

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. All three history courses focus on the development of historical thinking while learning required course content. Course themes foster deep analysis by making connections and comparisons across different topics.

AP United States History Course Overview

AP U.S. History is designed to be the equivalent of a two-semester introductory college or university U.S. history course. 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, practices, and methods employed by historians: analyzing primary and secondary sources; developing historical arguments; making historical comparisons; and utilizing reasoning about contextualization, causation, and continuity and change over time. The course also provides seven themes that students explore throughout the course in order to make connections among historical developments in different times and places: 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.

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 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.

AP History Disciplinary Practices and Reasoning Skills

The AP history courses seek to apprentice students to the practice of history by emphasizing the development of disciplinary practices and reasoning skills while learning historical content. The practices and skills that students should develop in all AP history courses are listed below, along with a condensed description of what students should be able to do with each. Every AP Exam question will assess one or more of these practices and skills.

AP HISTORY DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES

Practice 1: Analyzing Historical Evidence

Primary Sources

- Explain the relative historical significance of a source's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience.
- Evaluate a source's credibility and/or limitations.

Secondary Sources

- Explain how a historian's claim or argument is supported with evidence.
- Analyze patterns and trends in quantitative data in non-text-based sources.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of a historical claim or argument.

Practice 2: Argument Development

- Make a historically defensible claim in the form of an evaluative thesis.
- Support an argument using specific and relevant evidence.
- Use historical reasoning to explain relationships among pieces of historical evidence.
- Consider ways that diverse or alternative evidence could be used to qualify or modify an argument.

AP HISTORY REASONING SKILLS

Skill 1: Contextualization

- Use context to explain the relative historical significance of a specific historical development or process.

Skill 2: Comparison

- Explain the relative historical significance of similarities and/or differences between different historical developments or processes.

Skill 3: Causation

- Explain the difference between primary and secondary causes and between short- and long-term effects.
- Explain the relative historical significance of different causes and/or effects.

Skill 4: Continuity and Change Over Time

- Explain the relative historical significance of specific historical developments in relation to a larger pattern of continuity and/or change.

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 AP history disciplinary practices and reasoning 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.
- Students analyze primary and secondary texts, images, graphs, and maps.
- Questions cover all course periods.

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

- Students respond to 2 required questions and choose between 2 options for a third question.
- Questions 1 and 2 cover periods 3–8 of the course; students choose between answering either question 3 (covering periods 1–5) or question 4 (periods 6–9).
- Students analyze historians' interpretations, historical sources, and propositions about history.

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

- Students assess written, visual, and quantitative sources as historical evidence.
- Students develop an argument supported by an analysis of historical evidence.
- Question covers periods 3–8 of the course.

Section II, Part B: Long Essay | 1 Question | 40 Minutes | 15% of Exam Score

- Students select one question among three different periods (1–3, 4–6, 7–9) of the course.
- Students explain and analyze significant issues in U.S. history.
- Students 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 Short-Answer Question Focused on Causation



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) Describe the point of view reflected in the image regarding ONE of the following:
 - Migration
 - Technology
 - American Indians
- B) Explain ONE historical cause for the rise of 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.

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 changed in United States society from 1945 to the present.