



# Menlo School US History

Senior Elective Student Perspectives - 2017

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*The comments below were taken from student surveys. Please keep the ratings score in context, for example, Sophomores might consider a class or assignment as more rigorous than a Senior.*

## Philosophy (Fall + Spring)

Instructor: **Jack Bowen**

*What should a student know that's NOT in the course description:*

It's a fair amount of writing and work outside of the class.

You must have an open mind in order to truly understand the class.

The majority of this class is whole-class discussions about the previous night's reading. Be prepared to speak up and share your thoughts/opinions daily.

You have to do a blog post once a week.

*I would recommend this course to students that...*

Are very opinionated but also open-minded, enjoy discussion and enjoy fun, low-stress writing assignments, and respect ALL their classmates.

Want to learn how to think.

Are okay stepping outside their comfort zone and putting themselves out there.

Are interested in questioning things that relate to everyday life events, but that you would never really think deeply about on your own, especially with other people's opinions in mind.

*I would NOT recommend this course to students that...*

Aren't looking for a typical core history class.

Don't feel comfortable sharing their ideas with the class once in a while.

Do not like to take stances on particular issues, or [dislike] going through and analyzing philosophical texts.

Who...get overwhelmed by big questions, or don't enjoy writing essays.

*Highlights from the course and/or specific skills that I learned:*

I learned how to talk comfortably in front of the class about some very controversial topics.

I learned how to write a paper that is philosophical in nature.

I learned to be able to argue well about topics that don't necessarily have a clear answer.

You will really learn about yourself in this course because the topics revolve around...fundamental beliefs...You come out of this course having a deeper understanding of life...

*Average "Academic Rigor" Rating (1-5):*  
4.3

*Average "Amount of Homework" Rating (1-5):* 2.7

## **AP Economics**

Instructor: **Charles Hanson**

*What should a student know that's NOT in the course description:*

You do not need to do any fancy math in this class. Also, this class is not about economic policy.

There's a healthy balance between lectures and group board work and activities.

The kind of stuff you learn from this course isn't all about economic theory and obscure graphs...A lot of the material is very relevant to current events, and exploring the real-world applicability of economic lessons is an important part of the curriculum.

*I would recommend this course to students that...*

Enjoy math that applies directly to our daily lives.

Think they might be interested in economics but aren't sure.

Have a strong work ethic and want to take a college-level class.

Think logically and like learning how the world works. Having really good math skills isn't as important as being able to think critically and analytically.

Stay on top of homework and are willing to work outside of class to understand the material, who are able to apply their knowledge to new problems, and discuss current economic developments.

*I would NOT recommend this course to students that...*

Want a class about economic policy.

Are expecting a math course.

Are just taking this course to add another AP to their schedule.

Prefer writing essays and reading a textbook.

Don't reach out for extra help when they get stuck.

*Highlights from the course and/or specific skills that I learned:*

Being able to look at business articles and understand the economic principles behind them is very gratifying.

I really enjoyed making portfolio projects, where we read real articles from *The Economist* about the units we're covering in class and summarize and analyze them using what we learned.

Average "Academic Rigor" Rating (1-5):  
3.8

Average "Amount of Homework" Rating (1-5): 2.8

**AP Government**

Instructor: **Dan Devitt**

*What should a student know that's NOT in the course description:*

It's a lot of discussions, which are great for people who learn that way.

Mr. Devitt is really good about not favoring a political party.

This course alternates between being very project based and [more traditional assessments].

I think that it's a necessary course for everyone, regardless if they see themselves in a future career in politics.

It's one of the most relevant classes at Menlo...Class is never boring!

*I would recommend this course to students that...*

Are interested in public policy, government, politics, history, debating

Are happy with textbook reading, but also happy to spend a lot of outside time on the mock election project.

Liked U.S. History.

Are motivated to work hard on their own and that take initiative when struggling with concepts.

*I would NOT recommend this course to students that...*

Just want an easy AP course, because it's not.

Are not very comfortable speaking up and need a lot of guidance.

Don't like writing or reading.

Are not interested in current events, politics, history, or how our country works.

*Highlights from the course and/or specific skills that I learned:*

I had a ton of fun doing the mock election.

Talking about current events is always fun.

Teamwork and debate skills.

Average "Academic Rigor" Rating (1-5):  
3.6

Average "Amount of Homework" Rating (1-5): 3.5

## Contemporary American Issues

Instructor: **Matthew Nelson**

*What should a student know that's NOT in the course description:*

There are many references to Global Issues, so it is useful to take both courses.

This course will require you to think deeply about the American identity and your own misconceptions about what it means to be an American.

Talking about this course with your parents will always lead to great conversations. Every day you learn something new and your perspective is challenged.

*I would recommend this course to students that...*

Are interested in debating American issues...and studying both the positives and negatives that our country has been a part of.

Enjoy discussing America and its place in the world.

Want to learn about current events. This course is extremely relevant to our daily lives.

*I would NOT recommend this course to students that...*

Dislike reading, discussion, and critical thinking.

Aren't willing to have their ideas challenged or aren't willing to hear the other side of the story.

[Do not want to] speak up and share thoughts in class.

*Highlights from the course and/or specific skills that I learned:*

[This course]...educated me on perspectives and opinions that we are not used to in the Bay Area, yet are American voices, just like us.

Because this course directly aligned with the Inauguration...that was super interesting.

Average "Academic Rigor" Rating (1-5):  
4.0

Average "Amount of Homework" Rating (1-5):  
2.5

## **Essential Economics (Fall + Spring)**

Instructor: **Andy Klitt**

*What should a student know that's NOT in the course description:*

There is not difficult math involved.

A lot of first semester deals with graphing and interpreting graphs.

*I would recommend this course to students that...*

Are interested in learning about both conventional economics as well as the economic factors driving current events. It's a good intro to business-related study too.

Would like to understand economics.

*I would NOT recommend this course to students that...*

Aren't interested in graphing problems or learning about local and global economic events.

Won't take the course seriously.

*Highlights from the course and/or specific skills that I learned:*

Analyzing economic and business news

Average "Academic Rigor" Rating (1-5):  
3.0

Average "Amount of Homework" Rating (1-5):  
2.8

## Global Issues for Global Citizens

Instructor: **Matthew Nelson**

*What should a student know that's NOT in the course description:*

[This is] more of a creative course, so it's not typical of a History class...There are lots of different projects that focus on research and just thinking of the world in a bigger picture lens.

...The Youth Philanthropy project...was a major portion of the class...

...[This] is not a test/quiz class, but more of a daily conversation that requires a lot of critical thinking based on readings and assignments.

*I would recommend this course to students that...*

Are interested in politics and current events.

Are looking for an engaging History elective that focuses on issues beyond what we typically learn in textbooks.

Keep up with current global events and want to have a better world perspective.

Are passionate, unsure, or just curious about issues that are affecting the planet right now.

*I would NOT recommend this course to students that...*

Dislike discussion about current events.

Are not at all interested in international affairs.

Do not want to take the time to understand cultures or open up their minds to new perspectives.

*Highlights from the course and/or specific skills that I learned:*

Learning how to communicate with and evaluate philanthropies.

This course really gave me the skills to look at many different global issues through different perspectives and educated me on a lot of topics that I only had a narrow or limited view on.

I learned about research, contacting and working with organizations, and about the events of the past affecting today's issues.

I learned how to vet organizations...write case studies, and various justice frameworks that pertain to foreign relations.

Average "Academic Rigor" Rating (1-5):  
3.6

Average "Amount of Homework" Rating (1-5):  
3.0

### **Humanities Interdisciplinary Seminar I & II (Formerly Head & Heart AND Id & Other)**

Instructor: **K. Hanson & R. Gertmenian**

*What should a student know that's NOT in the course description:*

You are exposed to a lot of different areas in the Humanities...(English, History, Art, Music) during the course and they really complement each other very well.

This course is very applicable to everyday life.

[It] covers lots of ground; [you] finish the course knowing a lot...

They should know that not only do we study different disciplines, we also combine them and analyze them together to create a deeper understanding.

*I would recommend this course to students that...*

Want to learn new skills with regards to the arts and are willing to try new things.

Are very interested in the arts, history, and philosophy.

Like art, history, and writing.

Are okay with stepping outside their comfort zone, love the humanities, and have an interest in interdisciplinary studies.

*I would NOT recommend this course to students that...*

Don't like learning about more abstract ideas.

Don't like the Humanities.

Are unwilling to examine art, music, or philosophy with an open mind...

Aren't willing to put the work in; there is a lot of work...but it's worth it because by the end of the semester you will have many new skills and a new appreciation for art and where it comes from.

*Highlights from the course and/or specific skills that I learned:*

I was not good with art history [when I started this class], but by the end...I was able not only to analyze the works of art, but also enjoyed doing so.

I learned how to view different forms of art as a history text as well as to appreciate how different art forms relate to one another.

...Useful comprehension of important thinkers/historical figures like Freud, Plato, and Nietzsche.

...Now I can delve to a deeper level that has really opened my love for art.

Average "Academic Rigor" Rating (1-5):  
3.3

Average "Amount of Homework" Rating (1-5): 3.3

## Ideology

Instructor: **Peter Brown**

*What should a student know that's NOT in the course description:*

...A lot of the information in this course comes through textbook reading...The class includes a lot of deep conversations that rely heavily on your understanding of the readings.

This course is a lot more about different people and their ideas than I was anticipating (not necessarily a debate about which ideology is better).

...This course will help [you] understand politics as a whole, not just current governments, but also past ones as well.

*I would recommend this course to students that...*

Want to know more about political perspectives that they do not affiliate with.

Would like to have a more intellectual, deeper understanding of politics.

Enjoy discussing current events, because most of the class is talking about how what we learn applies to the world today.

*I would NOT recommend this course to students that...*

Are not willing to be open-minded about different political views.

Do not like to read and write.

Are looking for ways to talk about the structure of U.S. government in depth...

Aren't interested in current events and expressing their opinions.

*Highlights from the course and/or specific skills that I learned:*



My highlight was a week when students taught the class because I enjoyed engaging in different methods of learning.

Argument and persuasive writing.

I enjoyed writing the final research paper for Ideology Honors, because there was a lot of room to research what really interested me.

I've found the information from this class incredibly applicable to everyday life, and I can teach a lot of people around me about [political] ideologies. It allows me to contribute new, interesting information to conversations.

*Average "Academic Rigor" Rating (1-5):*  
3.9

*Average "Amount of Homework" Rating (1-5):* 3.6