

**BROOKLINE HIGH SCHOOL**  
**Social Studies Department**  
**Gary Shiffman, Curriculum Coordinator**

**World History I: Identity, Status, and Power**

**Course Description:**

The goal of this course is for all of our students to understand themselves and their place in the world in historical and comparative perspective. Through historical case studies, students will learn how premodern and early modern societies answered these fundamental questions: Who are we, and who am I? How do societies establish the bonds of community? Who has power and why? How does wealth get produced and distributed? Through inquiry projects focused on these questions, students will learn and practice 21st-Century skills in collaboration, communication, and creativity. Through systematic comparisons between premodern and modern responses to our course questions, students will learn to answer those questions for themselves, and therefore conceive their own identities in comparative and historical perspective. This course is unlevelled.

**Learning Objectives:**

By the completion of this course, a successful student will be able to:

1. Describe a range of responses to enduring questions about politics, economics, and society
2. Explain commonalities and differences among premodern societies
3. Explain commonalities and differences between premodern and modern societies
4. Write proficient historical narratives
5. Defend claims in response to course questions with evidence and reasoning
6. Demonstrate independence in reading and interpreting grade-level nonfiction narrative
7. Demonstrate proficiency in collaboration and problem solving
8. Find and evaluate sources for research, including books, articles, and websites

**Learning Experiences:**

In this course, every student will:

1. Read primary sources from a variety of historical places and periods
2. Read reference and secondary sources on historical topics
3. Write and revise essays and reflections on course questions
4. Engage in collaborative inquiry projects
5. Present ideas to a variety of audiences
6. Write an independent research essay
7. Reflect systematically on their identity in historical context
8. Reflect systematically on their identity as a student

## **Course Outline:**

### **Unit One: Power**

#### *Essential Questions:*

Who has power?

How do leaders justify their power?

#### *Case Studies*

Song Dynasty in China

Feudalism in Japan

### **Unit Two: Status**

#### *Essential Questions:*

What is the “glue” that holds people together?

How do societies create community?

#### *Case Studies:*

The Development of Hinduism

The Development of Islam

### **Unit Three: Wealth**

#### *Essential Questions:*

How do civilizations get rich?

What does it mean to be wealthy?

#### *Case Studies:*

The Kingdoms of Mali and Songhai

European Conquest and the Columbian Exchange

### **Unit Four: Identity**

#### *Essential Questions:*

What is the role of the individual in society?

What does it mean to challenge authority?

#### *Case Studies:*

The Protestant Reformation

The European Enlightenment