

Brookline High School
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Dear Parents of Rising Sophomores:

Your 9th graders are studying Pre-modern World History right now in their Social Studies classes at BHS. They've already learned about classical China and India, and about the origins and development of Christianity and Islam. By the end of the year, they'll have learned about medieval Africa, the emergence of world trade, and the transformation of European politics and economics into something like the states and markets we inhabit today. By June, they will have read and interpreted some of the Enlightenment figures whose ideas still shape and inspire the education we're committed to providing to your children. Along the way, they'll have written an independent research essay, too.

Next year, we continue the story: we begin with the early attempts to realize Enlightenment political ideals during the Age of Revolutions, and end with recent history, when those ideals appear to be on trial. Once again, our students, your children, will write research essays.

As in 9th grade, we'll offer the Modern World History course at two levels, standard and honors. While the units of study are the same at each level, the primary difference between the two will continue to be how independently we'll expect students to read and write. In standard classes, teachers provide more scaffolding and review of readings and do more writing in class. We keep those classes smaller so that teachers can provide more personal attention to each student. In honors classes, we expect students to make sense of readings on their own, and to come to class ready to discuss and apply them. Writing assignments are more likely to be completed outside of class.

In addition to our required Modern World History class, sophomores are eligible to apply for either of two optional Social Studies courses: Racial Awareness, which meets twice a week and is open *only* to 10th graders, and Global Leadership, which meets four times a week and is open to 10th through 12th graders. Applications for both courses are posted on the BHS website on the Social Studies page.

Most students consider 10th-grade World History harder than 9th-grade World History. The unit stories are more detailed and the pace is brisk. The good news is that 10th-grade brains are substantially bigger and weightier than 9th-grade brains. (Oddly, that extra weight often doesn't result in improved judgment till about age 30.) At any rate, 9th-grade Social Studies teachers will be previewing the 10th-grade course and making a level recommendation for your child some time in the next week, if they haven't already. If you have any questions about that recommendation, or about anything related to our Social Studies courses or curriculum, please don't hesitate to reach out to your child's teacher, or to me.

Best Wishes,

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