*U.S. History (11th Gr.) New West Charter Instructor: Ms Hynes*

**Theory of American History Essay:**

**Pre-Writing Checklist**

* **Keep thesis and paper grounded in American history.** 
  + History can often branch off into multiple disciplines which it frequently intersects with. Some of you are writing about psychological, sociological, economic, political, or cultural topics in history, but be sure that your paper tracks some kind of historical trend over time, or discusses cause and effect, or continuity and change in order to draw conclusions. If your paper doesn't do any of these things, you're probably not writing a history paper.
* **Ensure that your thesis is persuasive, arguable, and worth exploring.**
  + Ask yourself: "Is my thesis a foregone conclusion by most people, like 'Racism is bad?'" If the answer is yes, you're probably not writing something that is "worth exploring". Perhaps try asking a slightly different question in your research if you find your thesis and evidence need to be expanded upon.
* **Ensure that you identify and deconstruct a counter-argument at some point in your essay - not during the conclusion!** 
  + This could be a counterargument to your overall thesis, or to one of your supporting points.
* **Ensure that you are choosing the most appropriate evidence to support your thesis, but also be honest about how thoroughly it supports your overall claim.** 
  + Don't make a grand conclusion where a sufficiently strong indication of a connection between the evidence and the thesis will suffice. It is a very scholarly attitude, especially in a discipline like history (which is the furthest thing from an exact science) to leave room for skepticism, doubt, and intellectual humility. Make your case, but analyze the evidence realistically, honestly, and fairly.
* **Don't let your paper get too long! Remember, you have only 5 pages, not including bibliography! I stop reading after that.** 
  + Make sure that everything you say is direct, meaningful, and worth saying. To the more wordy writers among us, keep trying to pare it down and you'll be surprised how a 10 page paper can turn into a 6 page paper.