Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Ms. Harding**

**Cluster 8-1 Social Studies**

**2015-2016**

**Room 206**

**E-mail:** caitlin\_harding@needham.k12.ma.us

**Homework Website:** charding.weebly.com

**Introduction**

Welcome to eighth grade Social Studies! Whether you consider yourself a history nut or not, this class is for you. It is amazing how much history unfolds around us every day if we open our eyes to it. My hope is that you will leave this class with an appreciation for history and its impact on daily life today. If you and I do our jobs well, we will all work hard, learn from one another, and have a good time doing it.

**Overview of Curriculum**

We will use the **TCI History Alive! and the TCI Government Alive!** texts and workbook assignments as a framework for our curriculum. We will also refer to maps, globes, slides, artwork, artifacts, and other reading materials to supplement our curriculum and deepen our understanding of the history that we are studying.

Each student will be provided with an online subscription to our course textbooks. While in class, hardcopies of the textbooks and worksheets will be provided. Your online textbook will be accessible using the following information:

 **Website:** teachtci.com

 **Username:** First initial, Last name (no spaces)

 **Password:** harding

Our curriculum focuses on the early settlements in America and the emergence of the United States as an organized and powerful country. Grade 8 curriculum includes the following elements: geography, economics, government, and history. As outlined in the MA Curriculum Framework, we will discuss the political and intellectual origins of the US through the early European settlements in the New World, the origins and impact of the American Revolution, the development of a system of government, the creation of our Constitution, and the first three administrations. We will also strive to make as many current events connections as possible, as that is the goal of studying history: to understand how these past events have affected our world today.

Equally as important to our content learning, we will strive to become stronger, more active citizens within a democratic society. We will learn ways to harness our passions and use our voices to positively impact change and help to improve our community. Being a citizen of this country is both a right and a privilege; there are certain responsibilities we all must honor as citizens of America, and we will spend time throughout our year together practicing how to perfect these skills.

Some of the *essential questions* we will pose throughout our studies will include:

* How does where we live affect how we live?
* What are the rights and responsibilities of members of a society?
* What is power? How is it exercised?
* What do historians do? How do they make sense of the past?
* What gives a government power?
* How do technological developments affect a culture?
* What does it mean to be a part of a democracy?
* When is it okay to rebel against a government?
* When is it acceptable to use military force?
* What can we learn from studying the past?
* Why is it important to study the past?
* How has the world changed and how might it change in the future?

Beginning in February, we will work on a focused unit on Black History Month, where we will begin to explore the role of race and racism throughout the history of the United States. This unit will not end when February does, but rather will serve as a framework for us to continue our more traditional study of U.S. history. During this unit, we will discuss the meaning of race, why racism remains a key issue in American society (and has been a cornerstone of our nation’s past), and cultural and political ways in which active and passive racism can be seen all around us. This unit will push us outside of our comfort zones and will challenge each and every one of us to think about ourselves and our role in this key issue.

We will work independently, with partners, and in cooperative learning groups to uncover answers to our class essential questions and to challenge ourselves and one another to deepen our understanding of our world today. We will also develop reading, writing, researching, organizational, and critical thinking skills through several formal and informal assignments and projects throughout the school year.

**Course Materials**

Materials you will need for this class are:

* 3-ring binder with loose-leaf lined paper and two dividers
* Pen/pencil
* Assignment book
* Journal

You are expected to come to class everyday prepared with these materials.

It is important that you stay up to date with your class work and assignments and that you complete them neatly and with effort. Binders will occasionally be checked for organization and completeness. A master binder organization list will be posted daily in the classroom to help you stay on top of your binder organization.

**Homework**

The purpose behind each homework assignment is to either review what was done in class on the assigned day or to preview what we will be working on in future classes. Homework is your responsibility, and it is based primarily on effort. If you want to do well in school, you will do your homework because you will see it as an opportunity to make sure you understand the material and the curriculum. Each assignment will be worth 1-5 points, depending on the importance and purpose of the assignment. You are expected to complete your homework thoroughly, neatly, and following all directions. All assignments will be introduced and distributed at the beginning of class, as well as posted online at **charding.weebly.com** (when possible, copies of assignments will be attached to each post).

**Absences**

You will be expected to complete any missed classwork and homework assignments by an agreed upon date when you return to school following an absence. Upon your return to school, you are responsible for checking in with me to see what was missed. Additionally, you are responsible for checking the “What Did I Miss?” folders on the windowsill to pick up any assignments that were done in class and/or for homework during the days you were out. To demonstrate even greater responsibility, if you are absent, you should check the cluster website and/or call a classmate.

**Grading**

Your trimester grade will be based on a points system, with more significant assignments carrying a higher point value. You will receive points for homework assignments, classwork and in-class assignments, and assessments (quizzes, tests, papers, projects). Throughout the year we will use our journals to reflect, make current events connections, or discuss/debate larger issues. Periodically these journal assignments will be checked and graded as well. PowerSchool will always contain the value of each assignment and will be updated weekly, depending on the work that we complete each week.

I will monitor your participation throughout the trimester in various ways. Frequently, on Fridays during a full week of school, as part of our Launch, I will ask you to quickly rate your Participation and Effort for that week using a rubric (a sample is attached to this packet). You will turn this rubric in, and I will fill it out for you as well, leaving my comments on your work that week. This will be a concrete way to ensure that you and I are on the same page about your effort and participation, as well as an opportunity for us to stay connected and communicate weekly about your work.

Rubrics will be used for all projects, major written work, and presentations, and will be distributed at the start of any of these kinds of assignments. Use them as guides whenever you are working on one of these major assessments, as they will point you in the direction of success.

Assessments will come in a variety of forms in order to evaluate different skills. So as to meet the varying talents and interests of all students, throughout the year we will work on the following types of assessments: tests, projects (predominantly technology-based), skits, debates, and formal writing assignments (open responses, paragraph writing, essays). Each will be weighted differently, depending on their importance and purpose.

**Expectations**

I expect you to do the following:

* Follow our social contract and accept the consequences that we establish as a team and class.
* Follow classroom procedures.
* Bring all necessary materials to class.
* Maintain a positive attitude and show effort in your work.
* Be responsible for your actions and your work, and ask for help when you do not understand something.
* Help create a comfortable and safe learning environment by showing respect to and encouraging classmates.

Remember that we all learn in different ways and need to work on different skills. Therefore, you may sometimes have different assignments. “Fair” does not always mean the same, but rather giving each student what he or she needs in order to be successful.

**I am thrilled to get to know you and work with you. It’s going to be a great year!**

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**Syllabus Receipt**

Directions: Please share and review this syllabus with your family. Then, together fill-out and detach this slip to turn in as your first social studies homework assignment.

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Family Contact Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Contact Information (phone number or email address): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Any additional information you wish to share at this time (ie comments/questions based on the syllabus, concerns/important information you wish to share about your student and his/her learning, etc):

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