

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

The Advanced Placement Program[®] enables willing and academically prepared students to pursue college-level studies — with the opportunity to 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. 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 two semesters of a typical introductory college history course.

AP United States History Course Overview

The AP U.S. History course focuses on the development of historical thinking skills (chronological reasoning, comparing and contextualizing, crafting historical arguments using historical evidence, and interpreting and synthesizing historical narrative) and the development of students' abilities to think conceptually about U.S. history from approximately 1491 to the present. Seven themes of equal importance — American and National Identity; Migration and Settlement; Politics and Power; Work, Exchange, and Technology; America in the World; Geography and the Environment; and Culture and Society — provide areas of historical inquiry for investigation throughout the course. These require students to reason historically about continuity and change over time and make comparisons among various historical developments in different times and places. The course also allows teachers flexibility across nine different periods of U.S. history to teach topics of their choice in depth.

PREREQUISITE

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 AP U.S. History course is structured around themes and concepts in nine different chronological periods from approximately 1491 to the present:

- Period 1: 1491–1607
- Period 2: 1607–1754
- Period 3: 1754–1800
- Period 4: 1800–1848
- Period 5: 1844–1877
- Period 6: 1865–1898
- Period 7: 1890–1945
- Period 8: 1945–1980
- Period 9: 1980–Present

Within each period, key concepts organize and prioritize historical developments. Themes allow students to make connections and identify patterns and trends over time.

Historical Thinking Skills

The historical thinking skills provide opportunities for students to learn to think like historians, most notably to analyze evidence about the past and to create persuasive historical arguments. Focusing on these practices enables teachers to create learning opportunities for students that emphasize the conceptual and interpretive nature of history. Skill categories and examples for each are listed below.

Analyzing Evidence: Content and Sourcing

- Explain the relevance of the author's point of view, author's purpose, audience, format or medium, and/or historical context as well as the interaction among these features, to demonstrate understanding of the significance of a primary source.
- Evaluate the usefulness, reliability, and/or limitations of a primary source in answering particular historical questions.

Interpretation

- Analyze a historian's argument, explain how the argument has been supported through the analysis of relevant historical evidence, and evaluate the argument's effectiveness.
- Analyze diverse historical interpretations.

Comparison

- Compare diverse perspectives represented in primary and secondary sources in order to draw conclusions about one or more historical events.
- Compare different historical individuals, events, developments, and /or processes, analyzing both similarities and differences in order to draw historically valid conclusions. Comparisons can be made across different time periods, across different geographical locations, and between different historical events or developments within the same time period and/or geographical location.

Contextualization

- Situate historical events, developments, or processes within the broader regional, national, or global context in which they occurred in order to draw conclusions about their relative significance.

Synthesis

- Make connections between a given historical issue and related developments in a different historical context, geographical area, period, or era, including the present.
- Make connections between different course themes and/or approaches to history (such as political, economic, social, cultural, or intellectual) for a given historical issue.

Causation

- Explain long and/or short-term causes and/or effects of an historical event, development, or process.
- Evaluate the relative significance of different causes and/or effects on historical events or processes, distinguishing between causation and correlation and showing an awareness of historical contingency.

Patterns of Continuity and Change Over Time

- Identify patterns of continuity and change over time, and explain the significance of such patterns.
- Explain how patterns of continuity and change over time relate to larger historical processes or themes.

Periodization

- Explain ways historical events and processes can be organized into discrete, different, and definable historical periods.
- Evaluate whether a particular event or date could or could not be a turning point between different, definable historical periods, when considered in terms of particular historical evidence.
- Analyze different and/or competing models of periodization.

Argumentation

- Articulate a defensible claim about the past in the form of a clear and compelling thesis that evaluates the relative importance of multiple factors and recognizes disparate, diverse, or contradictory evidence or perspectives.
- Develop and support a historical argument, including in a written essay, through a close analysis of relevant and diverse historical evidence, framing the argument and evidence around the application of a specific historical thinking skill (e.g., *comparison*, *causation*, *patterns of continuity and change over time*, or *periodization*).
- Evaluate evidence to explain its relevance to a claim or thesis, providing clear and consistent links between the evidence and the argument.
- Relate diverse historical evidence in a cohesive way to illustrate contradiction, corroboration, qualification, and other types of historical relationships in developing an argument.

AP United States History Exam Structure

AP U.S. HISTORY EXAM: 3 HOURS 15 MINUTES

Assessment Overview

The AP Exam questions measure students' knowledge of U.S. history and their ability to think historically. Questions are based on learning objectives, key concepts, course themes, and historical thinking skills.

Format of Assessment

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

- Questions appear in sets of 2–5.
- Analyze historical texts, interpretations, and evidence.
- Primary and secondary texts, images, graphs, and maps are included.

Section I Part B: Short Answer | 4 Questions | 50 Minutes | 20% of Exam Score

- Questions provide opportunities for students to explain the historical examples that they know best.
- Analyze texts, images, graphs, or maps.

Section II Part A: Document Based | 1 Question | 55 Minutes | 25% of Exam Score

- Analyze and synthesize historical data.
- Assess written, quantitative, or visual materials as historical evidence.
- Develop an argument supported by an analysis of historical evidence.

Section II Part B: Long Essay | 1 Question | 35 Minutes | 15% of Exam Score

- Select one question among two.
- Explain and analyze significant issues in U.S. history.
- Develop an argument supported by an analysis of historical evidence.

AP U.S. HISTORY SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS

Sample Multiple-Choice Question

“Our ... destiny [is] to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions. . . . The Anglo-Saxon foot is already on [California’s] borders. Already the advance guard of the irresistible army of Anglo-Saxon emigration has begun to pour down upon it, armed with the [plow] and the rifle, and marking its trail with schools and colleges, courts and representative halls, mills and meetinghouses. A population will soon be in actual occupation of California. . . . Their right to independence will be the natural right of self-government belonging to any community strong enough to maintain it.” — John L. O’Sullivan, 1845

The process described in the passage above most directly led to political controversies in the 1840s and 1850s over the

- (A) expansion of slavery into newly acquired territories
- (B) authority of the Supreme Court to overturn federal laws
- (C) role of the federal government in economic development
- (D) use of natural resources in newly acquired territories

Sample Free-Response Question: Document-Based Question

Analyze major changes and continuities in the social and economic experiences of African Americans who migrated from the rural South to urban areas in the North in the period 1910–1930. Students examine seven primary source documents, including a map, newspaper articles, a letter, song lyrics, and a folk saying.

Sample Free-Response Question: Long Essay Question Focused on Continuity and Change over Time

Evaluate the extent to which increasing integration of the United States into the world economy contributed to maintaining continuity as well as fostering change in United States society from 1945 to the present.

Sample Short-Answer Question Focused on Contextualization



John Gast, *American Progress*, 1872
Courtesy of Library of Congress

Use the image and your knowledge of United States history to answer parts A, B, and C.

- A) Explain the point of view reflected in the image regarding ONE of the following:
 - Migration
 - Technology
 - American Indians
- B) Explain how ONE element of the image expresses the point of view you identified in Part A.
- C) Explain how the point of view you identified in Part A helped to shape ONE specific United States government action between 1845 and 1900.