

SOPPADA for Social Studies Program

SUBJECT: Living History Offering -“**Living History Project: World War II and the Holocaust**”

OBJECTIVE: Reinvigorate Living History course offering; develop existing District asset into more opportunity for college bound students and District

PRESENT SITUATION:

As of Nov. 2012, Grade 12 social studies electives are no longer present.

The original WW2 Living History/PIG course fomented high level synthesis learning while putting students in contact with the community.

In the nine years since the half year course was first offered, amazing things happened to Hudson Falls High School. We are a sought after leader nationwide in World War II and Holocaust education (please see attached article in a forthcoming national publication). The instructor has received numerous national and state awards in building partnerships with important educational institutions. Our district has also been the subject of much positive media publicity, and has put on over thirty symposiums for the public and student body. Past students have also collected interviews and conducted research on over 150 individuals for our files; many of these subjects are now deceased. Since the start we have also built important contacts at home and abroad.

PROPOSED:

[Living History Project: World War II and the Holocaust

1 credit

Highly motivated senior (and junior) students will be presented with the unique opportunity to hone the critical habits of mind necessary for college while also serving the community and nation by collecting and preserving the oral histories of the fast fading World War II and Holocaust survivor generation. Qualified students will accept the responsibility to become the new witnesses as they actively rescue the evidence of the most cataclysmic event in recorded history. We will begin by exploring the historical context of World War II through lecture and textbook assignments, films and guest speakers. As the course unfolds, students will be presented with the discovery of the greatest crime in the history of the world, the Holocaust, through the eyes of our own veterans. Each student will be expected to take on a project of interest that will culminate in original historical material being preserved for future generations, laying the groundwork for publication. Students will also have the opportunity to work with our partners at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. and our friends at the Bergen Belsen Memorial in Germany, as well as the National World War II Museum in New Orleans. Our project has also been the subject to a film by USHMM in Washington D.C., and has been featured on ABC World News. A specially guided visit to the USHMM will be planned, and the groundwork for post graduate opportunities in the field will also be laid.

Students completing this course will fulfill the New York State 12th grade Participation in Government requirement.

Pre-requisite: Teacher Recommendation, summer preparation

Evaluation: Departmental Exam or Project]

The proposal is to extend the course into a full year for engaging interested juniors and seniors with the opportunity to interact and study with the remaining veterans of World War II and survivors of the Holocaust. Continuity of material, projects, student commitment and momentum from fall to spring would make this possible for the instructor. Our students will now produce and publish original historical material. Working with national outlets and institutions, this student work will be then used to create educational materials for use in

educational settings around the nation, a consummate higher level academic synthesis. As a side note, in the hands of trained teachers, Holocaust related materials have been proven to be highly engaging with all students, including the at-risk student population. See writing exemplar in Common Core State Standards Guide (distributed at Oct. 2012 HS faculty meeting).

Students enrolled in the class will become leaders in Holocaust education themselves. They will, in the words of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “rescue the evidence” before it goes to the grave.

With a full year we will maintain a level of opportunity and rigor for those students who aspire to stand out for college admissions and to be well prepared for the college experience. This is all the more important as our kids must also compete with students from more affluent districts, but we can offer our kids eye catching admissions folder experiences that others cannot.

Course Rationale:

World War II and the Holocaust provides one of the most effective subjects for an examination of basic moral and character issues. A structured inquiry into this history yields critical lessons for an investigation of human behavior. Study of the event also addresses one of the central mandates of education in the United States, which is to examine what it means to be a responsible citizen. Through a study of these topics, students come to realize that:

- Democratic institutions and values are not automatically sustained, but need to be appreciated, nurtured, and protected;
- Silence and indifference to the suffering of others or to the infringement of civil rights in any society can—however unintentionally—perpetuate the problems.
- The Holocaust was not an accident in history—it occurred because individuals, organizations, and governments made choices that not only legalized discrimination but also allowed prejudice, hatred, and ultimately mass murder to occur.
- American soldiers were confronted with trauma and tragedy beyond imagination. They, too, were confronted with choices they had to make.

Course Objectives:

1. For Hudson Falls High School to grow its reputation as a recognized leader in World War II/Holocaust education regionally and on the national level.
2. Expand the archives and knowledge base of the accompanying course website with original, student produced materials for use in educational settings everywhere. Work with producers of documentaries.
3. Produce a nationally circulated values/character educational materials, articles, and book based on the work of the new course.
 - a. The culmination of the course will be student produced and published original historical material for use in educational settings, consistent with the [highest levels of the Common Core State Standards](#).

Student Specific Objectives:

1. Students will actively study the history of World War II and the Holocaust using original testimony, original source documents, and conducting interviews with veterans/survivors.
2. Students will engage on topics like the advent of genocide and its historical roots, anti- Semitism, variety of meanings of resistance, psychology of perpetrators, the world response to the Holocaust and the importance of the Holocaust today, as well as growing Holocaust denial.
3. Students will learn how to analyze primary sources, draw conclusions through interpretations of testimony and documents, and in interviewing, create significant primary documents themselves.
4. Students will synthesize this data through ongoing reflective journaling, research writing, presentations, publications, and civic action.

ADVANTAGES:

- This elective will empower students to learn and collaborate with outside organizations to rescue the evidence of the greatest crime in the history of the world. This is one of the more pressing mandates of the USHMM, and one that will offer our students unprecedented opportunities.
- Students, properly trained, will actively produce material of historical significance. These materials will be archived and published, and will be available for the community as well as researchers anywhere in the world.
- Moreover, given the consortium wide “sharing” discussions, we will be positioning the Hudson Falls High School for a leadership role in history education. Perhaps it is also about leveraging and developing what we have, creating a product that others may wish to buy into in the future, perhaps via distance learning, helping to affirm our role as the flagship district in the county.

DISADVANTAGES:

- The longer we wait to begin, the window of opportunity to collect first person testimony and work directly with eyewitnesses narrows.
- Only one section is proposed at this time. There could be scheduling issues. However, solutions can be found to address these issues to create space in students' schedules, particularly seniors, to be able to include this class.
- Qualified student maximum enrollment is probably no higher than 25, with 16-22 being more likely. Original WW2 class averaged 17 students over 9 years of offering. This is consistent with AP course numbers, and given [the final product](#) (please click on link), it is recommended that Level 4 credit be considered.

ACTION:

1. SOPPADA proposal submitted Fall 2012.
2. Board approval by January, 2012 for course selection guide.
3. 2013-14 course begins.

PROJECTED COSTS:

Curriculum development: 20 hours at negotiated rate. Possibly waived by instructor.

- Supplies/Equipment: (Audio/Visual, cameras, etc.) Use History Club resources, if necessary. No new cost to district.
- Textbooks-use existing- also the following to be donated by 30th Infantry Division Veterans of World War II.
 - Textbook: Chartock, Roselle K; Spencer, Jack, *Can It Happen Again?: Chronicles of the Holocaust*.

- Reserve Textbook: Berenbaum, Michael, *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:

- Staff Development: We already have in house one of the most highly trained staff in the country, with numerous highly placed professional contacts. Letters provided upon request. The instructor is also applying to study in depth abroad this summer, touring authentic sites in three countries related to this course.

EVALUATION:

The success of the proposed change will be evaluated by:

- Departmental //administrative review
- Student exit surveys and feedback