

May 26, 2026

Dear Rising Juniors,

While we still have a few weeks left in this school year, it is also time to start thinking about next year. I am excited that I will be working with you in ECE United States History. We will study American history from 1607 to the 21st century. We will engage with documents, artifacts, literature, songs, and visual arts in a quest to develop a rich understanding of the American past. We will listen closely for voices that have been quiet or silent throughout history and strive to understand how incorporating those voices complicates the past. Of course, through our partnership with UConn, with successful completion of ECE United States History you will earn six college credits.

You will begin our course with the summer reading, in which you will read ONE of two books, either, David A. Price's *Love and Hate in Jamestown* or Camilla Townshend's *Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma*. Both are superb works of history and great reads, and each presents us with a unique view on the experiences in the earliest English colony in America, from the terrible to the triumphant. As you read, consider the following questions:

- What was the purpose of the Jamestown colony, and was it successful?
- Who does the book put at the center of the Jamestown story?
- How did an economy arise at Jamestown and what economic system ultimately came to support the colony?
- How did the relationship between the British and Powhatan Indians change over time? What was the true nature of the relationship between John Smith and Pocahontas?
- What role did the first African-Americans play in Jamestown and what was their societal status?
- How do we know about life at Jamestown, and how does the source of our knowledge shape our understanding?
- What is the long-term meaning of Jamestown in American history?

Your assignment for the summer is to read - carefully and deeply. (Consider buying your own so that you can write in it. As I write this, used copies of both books are available for under \$3.00 on Amazon. Please do not write in the school's copy!) Think about keeping a notebook with you as you read to record your thoughts or what you feel are especially powerful sentences related to the questions above.

On the second day of school we will have a conversation about Jamestown based on the books. Students will share their thoughts and ideas, as well as ask questions. We will explore the questions above, as well as how the two authors' views conflict and agree. Following that conversation, you will write an essay that examines some of the questions listed above. As with all things in our class, I urge you to be creative in your thinking; view our class as a safe space to take intellectual risks with the goal of doing something extraordinary.

Be sure to contact me at pvermilyea@region1schools.org should you have any questions. I wish you a great end to the school year and a wonderful summer. I look forward to working with you next year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Vermilyea". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "P".

Mr. Vermilyea