# UNITED STATES HISTORY

FINAL PROJECT: “TWO SIDES TO EVERY STORY”

For your final project, you will be preparing a brief presentation to your classmates. In a four-minute speech, you will have to briefly present PRO/CON arguments and your stance on a controversial issue in modern American history.

Process:

1. Step One: Select a controversial event or person from recent American history (1990-present). Some topics will be suggested but you are allowed to select your own topic IF you obtain prior approval from your teacher.
2. Step Two: Research your topic in order to find out different interpretations of it. There are, in reality, *more than two* sides to every story, but you will only have time to present a brief summary of the PRO/CON arguments.
3. Step Three: Boil down all of your research so that it can fit within a 4 minute presentation. Your presentation may have visuals if you wish but it is not required. What will be graded is the content and your delivery of it.
4. Step Four: Decide which perspective (PRO/CON)—based on your research—should be the most accepted story of that event or person. What interpretation seems to best “fit” the facts? Where do you stand on this issue and why?
5. Step Five: Write out and practice your presentation. DO NOT think that you can “wing-it.”

# Timeline:

1. May 1-3: Research Phase One. (On Your Own)
   1. This is a crucial step. You must do some work on your own. Learn the basic facts about your topic. If you find that topic unmanageable, get permission to switch to another one.
   2. Start with your textbook. The textbook will give you the “Cliff’s Notes” version of the topic and sometimes even provides differing interpretations. Then move to learn more by using library databases and—gasp!—real books. Figure out the basic PRO/CON positions people take on your topic.
   3. I will be interviewing each of your briefly to ask what you are interested in working on and what angle you might take in presenting it.
2. May 4: Library Research.
   1. THIS IS NOT TIME TO START YOUR RESEARCH; THAT SHOULD ALREADY HAVE BEEN DONE. This is the time to *refine* your research and allow your teacher to help guide you.
   2. This is a good point to make summaries of the possible PRO/CON perspectives of your event/person to decide which two that your will be using in your final presentation.
3. May 5: Write and Practice Presentation.
   1. Write out your presentation. Make yourself notecards. Eliminate anything that is not necessary to present your interpretations of the event/person.
   2. Practice giving your presentation. Have a friend watch you. Webcam or Skype your presentation (record it and watch yourself). Time yourself. Note your delivery of the words.
   3. May 18- Start presentations. Volunteers will go first. Presentations will continue through the exam period if needed. IF YOU HAVE VISUALS (powerpoint, etc.), please send them to your teacher ahead of time.

Grading:

You will be graded as a whole on your presentation rather than assigning point values for each part. Overall, content is worth 80% of your score and delivery is worth 20%.

1. Content – 80%
   1. PRO
      1. Do you summarize (quickly and clearly) the major facts of those who are in favor of the issue/person/stance?
   2. CON
      1. Do you summarize (quickly and clearly) the major facts of those who are opposed to the issue/person/stance?
   3. Your Conclusion
      1. Do you indicate which perspective you think best fits the facts and why?
2. Delivery – 20%
   1. Time Limits – Your presentation can be NO shorter than 3 minutes, 55 seconds and NO longer than 4 minutes and 15 seconds. You will get a visual reminder when you have reached the 4 minute mark and a visual STOP cue when you reach 4 minutes and 15 seconds.
   2. Voice Delivery – You must speak clearly, at a steady rate, and a sufficiently loud volume to carry to the back of the room; avoid vocalized pauses such as “um,” and “uh.”
   3. Body Posture/Gestures – Stand tall; face forward and look at your audience. Don’t shuffle your feet, make distracting hand gestures, or suggest in your tone or posture that you don’t care about your presentation. Be in command of the audience.

Possible Topics:

This is not an exhaustive list. Anywhere there is controversy, there’s bound to be two sides to the story. If you have a topic that interests you and would like to pursue it, please ask your teacher for permission first. There are enough topics out there that everyone can have his or her own topic without overlap in or between classes. Many of the topics below have sub-topics that can be explored. For example, abortion could be broken in fetal heartbeat bills, partial birth abortions, length time for the abortion window, shutting down clinics, etc.

* Legalizing medical marijuana
* Funding stem cell research
* Marriage Equality (DOMA, Prop 8)
* Abortion debate
* Teaching evolution vs. creationism in schools
* Bill Clinton’s impeachment scandal
* Welfare Debates of the 1990s
* *Citizens United* case
* USA PATRIOT ACT
* Global warming
* Vaccines/Autism
* U.S. foreign policy – Israel/Iran
* Illegal immigration
* Affirmative action
* Charter Schools Movement
* Global intellectual copyright (piracy)
* Physician assisted suicide
* Fracking/energy policy
* Gun control – 2nd Amendment
* Media violence (video games, movies, TV)
* #BlackLivesMatter
* Universal healthcare (Obamacare)
* Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (and its repeal)
* Election of 2000
* Invasion of Iraq, 2003
* Occupy Wall Street movement
* Transgender Rights
* Standardized testing and the Common Core
* Voter Fraud and Voter-ID Laws
* Bans on Sugary Drinks to fight obesity epidemic
* Use of drones in warfare
* Wealth inequality in America currently