Instructor: Dr. Brent Riffel, Ph.D.
Email: Brent.Riffel@Canyons.edu

Dear Student,

Welcome to History 111, a survey of United States History to 1877. This course will be 100% online course, and as such does not include in-class, face-to-face meetings at any point during this semester. All readings, assignments, quizzes, exams, and papers will be entirely online and can be completed anywhere you have access to the internet, and as long as they are turned in on time.

Although this is an online class you will find me to be regularly available to answer any questions you might have. I genuinely want each of you to succeed in this course, so please don’t hesitate to contact me at any point during the semester. I will also be communicating with you through frequent class announcements and discussion boards, so my hope is that you will not feel as if you are taking this class alone, but rather that you are part of a team all working to succeed and learn more about American history.

Since we do not have any on-ground class sessions, in order to succeed in this course, it will be vital for you to check for any class updates as posted in the Announcements section of our class Canvas site consistently (preferably two or more times per week). There you will find information regarding upcoming exams, assignments, or any changes to our schedule as needed. Please note that the Canvas site for this course will not be available until the first day of instruction of this semester. In the meantime, if you have any questions about this course, please let me know by contacting me via email.

Important Learning Management System Information
Previously you might have used Blackboard, a learning management system (LMS), to access your course. This course utilizes a system called Canvas for our textbook, discussions, grades, exams, quizzes, essays, and other resources. Please log into Canvas by visiting https://coc.instructure.com by the end of first day of the semester. Login information will be emailed to you prior to the start of the course. If you haven’t used or want a refresher on Canvas, please visit the Canvas Guide for Students, https://guides.instructure.com/m/4212 All students must successfully log in to the class Canvas site by 11:59 PST on the first day of class. You will be able to log in about 24 hours earlier than that if you wish.

Required Materials and Class Expectations
In order to succeed in this course, you must have regular, consistent access to the internet. You may access the course Canvas site from the college’s library, computer labs, or from your local public library. You will also need to obtain, if you have not already done so, a valid MyCanyons email address through which you can be contacted. If you have not already done this you can do so here: https://my2.canyons.edu/WebAdvisor

If you have more general questions about online courses, or if you would like to know the technical requirements (recommended software, browser, and other related information), you may find the College of the Canyons Distance Learning site useful: http://www.canyons.edu/Offices/Distance_Learning/
**Required Readings**

Catherine Locks, et al. *History in the Making: A History of the People of the United States of America to 1877*. The textbook for this course is 100% online, downloadable, and best of all, free. You can access the textbook via the web here: [http://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/books/1/](http://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/books/1/)

If you have any trouble accessing the text at any time during the semester, please contact your instructor. An additional copy of the text will be posted to Canvas. There will specific questions drawn from the textbook as part of class discussions and quizzes, so be sure to keep up with the readings.

Assigned Primary Source Readings (these will be distributed each week on Canvas). Each week’s reading assignment is listed in the class discussion section on Canvas. Students are expected to have read the assignment prior to the final class of each week. The readings assignments in the History in the Making text are designed to provide you with supplemental background information. To succeed in this course, however, you will need to take good notes as well as keep up with the readings.

**Tools for Success**

Although this is a completely, 100% online course, your “attendance” is still critical in order to succeed. In fact, in order to complete this course, you must complete the first assignment by the 11:59 PST on the first day of the semester. This first assignment will not require much beyond answering a few simple questions that let me know you are able to log in to Canvas and that you are participating on the first day. This is basically the same requirement for face-to-face classes, where students must be present on the first day.

Furthermore, you will be expected to regularly participate in online discussion boards, as well as to complete written assignments on time. This is not a self-paced, or correspondence course, so you will need complete all coursework by the due date, and you will not be allowed to go back and revise old assignments. For the first week of the semester, failure to complete the first assignment by the due date will result in you being dropped from the course.

Here are a few other tips for succeeding in this course that you might keep in mind:

1. **Check the Specs** - Make sure you have the proper software and other technical requirements and specifications before the course begins. You don’t want to fall behind early or be dropped from the course, so check to see that you are able to log in to Canvas at least a few days prior to the beginning of the semester (even if your specific course isn’t yet available). Then, if there are any problems, you’ll have time to seek help and fix things.

2. **Create a schedule** (and stick to it) - Make a calendar for the course, and plot all of the due dates and important assignments. By doing this, you’ll be able to keep up with the course and not have to log in to Canvas every time you’re wondering what’s coming up in the course. Online classes can move quickly, so it’s essential be aware of what’s happening. In addition, consider printing your syllabus so you’ll have a handy hard copy.

3. **Organize** – This goes along with creating a schedule and is generally a good idea for all of your courses, whether online or not. One good way to organize is to create a dedicated workspace, notebook, or area in your home where you keep all of your online class materials. This will help you stay on task and complete your coursework on time.
4. **Stay connected** – Don’t hesitate to contact your instructor with questions. There’s no such thing as a dumb question, and they are there to help you and guide you through the course. Also, don’t be shy about connecting with your fellow students. If you’re unclear about something, post a question on a discussion board; chances are, you’re not alone and others have the same question. By doing this, you’ll be doing yourself, and your peers, a favor.

5. **Find Your Motivation** – Successful online students are self-starters, who set their own goals and try their best to meet them. But that doesn’t mean we were all born that way. Whatever your shortcomings as a student, this class is an opportunity to restart your academic career and succeed. If you would like to know about how to succeed in colleges classes of all types, contact your instructor, or your counselor, or both.

**Disability Accommodation**
COC provides services for students with disabilities in compliance with the American Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If you need any accommodation in order to complete the coursework for this class, or if you have any questions about whether you meet the qualifications to receive services, please contact the College of the Canyons Disabled Students Program & Services (DSPS):
[http://www.canyons.edu/offices/dsps/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.canyons.edu/offices/dsps/Pages/default.aspx)

**Course Description and Learning Outcomes**
This course covers the history of the United States from the arrival of European settlers on the continent, their encounters with Native American peoples, through the formation of an American government to the American Civil War and, finally, to the end of Reconstruction in 1877. Because this country contains within so many competing ideas, goals, cultures, ethnicities, and other elements, we will approach this course thematically. As part of the final exam, students will be assessed based on the following outcomes:

1. Assess the history of America and the United States from the Colonial period through Reconstruction.

2. Analyze the cultural, social, and political diversity embodied in the American experience from the sixteenth century through 1877.

3. Examine the origins of the United States Constitution and the milestone events associated with that document from the ratification process through the Civil War and Reconstruction, including the implementation of federalism and the Bill of Rights.

I hope you enjoy this semester, and I look forward to working with you to succeed in this course. As I previously noted, I will be regularly observing and participating in classroom discussions, so I look forward to “seeing” you there. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact me at Brent.Riffel@Canyons.edu

Brenton E. Riffel
Professor of History
Coordinator, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning
School of Social and Behavioral Sciences
College of the Canyons
Valencia, California
Brent.Riffel@Canyons.edu
(661) 362-3151

Riffel – HIST 111 Orientation Letter