**U.S. HISTORY ITEM WRITER GLOSSARY**

The following glossary is a reference list provided for Item Writers and is **not** intended to comprise a comprehensive vocabulary list for students. The terms in this glossary pertain to the NGSSS, the *Specifications*, and the benchmark clarifications for U.S. History.

**American Exceptionalism**—A view in which the United States is believed to be an

extraordinary nation with a special role to play in human history–a nation that is unique and divinely ordained to lead the world toward democratic values.

**Americanization**—the process of assimilating immigrants into mainstream society by instilling the values and behaviors of American culture.

**Anarchism**—A radical political theory that opposes all forms of government; the act of opposing the dominant political leadership, often including acts of violence.

**Blue Collar**—Refers to a member of the working class who typically performs manual labor and earns an hourly wage; also used as a term to distinguish between social and economic classes. For example, neighborhoods, social events, and consumer spending patterns have been described as being white collar or blue collar.

**Brinkmanship**—the policy of being willing to go “to the brink of war” to preserve peace. The term was applied to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles’s foreign policy by his critics in the 1950s.

**Capitalism**—A market-based economic system in which individuals or corporations own and control factors of production; characterized by investment, economic incentive and risk, division of labor, free trade, and competition.

**Civil rights**—Basic rights of all citizens that are upheld by law. In the United States,

civil rights include the rights described in the Bill of Rights and in the amendments to

the Constitution.

**Communism**—A command-based economic system in which the factors of production are owned by the government and are operated by central planners who determine the type, quantity, price, and distribution of the goods that will be produced. It is often characterized by a single authoritarian party holding power.

**Conservatism—**A philosophy that resists rapid changes to established economic, political, and social institutions; characterized by an appreciation of stability, free enterprise, limited government, and traditional cultural norms.

**Domino Theory**—An idea that originated in the 1950s based on the belief that if one Asian country fell to communist rule then neighboring nations would also fall to communism.

**Fascism**—A philosophy or system of authoritarian government that advocates or exercises a single-party dictatorship, together with an ideology of nationalism, and assigns to the state control over every aspect of national life. It originated in Europe after World War I and is most commonly associated with Italy and Germany’s National Socialism, or Nazism.

**Feminism**—A commitment to equal economic, political, and social rights for women. In the early twentieth century, the women’s movement focused on issues such as suffrage and access to education. Since the 1960s, feminism has been largely concerned with other steps towards social equality, such as reproductive rights and equal pay for equal work.

**Free Enterprise**—an economic system in which private businesses and consumers are free to use their resources for production, consumption, and trade with limited government regulation. Free enterprise is associated with the concept of capitalism.

**Fundamentalism**—Belief based on traditional, strict, and more literal interpretation of religious texts, most commonly associated with certain segments of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Fundamentalism can also be applied in a political context.

**Glasnost**—A policy introduced in the Soviet Union by Mikhail Gorbachev in the 1980s that promoted political openness and freedom of expression; the Soviet policy was to use the media to make information available on some controversial issues in order to provoke public discussion, challenge government and party bureaucrats, and mobilize greater support for the policy of perestroika. The loss of the control of information through the media was one of the contributing factors to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

**Globalization**—the process by which the economies of countries around the world become increasingly integrated and interdependent; characterized by the worldwide integration of markets for goods, services, and capital.

**Imperialism**—a policy in which one country gains or expands political and/or economic

influence over foreign lands through military conquest or economic supremacy.

**Industrialization**—the establishment and subsequent growth of manufacturing and

mechanical production in a country; characterized by the growth of factories, technological advancements, and profound social developments.

**Inflation (Economic)**—An increase in overall prices caused by rising wages, an oversupply of money or credit (e.g., an increase in the amount of currency), an increase in the demand for goods, or a shortage in the supply of goods.

**Innovation**—the creation or introduction of a new idea in the form of a new product,

invention, or service or an improvement in organization or process.

**Isolationism**—the policy of avoiding or limiting involvement with other nations. This may be applied through restricted immigration, foreign policy (e.g., avoiding entangling alliances and nation building), or economic policy (e.g., high tariffs and protectionism).

**Jihad**—A belief within Islam calling for an uprising or struggle against threats to Islam. In a modern sense, it refers to armed action against persons and/or governments and is associated with groups such as al Qaeda.

**Liberalism**—a philosophy that advocates for change and reform to established economic, political, and social institutions and norms to resolve social inequities. Classical liberalism, from the 17th century through the early 20th century, emphasized individual freedom and the consent of the governed. Modern liberalism, in the 20th and 21st centuries, utilizes government policies to address societal inequities.

**Libertarian**—a person who believes in the primacy of individual rights and the exercise of free will. Modern libertarians view government as a potential threat to individual freedom and argue that the federal government should limit itself to duties expressly stated in the Constitution.

**Marxism**—A political and economic philosophy developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and described in The Communist Manifesto (1848). Marxism, or communism, was based on the premise that the capitalist system was corrupt and that it would eventually be overthrown by the workers, who would establish a classless society.

**McCarthyism**—A term that stems from Senator Joseph McCarthy’s accusations in the 1950s of communists in the federal government. The search for suspected communists in the United States was widely publicized, and the charges were indiscriminate and unsubstantiated. Today, the term is used in a pejorative manner.

**Militarism**—A government policy dedicated to maintaining a strong military force with a

willingness to use it aggressively to promote the country’s interest. It is also the involvement of members of the military in setting government policy or in the direct governing of the country.

**Nadir**—A reference to the low point in race relations beginning in the late nineteenth-century United States, coinciding with the period between *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Brown v. Board* *of Education*.

**Nationalism**—a feeling of extreme pride and loyalty citizens have for their country. It can also be defined as a national policy based on self-interest rather than the common goals of international groups or coalitions.

**Nativism**—an attitude and belief that immigrants and their cultural influences are undesirable.

**Pacifism**—the belief that opposes the use of war to resolve conflicts; can include the doctrines of nonviolence and passive resistance.

**Populism**—refers both to the People’s Party (a movement of farmers, workers, and middleclass reformers who protested the growing unequal distribution of wealth and political corruption during the Gilded Age) and a style of protest found throughout American history.

**Progressivism**—a reform movement that sought to improve economic, political, and social conditions during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Progressivism is associated with the desire to use science to solve societal problems and government to affect change.

**Radical**—A person who favors rapid, fundamental change in the existing economic, political and social order.

**Social Darwinism**—the social philosophy based on Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution that asserts humans, like other forms of life, competed for survival and that the “fittest” were the social elite. Therefore, Social Darwinism was used as a justification for imperialism, the denial of civil rights, and a justification for maintaining the societal status quo.

**Socialism**—A philosophy that espouses the utilization of government ownership or control of the means of production and the distribution of goods.

**Superpower**—A nation more powerful than most others that acts as a leader among nations; generally used after World War II in referring to the United States and the Soviet Union. While superpowers have often been considered those with the most destructive weapons, the term may also refer to nations with strong economies.

**Terrorism**—The use of violence, intimidation, and coercion to achieve an end, to gain

publicity for a cause, or to disrupt the normal functioning of society. In the twenty-first century, terrorism became a central issue in United States foreign policy.

**Vietnamization**—A policy of the Nixon administration to encourage the South Vietnamese to take more responsibility for fighting the war and enable the United States to gradually withdraw its soldiers from Vietnam.

**White Collar**—Refers to a salaried professional or an office worker in a professional, managerial, or administrative position; also used as a term to distinguish between social and economic classes. For example, neighborhoods, social events, and consumer spending patterns have been described as being white collar or blue collar.

**Yellow Journalism**—sensationalized reporting used by newspapers to attract readers and make profits. It was a contributing factor in the outbreak of the Spanish-American War and is still an element of reporting today.