

Schimelpfenig Middle School PACE Humanities

6th Grade World Cultures & Geography

2024-2025 Course Syllabus

Welcome to 6th grade PACE Social Studies. In this course, we'll be studying cultures around the world with an emphasis on the humanities. The units and ideas we will study are:

Unit 1 - Cultural Geography

The lessons in this unit are designed to help students develop an understanding of the factors that determine cultural identity. Students will learn about the six elements of culture: geography, language and education, religion, political systems, the Humanities, and family life (technology, values, arts, recreation, etc.). This foundational knowledge will underpin all successive units of study. Major skills practiced in this unit include reading maps, making and justifying decisions, and working cooperatively in teams.

Enduring Understandings

- Geography influences the development of culture

Essential Questions

- What is culture?
- What role has geography played in the development of cultures?

Unit 2 Cultural Foundations

The lessons in this unit are designed to help students develop an understanding of the factors that determine cultural identity. Students will continue to learn about the six elements of culture. This foundational knowledge will be used as students focus on the region of the Middle East. Major skills practiced in this unit include reading maps, making and justifying decisions, and working cooperatively in teams.

Enduring Understandings

- A culture's development is dependent upon its ability to adapt to or modify the environment.
- Institutional systems influence the development of every culture.
- The artistic elements of the Humanities play an important part in everyday life.

Essential Questions

- What are important cultural elements found in the Middle East?
- What role has geography played in the development of cultures in the Middle East?
- How are the artistic elements of the Humanities a part of everyday life?
- How are citizens able to participate and influence the political process?

Unit 3 – Cultural Diffusion

The lessons in this unit are designed to guide students to an understanding of cultural diffusion. They will analyze how ancient cultures affected one another in history, how past cultures affect the world today, and how contemporary cultures affect one another in modern day. Students will study the ways in which ideas transfer from place to place and the impacts they have. This unit focuses on honing skills in thesis generation, research, and analytical thinking.

Enduring Understandings

- Cultural diversity contributes to unique relationships among nations.
- The foundations of modern society are built upon contributions from the past.

Essential Questions

- What is cultural diffusion and how does it affect us?
- What can we learn from historical examples of cultural diffusion?
- What contributions of the past are evident in our culture today?

Unit 4 –Cultures in Transition

In this unit, students will be introduced to the Latin American and Sub-Saharan African regions. These cultural regions have been hindered by struggling economies and unstable governments. Students will discover that these regions' development can largely be attributed to a history of European colonialism and imperialism. Students will understand how the spread of nationalism in the 20th century resulted in widespread independence movements; however, the regions continue to face challenges in the modern era.

Enduring Understandings

- Geography plays a major role in a nation's economic development.
- Historical events affect the economic development of nations.

Essential Questions

- What are the characteristics of a developing nation?
- How does geography affect developing nations?
- Why have some nations developed more rapidly than other nations?

Unit 5 –Conflict and Cooperation

In this unit, students learn about the challenges of the 20th Century, including World War I, World War II, the Russian Revolution, and the Cold War. They also learn that compromise is essential for creating and maintaining a balance of power among nations and the role of global organizations such as the European Union and United Nations. Students will also compare the economic systems of communism and free enterprise, as well as their impact on human rights.

Enduring Understandings

- Personal, economic, and political decisions are affected by limited or unlimited governments.
- Power can be used to promote or to limit individual rights.
- Compromise is essential for creating and maintaining a balance of power among nations.

Essential Questions

- How would exercising my basic freedoms be different in a communist country?
- How do political and economic powers affect the rights of the citizens?
- How do conflict and/or cooperation affect the balance of power?
- How has history affected the development of Europe?

Unit 6 –Global Interdependence

The Global Interdependence unit concludes the 6th grade study of people of places in the contemporary world. China and Japan receive the most emphasis in this unit of study but other major countries from the Pacific Rim are also discussed. This concluding unit demonstrates that cultures are now more globally connected than in the past. The contact that results from this interdependence spreads cultural traits from one group to another. Modern communication technologies have blurred many of the differences among world cultures and decreased political, economic, social, and geographic barriers.

Enduring Understandings

- Communication technologies have connected the world by diminishing geographical barriers.
- Nations of the world have become increasingly interdependent.
- Governments affect the economic development of nations.

Essential Questions

- In what ways are we interdependent?
- How is my life enhanced by international trade?
- What role does government play in economic development?
- How has global communication decreased geographical barriers?