

“Reforming America” Project Outline

AP U.S. History (one-year)

2001-2002

PURPOSES:

1. To explore the nature and scope of antebellum reform movements and their modern-day organizational descendants—
2. To begin a dialogue with scholars, activists, and journalists who share our interest in American reform movements, past and present—
3. To share our findings in the form of an interclass publication that will be composed of student-generated accounts of reform movement activities during both time periods—
4. To reinforce our research, journalistic and cooperative learning skills as we build towards an intellectually and emotionally satisfying interclass effort—

PROCEDURES:

I. REFORM MOVEMENT SELECTION PHASE

Learning Teams composed of students in both AP U.S. History one-year classes are formed around a specific antebellum reform movement (e.g. women’s rights, temperance, peace, penal reform, education)

NOTE: The reform movement that each team selects must still have a measurable impact on present-day America. This will allow students to both compare and contrast reform movement tactics and to examine the extent to which each movement has changed its mission over time.

II. FOCUS QUESTIONS

Once reform-specific interclass Learning Teams have been formed, each team then begins its search for background information. The extent of the information gathered will determine the depth of the foundation upon which will rest the team’s compendium of original articles, editorials, interviews, and investigative reports.

The following are some of the questions that will frame each Learning Team’s examination of its specific reform movement.

1. What factors (e.g. political, economic, social, cultural) influenced the call for democratic and humanitarian reform in the early 19th century?
2. Were the leaders of each movement idealists, practical reformers, or a combination of both?
3. To what extent did these reformers and their movements achieve success during the antebellum period?
4. To what extent did these movements help build a foundation for the realization of their goals in a later period of American History?
5. What characteristics do the modern-day organizational descendants of these early reform

movements share with each other? (i.e. goals, tactics, membership profile, etc.)

III. INFORMATION-GATHERING PHASE

Working individually, but within a team format, students begin the process of finding answers to above questions by accessing the following sources:

1. Written—Primary (contemporaneous accounts), secondary (interpretative essays, statistical analyses, etc.)

These will take the form of:

a. non-governmental organization (NGO) reports, press releases

b. articles from scholarly journals

c. articles from mass circulation magazines and newspapers

d. books

e. on-line databases (see classroom bulletin boards for site addresses)

f. U.S. government publications

2. Evidence supplied by scholars and activists (contacted only after initial research has been done)—their input as to additional useful sources, comments on the team's research efforts, as well as on the look and feel of the final product is vital. Contacts with such individuals can occur through:

a. S-mail b. E-mail c. IRC lines d. listservs e. telephonically f. in person

NOTE: Specific assignments with specific due dates will be given as a means of monitoring the progress of each team in accomplishing the requirements of the information-gathering phase of the project.

IV. TEAM PRESENTATION PHASE

Each Learning Team's findings will be shared using a variety of formats:

1) Beginning in April, each team will contact scholars and/or activists who share an interest in and have expertise relevant to the team's reform movement. Each team will invite one of these experts into our classroom to participate in our "MEET THE PRESS" segment. The highlights of each event can be incorporated into our interclass publication.

2) Student editors will work with their peers to compile highlights of our research and information-gathering activities into a visually attractive and intellectually stimulating publication featuring student-generated original articles, advertisements, editorials, interviews, and other features. This publication will appear in both hardcopy and on-line formats. The exact structure and content of our Reforming America publication will be determined by the interclass editorial staff.

Student editors from last year's "TRENDS AND TRAJECTORIES" publication have volunteered to help with this year's efforts in any way they can.

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