

**Revised syllabus and samples of lesson plans for  
USA! USA! –course at Vaskivuori High School**

Capstone Project

Fulbright Distinguished Teacher Award –program 2014

Petteri Granat

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## Forewords

For my Capstone Project I have created texts and activities for history and social studies sections of a multidisciplinary course called “USA! USA!” taught in my home institution, Vaskivuori High School in Vantaa, Finland. The course has been in the school curriculum since school year 2012-2013 and it is developed by team of teachers at Vaskivuori. I have coordinated the work as well as taught 50% of the classes. In addition, as part of the Capstone project, I have updated the course syllabus.

Material and activities I have created are designed to be easily disseminated to other Finnish high schools. I have also already started the process of actively encouraging teachers to design similar courses in their respective institutions. For this purpose I work in cooperation with the Association for Teachers of History and Social Studies in Finland.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In Finnish: Historian ja yhteiskuntaopin opettajien liitto (HYOL), <http://www.hyol.fi/en/english/>

## Background: Finnish National Curriculum

All high schools in Finland are publicly funded and they follow the national curriculum guidelines.<sup>2</sup> The current national curriculum for upper secondary education came into effect in 2005. According to it, in order to graduate from high school, one needs to take minimum of 75 courses. Depending on a student 47-51 of them are compulsory, the rest being electives.<sup>3</sup> Majority of electives tend to be national in character, meaning that they are offered in every high school throughout the country. However, schools are allowed and encouraged to create courses on their own. These are called applied courses. An example from history education (names and codes of courses) in Vaskivuori High School<sup>4</sup>:

National compulsory	National electives	Applied
Man, the Environment and Culture HI1	Finland from prehistoric times to autonomy HI5	The World Today HI7
European Man HI2	Meeting of Cultures HI6	Preparation for matriculation examination in History HI8
International relations HI3		
Turning-points in Finnish history HI4		

One course consists of 38 class periods, 45 minutes each. This however can be organized differently. In Vaskivuori classes meet three times a week, 75 minutes at a time for six

<sup>2</sup> A very small number of schools are private. However they follow national curriculum and are publicly funded (resembles charter school system in United States). In addition some schools are International Baccalaureate schools and therefore follow a different curriculum.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.oph.fi/download/47678\\_core\\_curricula\\_upper\\_secondary\\_education.pdf](http://www.oph.fi/download/47678_core_curricula_upper_secondary_education.pdf) (p. 255 in particular)

<sup>4</sup> Official English translations for courses HI1-HI6 by the National Board of Education [http://www.oph.fi/download/47678\\_core\\_curricula\\_upper\\_secondary\\_education.pdf](http://www.oph.fi/download/47678_core_curricula_upper_secondary_education.pdf) (pp. 181-185). HI7-HI8 translated by Petteri Granat.

weeks. This means that a course has 18 class periods. At the end of a six-week cycle, there is one week of examinations during which there are no classes.

In addition to courses in any given subject, such as history or biology, it is possible to create multidisciplinary applied courses. In recent years, these courses have gained more popularity in the Finnish education system.

New national curriculum is scheduled to come into effect on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2016.<sup>5</sup> The work is ongoing but we already know that there will be minor changes in the structure of high school education. From my project's view point most interesting of them is the introduction of compulsory thematic and multidisciplinary courses.<sup>6</sup> As of now (December 2014), details remain unclear but my expectation is that they remind the model on USA! USA! –class at Vaskivuori. Therefore the experience Vaskivuori High School has in organizing such classes already, is an asset for the school.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.oph.fi/english/curricula\\_and\\_qualifications/general\\_upper\\_secondary\\_education](http://www.oph.fi/english/curricula_and_qualifications/general_upper_secondary_education)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.oph.fi/ajankohtaista/verkkouutiset/101/0/lukion\\_uusi\\_tuntijako\\_hyvakysyttiin\\_-\\_lukiokoulutukselle\\_oma\\_kehittamishanke](http://www.oph.fi/ajankohtaista/verkkouutiset/101/0/lukion_uusi_tuntijako_hyvakysyttiin_-_lukiokoulutukselle_oma_kehittamishanke) (Finnish National Board of Education, this section is available in Finnish only. Translation of the most important sentence from my perspective: "Uutena tuntijaon rakenteeseen tulevat mm. syventävät teemaopinnot (3 kurssia), jotka eheyttävät opetusta ja lisäävät oppiaineiden välistä yhteistyötä ja vahvistavat yksittäistä oppiainetta laajempien kokonaisuuksien hallintaa" = "As new elements in the structure of curriculum, thematic and multidisciplinary courses (3) will be introduced. They will increase co-operation between subjects and strengthen students' knowledge of larger phenomena.")

## Vaskivuori High School

In a Finnish context Vaskivuori High School is an exceptionally large school. With a student body of more than 1 000, Vaskivuori is among the largest high schools in the country. On the average there are only about 250 students in a high school. However, the trend in recent years has been towards bigger schools, mainly following economic rationale.<sup>7</sup> Large size leads to smaller expenses per student and also somewhat better possibilities in providing applied courses for students to choose from.

In addition to size, another feature of Vaskivuori High School should be mentioned. Mainly due to special programs in music, dance and media, the student body is quite diverse, school's atmosphere is very liberal and innovative teaching methods are welcomed and encouraged by administration.

Together these features result in an environment suitable for creating a multidisciplinary course.

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<sup>7</sup> [http://yle.fi/uutiset/school\\_streamlining\\_plan\\_sparks\\_controversy/7597438](http://yle.fi/uutiset/school_streamlining_plan_sparks_controversy/7597438)

## **USA! USA! –course. What is it and why is it needed?**

In university I majored in history and one of my minors was North-American Studies, a multidisciplinary approach to learn about Canada and the United States. I felt really comfortable with the approach: instead of just learning about American history, I learned about American geography, culture, art, literature etc. That helped me to put things in perspective and understand how phenomena that seem separate from each other are actually related to one another.

In addition, it needs to be acknowledged that United States has been and currently is an important factor in the world in terms of economy, politics, culture etc. Even if the growing influence of so called BRICS-countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South-Africa) is rapidly changing the world in which we live in, I am convinced that learning about United States, its history, society and culture is beneficial to Finnish high school students. Therefore I felt necessary to provide my students a chance to study the subject. All this led to creation of USA! USA!, a multidisciplinary course at Vaskivuori. The course has been available once a year since school year 2012-2013. I am the coordinator and teach nine out of eighteen class periods, my colleagues at Vaskivuori teach seven class periods and two are initially reserved for a visiting speaker and a field trip depending on availability.

## **Portfolio - student assessment on USA! USA! -course**

In a Finnish high school students will often be assessed based on a final exam at the end of a course. Other factors, such as quizzes, homework and presentations can and will also be taken into consideration. Scale is from 4 to 10 equaling F to A in American school system. However, the law on secondary education allows individual teachers to use different methods of assessment. On this specific class a final exam is not a particularly good way of assessment. USA! USA! is an elective, multidisciplinary course that is not a part of any traditional school subject curriculum, thus it is not directly related to the national matriculation examination at end of high school. In addition, there is a heavy emphasis on classroom work (see examples later on), for which readings are background information. Therefore, instead of taking an exam, students will compile a portfolio that consists of assignments completed both during class periods and as homework. Students earn points by completing each assignment, in addition points are rewarded for attendance. This method is designed to encourage students to attend classes and divide the work evenly throughout the six-week period. Instead of studying only for the exam, students are in better control of their own work, which in turn should result in better results in learning. In revising the assessment procedure I have benefited from my observations during the Fulbright-program. I studied several course syllabuses in Bloomington High School North and other schools I visited and paid attention to very detailed system of assessing. Although I would rather have my students focusing on actual learning than just their grades, I do acknowledge the importance of grading in education. Particularly important is that grading is transparent and as objective as possible. Therefore it is in the interest of the students to be fully aware how exactly they are assessed.



To allow students a chance to focus more on a specific topic of their own interest, I have included an essay in the course syllabus. Students can either review a novel (encouraging and improving reading skills) or write a paper on a topic of their choosing (encouraging and improving independent research skills) as long as it related to United States. Topic has to be pre-approved by the course coordinator.

Points are rewarded as follows:

<b>Section</b>	<b>Points</b>	<b>Requirements</b>
Attendance	0-18	1 point for each class attended
Geography	0-4	2 assignments (0-2 points ea.)
History	0-12	8 assignments (0-2 points ea.)
Social studies	0-4	2 assignments (0-2 points ea.)
Religion	0-4	2 assignments (0-2 points ea.)
English	0-4	2 assignments (0-2 points ea.)
Popular culture	0-2	1 assignment (0-2 points)
Essay	0-6	1000-1500 words. Choice of: a) book review (novel) b) research paper  Reviewed book/ research topic needs to be approved by coordinator

Minimum of 15 attended class periods is required. More than three missed classes result in extra assignments determined by coordinator. All assignments have to be completed.

Final grade is based on the total number of points on a following scale:

<b>Number of points (0-54)</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Grade</b>
Less than 18 points	Below 33%	4
Minimum of 18 points	33%	5
Minimum of 23 points	42%	6
Minimum of 27 points	50%	7
Minimum of 34 points	63%	8
Minimum of 41 points	77%	9
Minimum of 48 points	90%	10

**A preliminary course plan for USA! USA! –class, April 7<sup>th</sup> – May 20<sup>th</sup> 2015:**

	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Teacher</b>
Lesson 1	Introduction	Petteri Granat
Lesson 2	Geography	Pilvi Koivuniemi
Lesson 3	Geography	Pilvi Koivuniemi
Lesson 4	History	Petteri Granat
Lesson 5	History	Petteri Granat
Lesson 6	History	Petteri Granat
Lesson 7	History	Petteri Granat
Lesson 8	History	Petteri Granat
Lesson 9	History	Petteri Granat
Lesson 10	Field trip	Petteri Granat
Lesson 11	Religion	Teemu Ratinen
Lesson 12	Religion	Teemu Ratinen
Lesson 13	American rhetoric	Virpi Kantonen
Lesson 14	American rhetoric	Virpi Kantonen
Lesson 15	Popular culture: movies	Visiting lecturer
Lesson 16	Popular culture: music	Matti Suomela
Lesson 17	US Government	Petteri Granat
Lesson 18	Contemporary issues in American society	Petteri Granat

Plan is subject to changes based on availability of visiting lectures and suitable day for a field trip. All teachers have individual freedom in planning their classes. However, as the coordinator I am responsible for assuring a coherent course plan.

## **Philosophical and pedagogical background of texts and activities in the History and Social**

### **Studies –sections**

For most high school courses in Finland there is a variety of text books and other material available. In Vaskivuori, the principal makes the final decision on materials based on teachers' wishes. Students are expected to purchase assigned textbooks on their own. In addition, it is very common for teachers to design their own material that they use on the side. For applied courses the situation is different, quite naturally so. There is no economic incentive for publishing houses to publish a text book that is only used in one class room once a year nationwide.

Therefore practically all the material used in USA! USA! –class is prepared by an individual teacher teaching the class. As history teacher I realized that Finnish high school students cannot be expected to have extensive prior knowledge about American history. For the purpose of providing general understanding of major events and phenomena in American history I decided to write text book like readings for each history and social studies class. The readings will be available online in the electronic classroom and students are assigned readings as homework prior to the class. The city of Vantaa has purchased a license for platform called Fronter<sup>8</sup>, which is in use in all city schools.

Since students have done the readings prior to the class period, classroom time is mainly reserved for activities.<sup>9</sup> Each class period on American history will start with an episode of Crash course US History, a short (10-15 minutes) video, available on Youtube. On this course specifically, I would like to see myself more in a role of a facilitator than a traditional teacher.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://com.fronter.info/>

<sup>9</sup> On learning by doing –method in teaching history, see Levstik, L. S., & Barton, K. C. (2010). *Doing history: Investigating with children in elementary and middle schools*. Fourth edition. Routledge.

Instead of telling the students what I know about the subject, I want to guide them as they find out about the subject individually or in groups.

As a history teacher one of my main goals is to lead students to study original documents. In reference to American history, there are a lot of them available online, on this class I use e.g. Columbus diary entries, the Constitution and speeches by Martin Luther King Jr. Students will be provided a laptop and an internet access on each history and social studies class period.

This method will serve the students better in two perspectives<sup>10</sup>:

- 1) students will be in more control of their learning process and therefore better engaged in the process
- 2) through this method students will practice their skills in searching for information and evaluating its credibility as well as connecting pieces of information from separate sources to one another

Another philosophical approach in my teaching is emphasizing that in history, perspective does matter<sup>11</sup>. Unlike in science, where the result of the experiment should be the same regardless of who conducted it, in history the concepts of “truth” or “valid” are often quite vague. It is possible to argue that there are historical facts, such as “George Washington was the first president of the United States” but historical interpretation or analysis depends on the perspective. I find that this is specifically true in the case of American history given the racial, religious, cultural and economic diversity in American society throughout its history. My experience as a classroom teacher for more than ten years has led me to believe that for a Finnish

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<sup>10</sup> More on benefits of the inquiry-oriented approach in Keith C. Barton “*The Denial of Desire. How to Make History Education Meaningless*” in National History Standards: The Problem of the Canon and the Future of History Teaching (Symcox, Wilschot (ed.) Information Age Publishing 2009)

<sup>11</sup> More on multiperspectivity and controversy in history teaching (by Dr. Robert Stradling):

<http://tandis.odhr.pl/documents/hre-compendium/en/CD%20SEC%202%20ENV/PARTNERS%20RESOURCES/CoE%20Multiperspectivity%20in%20history%20teaching%20ENG.pdf>

high school student this perspective might be specifically challenging to understand due to the quite homogenous culture of their own country. For a long time the dominant culture in Finland has emphasized consensus over conflict and unity over diversity. Regardless of how this emphasis in fact reflects the actual situation, the result is that high school students often struggle with the importance of perspective in historical analysis.

In USA! USA! –course this aspect is the underlying theme in all the texts students will read. It is especially studied several times through personal histories of significant individuals such as Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy.

Regarding this approach two program experiences had a special influence on my thinking. Firstly, a class I audited at Indiana University (POLSCI661 The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, & Identity) further convinced me that factors like gender, ethnicity and social status influence heavily on how an individual interprets the reality. Secondly, seminar meetings on Friday mornings taught me more about how diversity influences education in the United States, e.g. racially segregated schools based on legislation in the past and de facto segregation today based on school districts.

## A closer look into the revised course plan (History and Social Studies)

As a part of my capstone project I revised the history and social studies sections of the course. Given the very limited amount of time (six class periods for history and two for social studies), I decided to spend four class periods on chronological history and two on thematic history.<sup>12</sup> Idea is that the first four class periods will provide a general framework in which the last two class periods make more sense.

	<b>Topic/ title</b>	<b>Goals</b>
Lesson 4	American history: Columbus and colonies	Students will: -learn about historical context of Columbus' voyages -understand how Columbus can be interpreted differently from different perspectives -learn about the creation of European colonies in North-America and understand differences between them -learn about complex relationship between colonies and Native Americans
Lesson 5	American history: Independence and Civil War	Students will: -learn about causes and effects of American revolution -understand that colonists were not a unified front -learn about the Founding Fathers and main documents (Declaration of Independence and the Constitution) -learn about the complexity of the new nation, especially through Thomas Jefferson (author of the Declaration vs. a slave master) -learn about the causes and effects of the Civil War,

<sup>12</sup> Both thematic and chronological approaches have their pros and cons, see e.g Keith C. Barton "*The Denial of Desire. How to Make History Education Meaningless*" in National History Standards: The Problem of the Canon and the Future of History Teaching (Symcox, Wilschot (ed.) Information Age Publishing 2009), <http://teachinghistory.org/nhec-blog/24585> and <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/apr/08/teaching-history-without-facts-sociology>

		<p>especially understanding the importance of slavery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Understand the importance of perspective in history through president Lincoln (Great Emancipator vs. pragmatist)</li> </ul>
Lesson 6	American history: US in and between World Wars	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-learn why and how US participated in World Wars</li> <li>-understand the ramifications of World Wars, especially from US perspective</li> <li>-learn about economic boom and downfall of the 1920's</li> <li>-learn about New Deal program and place that into historical context, especially in relation to Keynes' studies in economics</li> </ul>
Lesson 7	American history: from 1960's to present day	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-learn about the wide range of societal changes of the 1960's and how they affected US permanently</li> <li>-understand how end of the Cold War affected US and its global position</li> <li>-learn about the complex relationship of US foreign and domestic policies and the War on Terror</li> </ul>
Lesson 8	Special theme in American history: African American history	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-learn about the historical circumstances that led to African American minority in US</li> <li>-learn about some key figures in African American history (such as Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells and Martin Luther King Jr.)</li> </ul>
Lesson 9	Special theme in American history: Who is an American? Waves of immigration.	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-learn about the diversity in American society from Native populations to current discussion on immigration</li> <li>-learn about melting pot vs.</li> </ul>



		<p>salad bowl -theories and evaluate their validity through historical evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-understand the difference between Finnish and American way of conceptualizing 'nation'</li> </ul>
Lesson 17	US Government	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-learn about the system of check and balances</li> <li>-compare that system with Finnish model (based on the same idea)</li> <li>-understand the historical context of that model</li> <li>-understand the benefits and limitations of that model</li> <li>-understand the concept of federalism and how it differs from Finnish model</li> </ul>
Lesson 18	Contemporary issues in American society	<p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-learn about the divide into liberal/ conservative groups and it's political ramifications</li> <li>-conduct research in small groups</li> <li>-prepare a short presentation on a contemporary issue in American society</li> </ul>

### **Three examples of text and activities with suggested lesson plans**

For this chapter I have translated three texts and activities (A, B and C) I have prepared for the course. They are examples of a much larger body of texts written in Finnish, a work that will continue after the Fulbright program. Texts are designed to be read before the class periods, leaving most of the period for activities. In addition I included suggestions of lesson plans.

#### **A) Lesson number 4. Topic “American history: Columbus and colonies”**

**Before the class period:** students are instructed to read the text about Columbus (below) together with another text discussing the birth of the colonies and the Columbian exchange. Together the texts are about 5 pages in length (double spaced, font size 12) and they can be downloaded from the electronic classroom.

#### **During the class period (75 minutes):**

- 1) Screening of a video on youtube: “The Black Legend, Native Americans and Spaniards”, first episode of a 48-episode series called Crash Course US History (by John Green), 12 minutes  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6E9WU9TGrec&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtMwmepBiTSG593eG7Obz07s>
- 2) Discussion about readings and video in groups of 4-6 students (2-3 minutes). Each student shares one thing he/ she paid attention to.
- 3) Discussion about readings and video together (2-3 minutes). Each group shares one thing they discussed in smaller groups.
- 4) Activity on Columbus, 45 minutes.
- 5) Discussion on activity, instructions for next class period, 10 minutes.

- 6) Homework: "List 5-10 food plants that you eat on a regular basis. Find out which of them came to Europe as a result of the Columbian Exchange." This assignment will be discussed shortly in the beginning of the next class period.

**Text that students will read before the class period:** Christopher Columbus is often considered to be "the man who found America". He is a celebrated figure in American history. Several cities in United States have been named after him and since 1937 the second Monday in October has been celebrated as federal holiday called Columbus Day. However, this is not the whole truth about Columbus.

Christopher Columbus (1451-1506) was a native of city of Genoa in Italy. Like a growing number of people in Europe, he was convinced that the earth is not flat but round in shape and therefore there is a way to reach India by sailing west from Europe. India was important for Europeans especially because of highly lucrative spice trade. The Portuguese had already found a route to India by sailing around African continent, however that was a relatively slow option. Transportation by land was even slower and less efficient in the 15th century, a time before railroads or decent road network. Therefore to find a shorter route to India would mean an opportunity to make a lot of profit. Among other sailors, Columbus spent years looking for a financier to fulfill his dream of finding that route.

Finally Columbus managed to convince the rulers of newly formed kingdom of Spain of his idea. In 1469 king Ferdinand of Aragon married Isabella, the queen of Castily, thus uniting the two kingdoms into what we call Spain today. Spain rivaled Portugal in Indian trade as well as conquering new territories outside of Europe. To beat the Portuguese, Ferdinand and Isabella

agreed to finance Columbus' voyage and so on 1492 he set sail from the Spanish port of Palos in order to reach India.

The most interesting point of view in considering Columbus as the man who found America is that he did not look for it. Rather, finding America was an accident or an unintended side product. As mentioned, Columbus was aware that earth is a globe but he had severely miscalculated its size and was totally unaware that instead of just one ocean, there were two oceans and two continents (North America and South America) between Europe and Asia. Furthermore, looking specifically at the history of the United States, it is useful to point out that Columbus actually never set foot on North American continent. All four of his voyages across the Atlantic were destined to Caribbean islands (e.g. modern day Cuba, Jamaica). Apparently Columbus died in 1506 convinced that he had reached the islands close to India.

Map: Columbus' four voyages: <https://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/exhibitions/columbus-and-his-voyages>

Regardless, Columbus' voyages started a process probably unparalleled in human history. His achievements led to further exploration by European powers, colonialization of American continents, almost total destruction of native populations and cultures, Atlantic triangular trade, exchange of plants and animals and many other phenomena in history.

**Activity:** "Columbus: hero or a villain?"

**In 1492 Columbus wrote on his diary:** *"They have no iron. Their spears are made of cane.... They would make fine servants.... With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want."*

The traditional way of portraying Columbus is that he was a fearless hero, who crossed the Atlantic and found the New World. However, without ridiculing his courage, skills in navigation and sailing it would be useful to study Columbus from another angle as well.

With that in mind:

- a) Search for 2-3 additional excerpts of Columbus' diary entries (they are easily available online) in which he describes the natives he met. Read them through, please remember to carefully evaluate the reliability of the source! (10 minutes)
- b) Find out who is Howard Zinn (5minutes).
- c) Find a clip from youtube/ a newspaper article etc. In which Howard Zinn describes Columbus' views and actions. Watch/ read it. (10 minutes)

Based on a, b and c please write a short essay (150-200 words) with a title: **Columbus, an alternative interpretation**. Submit the essay to electronic classroom. (20 minutes)

## **B) Lesson number 5. Topic: “American history: Independence and Civil War”**

**Before the class period:** students are instructed to read the text about Constitutional Convention (below) together with other texts discussing the causes of the American Revolution, major battles of the Revolutionary War and mini biographies of Thomas Jefferson and George Washington. Together the texts are about 8 pages in length (double spaced, font size 12) and they can be downloaded from the electronic classroom.

### **During the class period (75 minutes):**

- 1) Screening of a video on youtube: “Who Won the American Revolution?”, seventh episode of a 48-episode series called Crash Course US History (by John Green), 13 minutes  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3EiSymRrKI4&index=7&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtMwmepBjTSG593eG7ObzO7s>
- 2) Discussion about readings and video in groups of 4-6 students (2-3 minutes). Each student shares one thing he/ she paid attention to.
- 3) Discussion about readings and video together (2-3 minutes). Each group shares one thing they discussed in smaller groups.
- 4) Activity on Constitution and Bill of Rights, 45 minutes.
- 5) Discussion on activity, instructions for next class period, 10 minutes.
- 6) Homework: “Read the texts about the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln on electronic classroom. Choice of two assignments: a) Write a short essay (150-200 words) with a title “Was Lincoln the Great Emancipator?” or b) Read the Gettysburg Address, a link to original text is provided. Write a short essay (150-200 words) on why it has been considered such an important address. Include

one section of the address and analyze it (what does it mean, why did you choose that section). Submit the essay to electronic classroom.

**Text that students will read before the class period:** Fighting against and eventually overthrowing a government has many times proven to be easier than building a new system of government to replace it. This is true in case of United States as well. The thirteen colonies that rose against England were quite different from one another thus making it difficult to agree on a new constitution and a form of government. First attempt towards that aim is known as the Articles of Confederation from 1777, a year after the Declaration of Independence while the Revolutionary War was still ongoing. The fact that last of the thirteen colonies ratified the document only in 1781, says a lot about the disagreements among the colonies. Soon after the Revolutionary War the states realized that the Articles of Confederation emphasized the independent status of each state thus allowing very little power to central government. As a result representatives of the states gathered in Philadelphia in 1787 in order to create a new constitution. This convention is referred to as the Second Constitutional Convention.

Slavery was the pivotal question that divided the states in two camps regarding politics, economics and culture. Naturally these aspects are overlapping but they all are closely related to the institution of chattel slavery.

Economy in the South was based on agriculture and slave labor. Especially important crops were tobacco and cotton, both of which require a lot of manual labor. Since slave labor was very cheap, there was hardly any incentive for technological development. At the same time the North was much more industrialized and relied more on foreign trade. Because of this difference South and North disagreed on tax and tariff policies.

The political influence of slavery has to do with number of representatives each state has in the national parliament. The United States Congress consists of two chambers: The Senate and The House of Representatives (compare this with the Finnish parliament that has only one chamber). Each state has two senators regardless of the population but the number of representatives in the House is based on population. Therefore it is in the interest of each state to have as large a population as possible. This created a problem for the South: how to count the slave population? Including them in the population would at least suggest that they were citizens and therefore had same rights as white men. If this was the case, how could slavery be justified in the first place? On the other hand, if slaves were not included in the census, southern states would lose power compared to northern states. Compromise was the infamous decision stating that 3/5 of the total number of slaves were counted to define the number of representatives. Whereas this decision may have been a case of political pragmatism for the people who made the decision, it is yet another example of the inequality between white and black people in early United States history. The symbolic message is that a black person is not really a person but a commodity.

The cultural aspect of slavery can be seen in the structure of societies in the North and South. One should not have illusions of racially or socially equal North but compared to South wealth was more equally distributed and civil rights were more developed. A southern slave owner had a legal right to treat his slaves as he wished: physical, mental and sexual violence was not uncommon.

### **Activity**

Study the Constitution of the United States and the Bill of Rights (first ten amendments from 1789) and answer the questions below. Feel free to use any other source you



need as long as you remember to carefully evaluate the validity of them. Submit your answers on a word file to the electronic classroom.

Constitution: [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_transcript.html)

Bill of Rights: [http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill\\_of\\_rights\\_transcript.html#text](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html#text)

1. Why do you think the constitution starts with the words "We, the people of the United States...". What is the message?
2. In the beginning of the first article of the constitution it says that legislative power belongs to the Congress. How does this compare with the political system in Finland? How is the structure of US congress different from the Finnish parliament?
3. The first section of the second article discusses how President of the United States is elected. Choose **three** points that you find particularly interesting and present them with comments.
4. The first section of the third article defines the role of the Supreme Court. Together with the Congress and the President it constitutes the three branches of government in the US. Compare this with the Finnish system you have studied in class YH1 (Politics and society). How does the American model reflect the Montesquieu (18th century French philosopher) doctrine?
5. Take a look into the first ten amendments to the constitution (Amendments I-X, halfway through the page). Choose **three** points that you find particularly interesting and present them with comments.

**C) Lesson number 7. Topic: "American history: from 1960's to present day"**

**Before the class period:** students are instructed to read the text about John F. Kennedy (below) together with other texts discussing the 1960's, end of the Cold War, terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001 and the aftermath of them. Together the texts are about 8 pages in length (double spaced, font size 12) and they can be downloaded from the electronic classroom.

**During the class period (75 minutes):**

- 1) Screening of a video on youtube: "Terrorism, War and Bush 43", 46th episode of a 48-episode series called Crash Course US History (by John Green), 15 minutes  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nlsnnhn3VWE&index=47&list=PL8dPuuaLjXtMwmepBjTSG593eG7ObzO7s>
- 2) Discussion about readings and video in groups of 4-6 students (2-3 minutes). Each student shares one thing he/ she paid attention to.
- 3) Discussion about readings and video together (2-3 minutes). Each group shares one thing they discussed in smaller groups.
- 4) Activity on John F. Kennedy, 45 minutes.
- 5) Discussion on activity, instructions for next class period, 10 minutes.
- 6) Homework: "Journalist Bill Bishop has written a book called "Big Sort" about the cultural divide between liberals and conservatives in contemporary America. Read the text discussing the Big Sort in the electronic classroom. Then watch the interviews of the ex-president Bill Clinton and Bill Bishop on Youtube, links are available in the text. Write a short essay (150-250 words) with the title "Why do president Clinton and Bill Bishop think that the Big Sort has a negative impact on America?" Submit the essay to electronic classroom.

**Text that students will read before the class period:** Sometimes people talk about generation experiences. The term refers to an event or a phenomenon that whole generation can relate to. Examples of a generation experience include 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 or the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989.

For those Americans and people in many other countries as well, who lived in the early 1960's, 22<sup>nd</sup> of November in 1963 was definitely a generation experience. Everyone remembers where they were when they heard about the assassination of John F. Kennedy (commonly known as JFK) in Dallas, Texas. JFK became fourth and so far the last US president to be assassinated while in office. Previously Abraham Lincoln (1865), James A. Garfield (1881) and William McKinley (1901) had shared the same fate.

Assassination of JFK is likely to be most well-known and investigated assassination of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to the official commission investigating the murder, known as the Warren Commission, a man called Lee Harvey Oswald shot President Kennedy. Furthermore the commission declared that Oswald acted alone and that there was no conspiracy behind the assassination. Oswald himself was murdered two days after the assassination by Jack Ruby.

However, there is a great number of books, movies and documentaries denying the official explanation of events. Depending on a source, Kennedy was assassinated by a conspiracy led by the Cuban socialist leader Fidel Castro, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) or its' Soviet counterpart KGB. The final truth might never come out but there is a lot of evidence that Lee Harvey Oswald could have not been solely responsible for the murder, if he was responsible for it at all.

Due to the assassination, JFK's time in the office was relatively short. However, a lot of important events took place during his presidency. The Cuban missile crisis in October 1962

almost led to a war between United States and Soviet Union. Most likely this war would have been fought with nuclear weapons, which both countries had frantically developed since the end of World War II. Fortunately negotiations between JFK and Nikita Khrushchev, leader of the Soviet Union, resulted in a peaceful solution of the crisis. One interpretation of the crisis is that it led to both countries realizing the enormous risks of nuclear war and encouraged them to improve diplomacy between Washington and Moscow.

Another highlight in the Kennedy presidency was the visit to Berlin in July 1963 and the famous address he gave in front of an enthusiastic crowd, known as the "Ich bin ein Berliner" - speech. As a result of the World War II both Germany and the capital city Berlin were divided into western and eastern parts following the cold war division, leaving the city in the Soviet controlled East Germany. To stop people leaving East Berlin, the authorities built a wall around the western part of the city in 1961 thus creating the best known symbol of the cold war, the Berlin Wall. JFK's visit to West Berlin was designed to prove the US support for the people of West Berlin and the address was clearly directed against Soviet Union and socialism.

The Kennedy family encountered tragedy again in 1968 as JFK's younger brother Robert was murdered in Los Angeles during his campaign for presidential candidacy. Robert Kennedy was shot by a Palestinian born citizen of Jordan named Sirhan Sirhan, whose motives were political. Sirhan felt that Robert Kennedy had betrayed the Palestinians by supporting Israel in the so called Six Day War. Sirhan was convicted to life time in prison and currently (December 2014) he is serving his sentence in San Diego, California.

JFK – behind the scenes?

A bit more malicious interpretation of JFK is that he was a player with a drug problem. At least one could say that there was a darker side of him as well. Although he was

married, he had several extramarital affairs, Marilyn Monroe probably being the most well known of them. The affairs were not exactly a well kept secret but in the 1960's they were not publicized like similar events have later been, therefore the affairs did not destroy his presidency. One can just imagine what president Bill Clinton thought about all this when his affair with Monica Lewinsky became public in the late 1990's.

In addition Kennedy consumed enormous amount of pain killers and other drugs to cure his several illnesses (such as colitis, prostatiti and osteoporosis). Medication caused insomnia, for which Kennedy took a lot of other drugs to help him sleep. Combined JFK took at least 12 different drugs on a regular basis, some of which probably lowered his ability to fulfill his duties as the president of the United States. We cannot tell for sure how all this influenced his decision making e.g. in the case of the Cuban missile crisis, but there has been a lot of speculation about it.

**Activity:** watch the "Ich bin ein Berliner" –address on Youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56V6r2dpYH8> and read the original text at

<http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/speech-3376> . To find out more about the context,

please visit: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ich\\_bin\\_ein\\_Berliner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ich_bin_ein_Berliner)

Write a short essay (150-250 words) with the title "What did Kennedy mean by "Ich bin ein Berliner"?" Submit the essay to electronic classroom.

### **Co-operation with BHSN**

As part of the Fulbright-program I made weekly visits to Bloomington High School North (BHSN). Although I observed classes in other subjects as well, most of the time I spent observing history classes taught by my mentor teacher Patricia Wilson. With her approval and guidance I gathered a group of twelve volunteer students who wrote a short story about themselves with the title "A Day in the Life of a BHSN student". Later, students in USA! USA! -course will read the stories and write at least one BHSN student a similar story of themselves. Further correspondence between participants is encouraged but naturally voluntary and unsupervised. Purpose of this is to provide students in both schools a chance for first hand cultural exchange with a peer.

This is a first step in cooperation between BHSN and Vaskivuori High School. In the future I would like to see academic work conducted together using online tools, such as google documents, google drive etc. Possible topics include (but are not limited to) research papers on structure of government, social issues, cultural similarities and differences in respective countries.

## **Dissemination of Capstone project**

In order to further disseminate the results of my Capstone project in particular and the Fulbright experience in general I will work together with the Association for Teachers of History and Social Studies in Finland. So far we have agreed that I will write an article for the newsletter (release date in March 2015) and give a presentation on developing a multidisciplinary course at the annual summer seminar in June 2015. We are also looking into possibilities of presenting at faculty meetings.

In addition I have agreed with the principal of Vaskivuori High School that we will contact the five other high schools in the city of Vantaa to discuss about ways in which I can help them to design similar courses.