

AP[®] United States History

About the Advanced Placement Program[®] (AP[®])

The Advanced Placement Program[®] has enabled millions of students to take college-level courses and earn college credit, advanced placement, or both, while still in high school. AP Exams are given each year in May. Students who earn a qualifying score on an AP Exam are typically eligible, in college, to receive credit, placement into advanced courses, or both. Every aspect of AP course and exam development is the result of collaboration between AP teachers and college faculty. They work together to develop AP courses and exams, set scoring standards, and score the exams. College faculty review every AP teacher's course syllabus.

AP History Program

The AP Program offers three history courses: AP European History, AP United States History, and AP World History: Modern. All three history courses focus on the development of historical thinking while learning required course content. Themes foster deep analysis by making connections and comparisons across different topics within the course.

Each AP History course corresponds to a typical introductory college history course.

AP United States History Course Overview

In AP U.S. History, students investigate significant events, individuals, developments, and processes from approximately 1491 to the present. Students develop and use the same skills and methods employed by historians: analyzing primary and secondary sources; developing historical arguments; making historical connections; and utilizing reasoning about comparison, causation, and continuity and change. The course also provides eight themes that students explore throughout the course in order to make connections among historical developments in different times and places: American and national identity; work, exchange, and technology; geography and the environment; migration and settlement; politics and power; America in the world; American and regional culture; and social structures.

RECOMMENDED PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for AP U.S. History. Students should be able to read a college-level textbook and write grammatically correct, complete sentences.

AP United States History Course Content

The course content is organized into commonly taught units of study that provide a suggested sequence for the course. These units comprise the content and conceptual understandings that colleges and universities typically expect students to master to qualify for college credit and/or placement. This content is grounded in themes, which are cross-cutting concepts that build conceptual understanding and spiral throughout the course.

Historical Thinking Skills

The AP historical thinking skills describe what students should be able to do while exploring course concepts. The list that follows presents these skills, which students should develop during the AP U.S. History course.

- Developments and Processes
 - ◆ Identify and explain a historical concept, development, or process.
- Sourcing and Situation
 - ◆ Identify and explain a source's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience.
 - ◆ Explain the significance of a source's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience, including how these might limit the use(s) of a source.
- Claims and Evidence in Sources
 - ◆ Identify and describe a claim and/or argument in a source.
 - ◆ Identify the evidence used in a source to support an argument.
 - ◆ Compare the arguments or main ideas of two sources.
 - ◆ Explain how claims or evidence support, modify, or refute a source's argument.
- Contextualization
 - ◆ Identify and describe a historical context for a specific historical development or process.
 - ◆ Explain how a specific historical development or process is situated within a broader historical context.
- Making Connections
 - ◆ Identify patterns among or connections between historical developments and processes.
 - ◆ Explain how a historical development or process relates to another historical development or process.
- Argumentation
 - ◆ Make a historically defensible claim.
 - ◆ Support an argument using specific and relevant evidence.
 - ◆ Use historical reasoning to explain relationships among pieces of historical evidence.
 - ◆ Corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument using diverse and alternative evidence in order to develop a complex argument.

AP United States History Exam Structure

AP UNITED STATES HISTORY EXAM: 3 HOURS, 15 MINUTES

Assessment Overview

The AP U.S. History Exam assesses student understanding of the historical thinking skills and learning objectives outlined in the course framework. The exam is 3 hours and 15 minutes long and students are required to answer 55 multiple-choice questions, 3 short-answer questions, 1 document-based question, and 1 long essay question.

Format of Assessment

Section I (Part A): Multiple Choice | 55 Questions | 55 Minutes | 40% of Exam Score

- Typically appear in sets of 3–4 questions, each with one or more stimuli, including primary and secondary texts, images, maps, and charts or other data.
- Require analysis of the stimulus sources and historical developments or processes described therein.

Section I (Part B): Short Answer | 3 Questions | 40 Minutes | 20% of Exam Score

- Question 1 is required and includes secondary source stimuli.
- Question 2 is required and includes primary source stimuli.
- Questions 3 and 4 do not include stimuli; students may complete either question.

Section II: Free-Response | 2 Questions | 1 Hour, 40 Minutes | 40% of Exam Score

- Question 1 is document-based, with seven documents offering varying perspectives (**25% of Exam Score; 60 minutes**).
- Question 2, 3, and 4 are long essays. Students select one question from the three options. (**15% of Exam Score; 40 minutes**).
- Essay responses require a complex understanding demonstrated by a historically defensible thesis, historical analysis, and supporting evidence.

Exam Components

Sample Multiple-Choice Question

"May it . . . please your most excellent Majesty, that it may be declared . . . in this present parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, That the said colonies and plantations in America have been, are, and of right ought to be, subordinate unto, and dependent upon the imperial crown and parliament of Great Britain; . . . and [they] of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever."

—The Declaratory Act, passed by the British Parliament in 1766

Debates over the claims of the British Parliament in the excerpt most directly contributed to which of the following later characteristics of the United States government?

- (A) The reservation of some governmental powers for the states
- (B) The enforcement of term limits for the president
- (C) The establishment of taxation power in Congress
- (D) The practice of judicial review by the Supreme Court

Sample Free-Response Question: Document-Based Question

Evaluate the relative importance of different causes for the expanding role of the United States in the world in the period from 1865 to 1910. Students examine seven primary source documents, including a treaty between the U.S. and Russia, excerpts from writings by Josiah Strong, Alfred Thayer Mahan, John Hay, and Theodore Roosevelt, and cartoons from Puck and *The Boston Globe*.

Sample Free-Response Question: Long Essay Question

Evaluate the extent to which the ratification of the United States Constitution fostered change in the function of the federal government in the period from 1776 to 1800.

Sample Short-Answer Question

Answer A, B, and C.

- (A) Briefly describe ONE similarity between New Deal and Great Society programs.
- (B) Briefly describe ONE difference between New Deal and Great Society programs.
- (C) Briefly explain ONE reason for a difference between New Deal and Great Society programs.