

July 20, 2009

Greetings and salutations-

I do hope that each of you is enjoying your summer, especially given the fact that the weather has been unseasonably pleasant in comparison with the usual Virginia hazy, hot, and humid conditions. I am very excited to have the opportunity to work with you this coming school year in our exploration of European history and have been working to get ahead, brushing up on my Elizabeth I, Louis XIV, and Lorenzo the Magnificent. While I have never taught AP European History, my eight years of experience with AP US History should serve me, and you, well as the year proceeds. While there are some notable differences in the course, the "AP" format is essentially the same. As such, my expectations of you will be of a commensurate level, both intellectually and behaviorally. Rest assured, the bulk of the workload will fall squarely on your shoulders and you must be willing and able to accept such a challenge. If you are, then I expect that this course will be an educational experience unrivaled at Westfield High School and am thrilled at the opportunity!

Based on my initial foray into the material, I believe that this course lends itself particularly well to some very creative instructional opportunities throughout the year. If taken in combination with the fact that you have already studied the material (AP World, World Studies II), the possibilities are truly staggering! While I am certain there will be some lectures, I very much want AP Euro to be a student-driven, student-centered course and will require your input to those ends. Those of you who were fortunate (or unfortunate) enough to have me as an instructor know full-well that my classroom is most exciting and lively when class discussion is the primary learning format. Consequently, the atmosphere is best when students are active participants in the discussion and I can simply serve as a moderator; or even better yet, as an equal participant! Having said that, we certainly need to be attentive to the fact the course has a national examination affixed to it, to be administered in May 2010. As such, our unit exams will reflect the need to master both multiple choice questions and essays, including the expletive-inspiring DBQ! But as my father always said, "there is more than one way to skin a cat," meaning that, for our purposes, the more historical methodologies we employ, the better prepared we will be for the exam in May.

Now, on to the contents of this envelop. First and foremost, many thanks to those of you who contacted me via email regarding the summer assignment. Second, are you insane? You WANT to do more work? Like your five other AP classes didn't provide you with enough to do over break? In all seriousness though, I wanted to be certain that any summer assignment that I developed had

meaning and would lead to a worthwhile discussion when we returned. During my days as a neophyte historian at James Madison University, I had the good fortune to be exposed to the historical styling's of Barbara Tuchman and have remained a huge fan ever since. Much like Joseph Ellis, James McPherson, or Howard Zinn, Tuchman's historical analysis is superb and the prose into which she weaves that analysis is of equal quality. But in truth, it is above most high school students, which presents you with your first challenge of the year: you MUST elevate your reading ability! Those of you who are accustomed to reading to find the "right answer," you are in for a rude awakening and those of you who expect Mr. Pringle to "give" you the right answer may wish to switch out of the course before the year begins! Now, on to Tuchman.

The enclosed selection is chapter 3 of her incredible work *The March of Folly*, in which she builds on the great work of Erasmus and examines four instances in history where, despite all evidence to the contrary, human beings chose to ignore what seem to be obvious warning signs and plunged ahead with fateful decisions that literally changed the course of history. Why did the Trojans, after having fought Agamemnon and the Greeks to a draw over the course of ten years, chose to accept the wooden gift of Odysseus, thus sealing their fate and allowing the Greeks to become the dominant force in the Mediterranean world? Why did the British crown antagonize their North American colonies to the point of causing the American Revolution? Why did four successive American presidents ignore the lessons of the French in Indochina, ultimately resulting in the longest military conflict in US history, the Vietnam War? And why, despite all evidence, would six Renaissance popes refuse to reform the Holy See, plunging the Seat of St. Peter into such moral and economic degradation that a little known German Augustinian monk took it upon himself to challenge the very foundations of the Catholic Church, initiating the Protestant Reformation and changing the course of human history? The answer to that question is the subject of your summer assignment.

1. Read the selection, being sure to take notes and record questions about things that you do not understand.
2. While reading the selection, make a list of all the vocabulary words that you do not understand. Then, go back and record the definition of those words. Keep this list, as you will be asked to add to it throughout the school year. How else can you expect to become a better reader if you are not willing to augment your vernacular?
3. Answer the questions below to the best of your ability, being sure to cite historical support evidence that supports your responses. You may use other resources, including the internet, to refresh your memory regarding certain events, such as the Crusades or the Black Plague. You should be

prepared to respond to these questions either orally or in written form by the start of the school year!

- 1. What was the status of Western Europe between the fall of Rome in 476 CE and the High Middle Ages? What happened to “learning” during the Dark Ages?**
- 2. What role did the Crusades play in expanding the power and authority of the Catholic Church?**
- 3. What role did the Catholic Church play in the resurgence of Western Europe during the Middle Ages?**
- 4. How did the Black Death impact the role of the Catholic Church in Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries? How did this altered role lay the foundations for the Protestant Reformation?**
- 5. What were the social, economic, and political factors that prevented the six Renaissance popes from taking any action that may have avoided the split in Christianity?**

I do not expect that you will entirely comprehend the reading selection on the first attempt, so, if at first you don't succeed....

All the best for the remainder of your summer vacation! I look forward to meeting and working with each of you during the 2009-2010 school year! Please feel free to contact me directly should you have any additional questions regarding the course or the summer assignment.

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Yours most graciously,

Mr. Pringle

