Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am so pleased to be teaching social studies to your child at SOME HIGH SCHOOL this year. As this is my first year at SOME HIGH SCHOOL, I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself and to make you aware of the classroom guidelines and rules I have for the upcoming 2014/2015 school year.

First, a little about myself; I am new to teaching but not new to history. I have an MA in history, focusing on East Asia, from the University of Maryland College Park and will be finishing an MAT in Social Studies from the University of Central Florida this fall. As you may have guessed, I’m not a Florida native. I was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and lived in various areas within the state until 2010. My husband’s job transferred to the Orlando area and that is how I came to Florida. It’s been really nice not having to deal with snow in the winter! I am very passionate about history, civics, and cultural exchange and I hope to share this passion with my students and to develop their passions and interests as well.

**Expectations** for myself, my classroom, and my students for the coming school year are as follows:

* Learning will happen every day. Not all students learn in the same way or at the same pace. But there is always insight to be gained, whether it comes from a textbook, a presentation, a fellow student’s comments, or self-reflection. Everyone in the classroom, including the teacher, should be open to new ideas and reflection. Students should come to class ready and willing to learn.
* The social studies classroom will be safe and pleasant place to be. To promote learning, a positive environment that is welcoming to everyone is necessary. I will treat all students with respect and expect that the students will extend this same respect to me and to their peers. History contains some sensitive and controversial topics. In order to address these topics, students will need to be aware of how their comments and actions can affect others. Failure to treat others with respect and decency will result in conversations with me and/or required disciplinary action if corrections to behavior are not observed.
* Timeliness is the key to covering all the material required. There’s a lot of ground to be covered in each of the courses I teach, be it World History or American History. In order to adequately discuss each topic, as well as ensuring there is enough time to prepare for the various mandated tests, I expect students to be on time to class, to complete their homework or projects in a timely manner (in accordance with the rules below), to be prepared for in-class discussions based on assigned homework and the planner that will be sent home for each unit, and to make up any excused assignments, quizzes, or tests as soon as possible.
* Open communication is the best way to discover, explore, and rectify problems. I believe that open communication is the best way to build trust and to ensure that problems do not get out of hand or remain undiscovered for too long. I encourage my students to speak with me if they have any concerns about the class or the material. I encourage parents/guardians to ask questions about the class. I welcome parent/teachers conferences as a way to discuss student growth. In return, I will reach out to parents/guardians to express any concerns I may have about your student so that we may work together on figuring out the best way to help the student be successful. I would also like to share positive moments should the time/opportunity arise.

In conjunction with my expectations, I have a few set rules. There may be additional rules that will be communicated at the end of the first week of school. Each class will have the opportunity to discuss with me and each other what additional rules, if any, they feel should apply to their classroom during the first day of school. As the students are now in high school, I believe it is important that they have a say in determining and policing their own behavior. I understand that there may be outside causes that affect students’ in-classroom behavior. However it is important for students or their parents/guardians to communicate with me in the case that outside causes are having an impact in the classroom so appropriate steps can be taken to deal with it. Students should also be prepared to face the consequences should they decide to violate the rules outlined here and ones they may compose for their class.

**Rules**

* Personal electronic devices, including MP3 players, cell phones, beepers, smart watches, and other items (as new ones are invented) are not to be used in the classroom unless specifically stated by the teacher. There may be some limited opportunities for students to use cell phones in learning activities but these times will be explicitly stated by the teacher. Failure to follow this rule will result in initial confiscation on the first violation, with the device claimable at the end of class, confiscation with the device to be picked up from the office at the end of the school day on the second violation, and confiscation with the device to be picked up from the office at the end of the day by a parent on the third violation. Further violations will be dealt with using escalating discipline as necessary.
* Students are expected to enter the classroom on time, find their seats, and begin working quietly on the posted warm-up exercise on the board.
* Students must be respectful of the teacher and each other. This means not talking while the teacher or another student is talking. Remain silent and raise a hand to indicate a desire to speak – each student who wishes to talk about a given topic will be given the opportunity to speak in turn.
* Homework and projects count! Homework is not assigned for frivolous reasons or as another way to generate points towards a grade. Homework is to help students remember what was learned in class or to prepare for upcoming classroom discussion. Failure to complete assignments will be detrimental to a student’s grade. If four or more assignments are not completed within a three-week period, I will be contacting parents/guardians to find out if there are any external causes for failure to complete assignments and to make sure everyone involved is aware of the consequences.
* Only one student may leave the classroom for the bathroom at a time. Excessive time away from the classroom will be addressed and dealt with as dependent upon the cause. Specific policies for leaving the classroom will be determined (i.e. instructor permission, sign-out sheet, etc.) after the first day of class with student collaboration.
* Students are expected to follow all codes of conduct outlined in the county handbook. Violations will be dealt with according to the terms laid out in the handbook.

**Disciplinary Action** for rule violations – aside from those already specified above or in the county handbook – may include the following:

* After school detention to occur within 2 school days following rule violation
* Assignment of additional homework relating to the nature of the violation
* A letter or phone call home to parents/guardians
* Referral to school administration

**Grades** will be calculated based on the following criteria:

Classroom Participation 10%

Quizzes 10%

Homework Assignments 20%

Projects (~ 2 projects per quarter) 30%

Unit Tests 30%

Students who have an excused absence will be able to make up missed assignments, quizzes, and tests. Arrangements should be made to make up missed work on the first day the student returns to school. No more than 10 school days may pass between return to school and completing make up work.

Students will also have an opportunity for a single retake or redo of any project or unit test on which they fail to score above 70%. Students will have no more than 5 school days between the return of a score below 70% and retaking or resubmitting a project or unit test. The higher of the two scores will be entered into the grade book.

As mentioned earlier, I believe it is important for high school students to have some say over the rules for the classroom and in policing their own behavior. However, it is also extremely important for parents/guardians to remain active participants in their students’ school lives at this time. Therefore I would like to enlist your assistance in helping the students to succeed. Parents and guardians can help reinforce positive behaviors. I need your help to make sure students are reading, completing homework assignments, and studying for tests at home. And if students are not, please be aware of and make clear to them that there will be consequences in the form of lower grades and possible disciplinary action. I look forward to forming a relationship with students and their parents/guardians that will lead to positive behavior and study habits. Every student can learn if they have the will and the necessary support. Together we can provide the support to the students and help them find the will.

I can be contacted in a variety of ways. I can be reached by phone at SOME HIGH SCHOOL by calling 407-555-5555 ext. 555 and leaving a voice mail for me. I will respond as soon as I am able. When the individual classroom blogs are open, I will be sending home a note providing the URL for each class. You can send me a private message from the blog by clicking on my name (Ms Price) from the left side and choosing the Private Message option. Alternatively, I can be reached via email at eprice@somehighschool.edu or just feel free to drop by! I will be helping the academic tournament team and will be present in the school until 5 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays in my classroom, Room 103.

You can also reach me by mailing/faxing a letter to me care of the school if preferred.

To send a fax, please put ATTENTION EMILY PRICE as the subject and send the fax to 407-555-5556.

To send a regular letter, address it as follows:

Emily Price

C/O Some High School

123 Main Street

Altamonte Springs, FL 32701

If there are any questions or concerns at this time, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to meeting your students on the first day of class and seeing as many of you as possible on Back to School Night.

Cordially,

Emily Price