



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 in nine historical periods 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:
- **Unit 1:** Period 1: 1491–1607

- **Unit 2:** Period 2: 1607–1754
- **Unit 3:** Period 3: 1754–1800
- **Unit 4:** Period 4: 1800–1848
- **Unit 5:** Period 5: 1844–1877
- **Unit 6:** Period 6: 1865–1898
- **Unit 7:** Period 7: 1890–1945
- **Unit 8:** Period 8: 1945–1980
- **Unit 9:** Period 9: 1980–Present

AP United States History 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 historical concepts, developments, and processes.
- **Sourcing and Situation:** Analyze a source's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and audience, including how these may affect its usefulness.
- **Claims and Evidence in Sources:** Identify, describe, and evaluate claims and evidence in primary and secondary sources.
- **Contextualization:** Explain how a historical development or process is situated within a broader historical context.
- **Making Connections:** Identify and explain patterns, similarities, differences, and relationships among historical developments and processes.
- **Argumentation:** Make historically defensible claims and support arguments using specific and relevant evidence, using historical reasoning to explain relationships and develop complex arguments.

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. The document-based question presents students with seven documents offering various perspectives on a historical development or process.

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, maps, and charts.

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

Question 1 includes a secondary text source

Question 2 includes a primary text source

Question 3 includes a primary or secondary non-text source

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

Question 1 is document-based, with seven documents offering various perspectives (25% of Exam Score; 60 minutes).

Question 2 is a long essay question which presents a broad prompt, allowing students to draw evidence from across approximately half of the time periods covered in the course. (15% of Exam Score; 40 minutes).

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

Correct Answer: A

Sample Free-Response Questions

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.

Long Essay Question: Between 1776 and 1876, major political developments in the United States included the foundation of a new government, debates about definitions of citizenship, and the creation of political parties and institutions. Explain how changes in political participation in the United States influenced society between 1776 and 1876.

Your response may focus on any change(s) in political participation during the period 1776 to 1876. You are not expected to address the entire time period in your response

Short-Answer Question

"Of all the amusements that bedazzled the single working woman, dancing proved to be her greatest passion. After a long day laboring in a factory or shop, young women dressed themselves in their fanciest finery, put on their dancing shoes, and hurried out to the neighborhood hall, ballroom, or saloon equipped with a dance floor. . . . By the 1910s, over five hundred public dance halls opened their doors each evening throughout greater New York. . . .

"New ballrooms and dance palaces offered a novel kind of social space for their female patrons, enhancing and legitimizing their participation in a public social life. The commercial culture of the dance halls meshed with that of working-class youth in a symbiotic relationship, reinforcing emergent values and 'modern' attitudes."

Kathy Peiss, historian, Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York, 1986

"As strikers thronged the public streets of New York City [in 1909], demonstrated in parades and mass meetings, and picketed in front of factories, they challenged established assumptions about the identity and appearance of political actors and access to public space. These working-class, largely immigrant women comprised a subordinated group long denied an active voice in recognized political forums. By occupying the arena of labor politics through a mass strike, they demanded a voice."

Nan Enstad, historian, Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century, 1999

Using the excerpts above, answer (a), (b), and (c).

(A) Briefly describe ONE important difference between Peiss' and Enstad's historical interpretations of women's emergence in the public sphere at the turn of the twentieth century.

(B) Briefly explain how ONE specific historical event, development, or circumstance from the period 1880–1929 that is not specifically mentioned in the excerpts could be used to support Peiss' argument.

(C) Briefly explain how ONE specific historical event, development, or circumstance from the period 1880–1929 that is not specifically mentioned in the excerpts could be used to support Enstad's argument.