

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 to receive college credit and/or placement into advanced courses in college. 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

AP United States History focuses on developing students' abilities to think conceptually about U.S. history from approximately 1491 to the present and apply historical thinking skills as they learn about the past. Seven themes of equal importance — identity; peopling; politics and power; work, exchange, and technology; America in the world; environment and geography; and ideas, beliefs, and culture — 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.

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 types and examples for each are listed below.

I. Chronological Reasoning

- Compare causes and/or effects, including between short-term and long-term effects
- Analyze and evaluate historical patterns of continuity and change over time
- Connect patterns of continuity and change over time to larger historical processes or themes
- Analyze and evaluate competing models of periodization of American history

II. Comparison and Contextualization

- Compare related historical developments and processes across place, time, and/or different societies, or within one society
- Explain and evaluate multiple and differing perspectives on a given historical phenomenon
- Explain and evaluate ways in which specific historical phenomena, events, or processes connect to broader regional, national, or global processes occurring at the same time

III. Crafting Historical Arguments from Historical Evidence

- Analyze commonly accepted historical arguments and explain how an argument has been constructed from historical evidence
- Construct convincing interpretations through analysis of disparate, relevant historical evidence
- Evaluate and synthesize conflicting historical evidence to construct persuasive historical arguments
- Analyze features of historical evidence such as audience, purpose, point of view, format, argument, limitations, and context germane to the evidence considered
- Based on analysis and evaluation of historical evidence, make supportable inferences and draw appropriate conclusions

IV. Historical Interpretation and Synthesis

- Analyze diverse historical interpretations
- Evaluate how historians' perspectives influence their interpretations and how models of historical interpretation change over time
- Draw appropriately on ideas and methods from different fields of inquiry or disciplines
- Apply insights about the past to other historical contexts or circumstances, including the present

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 key and supporting concepts, course themes, and historical thinking skills.

Format of Assessment

Section I Part A: Multiple Choice | 50–55 Questions | 55 Minutes | 40% of Exam Score

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

Section I Part B: Short Answer | 4 Questions | 45 Minutes | 20% of Exam Score

- Questions provide opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know best.
- Some questions include texts, images, graphs, or maps.

Section II Part A: Document Based | 1 Question | 60 Minutes | 25% of Exam Score

- Analyze and synthesize historical data.
- Assess written, quantitative, or visual materials as historical evidence.

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

- Students 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: Periodization Essay

Some historians have argued that the Spanish-American War in 1898 marked a turning point in United States foreign policy. Support, modify, or refute this contention using specific evidence.

Sample Short-Answer Question: 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.