**Welcome to the Big History Project**



Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to Edison Middle School and the Big History Project. This year we will be taking an exciting 13.8 billion year journey that will explore the history of our universe, and ultimately, our place in the universe.

All too often, students learn facts and skills but do not have the chance to connect them all in a meaningful way. Big History links different areas of knowledge into one unified story. It is a framework for learning about anything and everything. This unified story provides students with a deeper awareness of our past, that will better prepare them to help shape the future of our world. By giving students tools to incite exploration and connect knowledge, our aim is to help young people develop key critical thinking skills that can prove vital in any discipline they choose to follow in their academic/professional lives.

Big History is a true history course. It weaves concepts and themes from chemistry, physics, and biology, to help students understand a historical narrative and ultimately human civilizations past, present, and future. Big History covers 13.8 billion years of shared history, from the Big Bang to modernity. Big History explores common themes and patterns spanning vast time scales, helping us better understand people, civilizations, and the world we live in.

Please review the “Course Requirements and Expectations” below and sign the back of this sheet. Feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have at cainza@champaignschools.org or 351-3771. Thank you and I look forward to a wonderful and successful year!!

Sincerely,

Mr. Cain

**Course Syllabus**

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| Unit | Driving Question(s) | Duration |
| What is Big History? | * Why do we look at things from far away and close up?
 | 2 weeks |
| The Big Bang | * How and why do individuals change their minds?
* How and why did human understanding of the Universe change?
 | 2 weeks |
| Stars & Elements | * How can looking at the same information from different perspectives pave the way for progress?
 | 2 weeks |
| Our Solar System & Earth | * How and why do theories become generally accepted?
 | 2 weeks |
| Life | * How are we still evolving?
 | 2 weeks |
| Early Humans | * What makes humans different from other species
 | 3.5 weeks |
| Agriculture & Civilization | * Was farming an improvement over foraging?
* What makes human societies similar and different?
* Why do societies collapse?
 | 4 weeks |
| Expansion & Interconnection | * What are the positive and negative impacts of interconnection?
 | 4 weeks |
| Acceleration | * To what extent has the Modern Revolution been a positive or negative force?
 | 10 weeks |
| The Future | * What is the next threshold?
 | 3 weeks |

**Course Requirements and Expectations**

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| **Required Classroom Materials*** 1 folder labeled social studies
* 1 notebook specifically for social studies
* Pencils/pens
* highlighters
 | Your notebook will be divided into three sections labeled: Notes, Homework, and Vocabulary. It is extremely important that you keep all of your notes in your notebook because you will need to review them for the final end of year Little Big History Project.\*\*This course is different than most conventional social studies courses. There is no required textbook. Instead, all required and optional materials can be found at the website below. All students will receive a username and password to access the materials on the website.Website: [www.bighistoryproject.com](http://www.bighistoryproject.com) |

**Classroom Expectations**

* All students are expected to be in class on a daily basis unless they are absent from school. In the case of an unexcused absence, you will automatically receive a zero for any classwork for that day, but you will have the opportunity to make-up the work before or after school.
* When a student returns from an excused absence, they will be responsible for any handouts or assignments they may have missed. Extra copies of handouts are in a folder labeled “Big History” in the classroom.
* If a student is absent the day before a test, they are NOT excused from taking the test and must make arrangements to take the test before or after school.
* Collective Learning is a group endeavor, and students will be expected to actively participate in all classroom activities.
* Because of the nature of this course, students will be expected to complete all homework assignments prior to arriving to class. Homework assignments are designed to prepare students for the classroom activities and group discussions.

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| **Grading**The following percentages will make-up your quarterly grades:* Homework: 10%
* Tests/Quizzes/Projects: 70%
* Participation/Classwork: 20%
 | Please sign below after reading and discussing the information above:Parent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Student: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |