do everything in my power and ability to help your child achieve academic success.

Every student has the opportunity to do well in my class. I believe every student is capable of learning something about history, regardless of previous knowledge. I am passionate about Social Studies and I am excited to share my passion with the students as we learn about United States history. I would like to encourage parents and guardians, as a way to get involved in your child's education, to talk about historical and current events with your child and the causes and impacts they have on us.

As we learn new facts and concepts, I will scaffold and model in order for your child to develop mastery. I welcome questions, concerns and feedback, so please let me know what I can do as your child's teacher to make this year's Social Studies class the most rewarding. Please visit the classroom website for information on policies and assignments, as well as continued updates on what is happening in Social Studies.

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Strand

Please fill-out the contact information below to help me continue this open dialogue...

**Name(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Cell #:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign and have your child sign below, and return to class by \_\_\_\_\_.\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student signature

\*Unless you and your student replied to the "Before the First Day" message sent to your email.