

Dear Facing History Parents,

For many students the third cycle of the *Facing History* course, focusing on the Middle East, has proven to be a particularly engaging and meaningful experience but also stressful and challenging. Attached you will find the calendar of due dates for this cycle's reading and writing assignments, tests and the final debates. Each assignment has a detailed written handout that will be available in the homework box in our classroom or I can email you a copy if you want. Feel free to e-mail me about the progress of your student if that would be helpful..

Characters: In the first week of the cycle each student be assigned a particular Middle East leader whom they will research throughout the cycle and represent during the televised debates in April. They will begin immediately working on their research papers (finding resources, taking notes, doing an outline and writing a rough draft).

Paper #1 - The Background Paper: We will spend class time training in research techniques as each student gathers appropriate material for the first paper on the background of their nation and group (history, culture, etc.). The paper should be written from the perspective of their leader. Three students will write a series of papers on different Middle East nations from the perspective of the current US administration.

Paper #2 - The Position Paper: For the second paper each student will describe the positions that their leader has on a host of Middle East issues, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Islamic Fundamentalism, the war in Iraq, Iran's nuclear program, etc. They will learn more sophisticated research skills for this paper, including social bookmarking on the Internet. The US reps will continue their papers on their Middle East nations.

The Debates: The last week of the cycle each student will demonstrate their research by participating in a simulated international conference where they give a 2-4 minute opening statement, make proposals, debate issues, give closing statements and vote. The debates will be aired on local TV in April (the date will be announced on the evaluations). You are welcome to attend the debates.

Following the News: Each student should continue following the International news on a daily basis through our class news portal: <http://oxfeed.pbworks.com>. We will continue to have a weekly news quiz.

Literature: In the first 2 weeks of the cycle students will read the first 9 chapters in the book Beirut to Jerusalem by Thomas Friedman. The written assignments for this may not be turned in late. Student will then choose one additional piece of literature about the Middle East to read and discuss in small groups.

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