

Department of History and Social Sciences
Mission Statement and Values

Through inquiry-based approaches, the History and Social Studies faculty leads BB&N students in an exploration of the past. We ask our students to engage in a process of discovery by posing open-ended and interpretative questions that are linked to major developments in the United States and Global History. Furthermore, we encourage our students to form their own questions, use evidence, and propose their own arguments about the past. In addition to guiding their inquiry, the role of the faculty is to provide our students with some of the vital background information, as well as appropriate primary sources and academic scholarship. BB&N students who satisfy the history requirement should be able to find interpret, contextualize, analyze and synthesize evidence as well as draw conclusions and make arguments about each issue, particularly in writing.

We believe it is our obligation to prepare educate our students about the past to prepare them for informed and active participation as ethical citizens in their communities, in the the United States, and the world. As citizens who can formulate reasoned explanations about the past, they are well equipped to make judgments about the present, have the tools to envision the future and to promote social justice.

In order to accomplish these goals, our curriculum encourages students to gain an understanding of societies across the world and global systems as inescapably interdependent and complex. It asks students to gain perspective on their own biases and cultivate empathy by understanding the past through multiple perspectives, especially by exploring the experiences of marginalized and oppressed groups in the U.S. and across the World. It presents the past, and by extension the present, to be the result of choices rather than inevitable outcomes, and invites students to imagine alternatives. The History and Social Studies curriculum and faculty engage students with broad and varied courses that examine history, geography, economics, and government. Specifically, students use spatial, quantitative and qualitative data, maps and statistics to study place, patterns, processes, people and policies in order to understand the local to global consequences of actions.

As a faculty:

1. We value a balance of pedagogical approaches including seminar discussions, project and problem based assignments, as well as Socratic conversations.
2. We offer materials specifically tailored to promote and support different pedagogical approaches.
3. We offer assessments that best fit our classroom approaches.
4. We believe that all BB&N students have the ability to access all the courses we teach and, therefore, we do not sort our students into leveled courses.
5. We encourage a growth mindset by rewarding process as well as finished products, utilizing feedback and revision as a way to strengthen skills.

6. We believe in the value of individual exploration and commit substantial segments of time in all our course courses to individual research projects.
7. We believe that our students should learn to work collaboratively in and out of the classroom; for that reason, we value blended learning and other technology mediated collaborative approaches.
8. We believe that our students should be flexible problem solvers, and we want them to believe in their own capacity for improvement. We model that capacity for improvement by continuously improving our curriculum and methods.