

 CollegeBoard

AP[®]

INCLUDES

- ✓ Course framework
- ✓ Instructional section
- ✓ Sample exam questions

AP[®] U.S. History

COURSE AND EXAM DESCRIPTION

Effective
Fall 2020

AP[®]

 CollegeBoard

AP[®] U.S. History

COURSE AND EXAM DESCRIPTION

Effective
Fall 2020

AP COURSE AND EXAM DESCRIPTIONS ARE UPDATED PERIODICALLY

Please visit AP Central (apcentral.collegeboard.org) to determine whether a more recent course and exam description is available.

Introduction

The *AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description* defines what representative colleges and universities typically expect students to know and be able to do in order to earn college credit or placement. Students practice the thinking skills used by historians by studying primary and secondary source evidence, analyzing a wide array of historical evidence and perspectives, and expressing historical arguments in writing.

Although the course framework is designed to provide a clear and detailed description of the course content and skills, it is not a curriculum. Teachers create their own curricula to meet the needs of their students and any state or local requirements.

The Inclusion of Names and Specific Historical Examples

As has been the case for all prior versions of the AP U.S. History course, this AP U.S. History course framework includes a minimal number of individual names: the founders, several presidents and party leaders, and other individuals who are almost universally taught in college-level U.S. history courses. As history teachers know well, the material in this framework cannot be taught without careful attention to the individuals, events, and documents of American history; however, to ensure teachers have flexibility to teach specific content that is valued locally and individually, the course avoids prescribing details that would require all teachers to teach the same

historical examples. Each teacher is responsible for selecting specific individuals, events, and documents for student investigation of the material in the course framework.

The Founding Documents

In the context of American history, the in-depth examination of the ideas and debates in the founding documents (e.g., the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Federalist Papers) helps students better understand pivotal moments in America's history. Through close reading and careful analysis of these documents, students gain insights into the remarkable people, ideas, and events that shaped the nation. Ultimately, students with command of the founding documents and a capacity to trace their influence will find opportunities throughout the course to draw on and apply this knowledge.

Throughout the course, students closely read and analyze foundational documents and other primary and secondary sources in order to gain historical understanding. Teachers may use these documents to help students trace ideas and themes throughout American history. On the AP U.S. History Exam, students will be expected to read and analyze primary and secondary sources, draw upon evidence from them, and connect them to the students' own historical knowledge and understanding. For these reasons, teachers may elect to teach the founding documents and the ideas they express in depth during the course.

Course Framework Components

Overview

This course framework provides a description of what students should know and be able to do to qualify for college credit or placement.

The course framework includes two essential components:

1 HISTORICAL THINKING SKILLS AND REASONING PROCESSES

The historical thinking skills and reasoning processes are central to the study and practice of U.S. history. Students should practice and develop these skills and processes on a regular basis over the span of the course.

2 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.

1

AP U.S. HISTORY

Historical Thinking Skills and Reasoning Processes

This section presents the historical thinking skills and reasoning processes that students should develop during the AP history courses and that form the basis of the tasks on the AP history exams.

Historical Thinking Skills

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

The unit guides later in this publication embed and spiral these skills throughout the course, providing teachers with one way to integrate the skills into the course content with sufficient repetition to prepare students to transfer those skills when taking the AP Exam.

More detailed information about teaching the historical thinking skills can be found in the Instructional Approaches section of this publication.



AP Historical Thinking Skills

Skill 1	Skill 2	Skill 3	Skill 4	Skill 5	Skill 6
<p>Developments and Processes 1 Identify and explain historical developments and processes.</p>	<p>Sourcing and Situation 2 Analyze sourcing and situation of primary and secondary sources.</p>	<p>Claims and Evidence in Sources 3 Analyze arguments in primary and secondary sources.</p>	<p>Contextualization 4 Analyze the context of historical events, developments, or processes.</p>	<p>Making Connections 5 Using historical reasoning processes (comparison, causation, continuity and change), analyze patterns and connections between and among historical developments and processes.</p>	<p>Argumentation 6 Develop an argument.</p>
SKILLS					
<p>1.A Identify a historical concept, development, or process.</p> <p>1.B Explain a historical concept, development, or process.</p>	<p>2.A Identify a source's point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience.</p> <p>2.B Explain the point of view, purpose, historical situation, and/or audience of a source.</p> <p>2.C 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.</p>	<p>3.A Identify and describe a claim and/or argument in a text-based or non-text-based source.</p> <p>3.B Identify the evidence used in a source to support an argument.</p> <p>3.C Compare the arguments or main ideas of two sources.</p> <p>3.D Explain how claims or evidence support, modify, or refute a source's argument.</p>	<p>4.A Identify and describe a historical context for a specific historical development or process.</p> <p>4.B Explain how a specific historical development or process is situated within a broader historical context.</p>	<p>5.A Identify patterns among or connections between historical developments and processes.</p> <p>5.B Explain how a historical development or process relates to another historical development or process.</p>	<p>6.A Make a historically defensible claim.</p> <p>6.B Support an argument using specific and relevant evidence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe specific examples of historically relevant evidence. Explain how specific examples of historically relevant evidence support an argument. <p>6.C Use historical reasoning to explain relationships among pieces of historical evidence.</p> <p>6.D Corroborate, qualify, or modify an argument using diverse and alternative evidence in order to develop a complex argument. This argument might:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain nuance of an issue by analyzing multiple variables. Explain relevant and insightful connections within and across periods. Explain the relative historical significance of a source's credibility and limitations. Explain how or why a historical claim or argument is or is not effective.



Reasoning Processes

Reasoning processes describe the cognitive operations that students will be required to apply when engaging with the historical thinking skills on the AP Exam. The reasoning processes ultimately represent the way practitioners think in the discipline. Specific aspects of the cognitive process are defined under each reasoning process.

Reasoning Process 1	Reasoning Process 2	Reasoning Process 3
<i>Comparison</i>	<i>Causation</i>	<i>Continuity and Change</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">1.i: Describe similarities and/or differences between different historical developments or processes.1.ii: Explain relevant similarities and/or differences between specific historical developments and processes.1.iii: Explain the relative historical significance of similarities and/or differences between different historical developments or processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">2.i: Describe causes and/or effects of a specific historical development or process.2.ii: Explain the relationship between causes and effects of a specific historical development or process.2.iii: Explain the difference between primary and secondary causes and between short- and long-term effects.2.iv: Explain how a relevant context influenced a specific historical development or process.2.v: Explain the relative historical significance of different causes and/or effects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">3.i: Describe patterns of continuity and/or change over time.3.ii: Explain patterns of continuity and/or change over time.3.iii: Explain the relative historical significance of specific historical developments in relation to a larger pattern of continuity and/or change.

Course Content

Influenced by the Understanding by Design® (Wiggins and McTighe) model, this course framework provides a description of the course requirements necessary for student success.

The course content is organized into commonly taught units. The units have been arranged in a logical sequence frequently found in many college courses and textbooks.

The nine units in AP U.S. History, and their approximate weighting on the AP Exam, are listed on the following page.

Pacing recommendations at the unit level and in the Course at a Glance provide suggestions for how to teach the required course content and administer the Personal Progress Checks. The suggested class periods are based on a schedule in which the class meets five days a week for 45 minutes each day. While these recommendations have been made to aid planning, teachers should of course adjust the pacing based on the needs of their students, alternate schedules (e.g., block scheduling), or their school's academic calendar.

A NOTE ABOUT PERIODIZATION

Following the example of many subfields within U.S. history, as well as the approach adopted by most U.S. history textbooks, the course framework reflects an acknowledgment that historians differ in how they apply boundaries between distinct historical eras. Several of the periods show some degree of overlap, depending on the thematic focus of the topics in that period. For example, Period 4, which begins in 1800, emphasizes antebellum reform and social change (with 1848 as an ending point because of the Seneca Falls Convention). Period 5 focuses on how expansion led to debates over slavery, thus beginning with Manifest Destiny and the election of James K. Polk in 1844; it spans the Civil War and Reconstruction and ends with the Compromise of 1877. The emphasis in Period 6 on economic development logically begins with the end of the Civil War in 1865 and ends on the eve of the Spanish–American War in 1898. Period 7 uses 1890 as the appropriate starting date for America's rise to global power—a major conceptual focus of the period.

TOPICS

Each unit is broken down into teachable segments called topics. The topic pages (starting on page 37) contain all required content for each topic. Although most topics can be taught in one or two class periods, teachers are again encouraged to pace the course to suit the needs of their students and school.

In order for students to develop an understanding of these topics, teachers select specific historical figures, groups, and events—and the primary and secondary source documents through which they can be examined—that enable students to investigate them. In this way, AP teachers create their own local curricula for AP U.S. History.

Units	Exam Weighting
Unit 1: Period 1: 1491–1607	4–6%
Unit 2: Period 2: 1607–1754	6–8%
Unit 3: Period 3: 1754–1800	10–17%
Unit 4: Period 4: 1800–1848	10–17%
Unit 5: Period 5: 1844–1877	10–17%
Unit 6: Period 6: 1865–1898	10–17%
Unit 7: Period 7: 1890–1945	10–17%
Unit 8: Period 8: 1945–1980	10–17%
Unit 9: Period 9: 1980–Present	4–6%

NOTE: Events, processes, and developments are not constrained by the given dates and may begin before, or continue after, the approximate dates assigned to each unit and topic.

Themes

The themes serve as the connective tissue of the course and enable students to create meaningful connections across units. They are often broader ideas that become threads that run throughout the course. Revisiting them and applying them in a variety of contexts helps students to develop deeper conceptual understanding. Below are the themes of the course and a brief description of each.

THEME 1: AMERICAN AND NATIONAL IDENTITY (NAT)

This theme focuses on how and why definitions of American and national identity and values have developed among the diverse and changing population of North America as well as on related topics, such as citizenship, constitutionalism, foreign policy, assimilation, and American exceptionalism.

THEME 2: WORK, EXCHANGE, AND TECHNOLOGY (WXT)

This theme focuses on the factors behind the development of systems of economic exchange, particularly the role of technology, economic markets, and government.

THEME 3: GEOGRAPHY AND THE ENVIRONMENT (GEO)

This theme focuses on the role of geography and both the natural and human-made environments in the social and political developments in what would become the United States.

THEME 4: MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT (MIG)

This theme focuses on why and how the various people who moved to and within the United States both adapted to and transformed their new social and physical environments.

THEME 5: POLITICS AND POWER (PCE)

This theme focuses on how different social and political groups have influenced society and government in the United States as well as how political beliefs and institutions have changed over time.

THEME 6: AMERICA IN THE WORLD (WOR)

This theme focuses on the interactions between nations that affected North American history in the colonial period and on the influence of the United States on world affairs.

THEME 7: AMERICAN AND REGIONAL CULTURE (ARC)


This theme focuses on the how and why national, regional, and group cultures developed and changed as well as how culture has shaped government policy and the economy.

THEME 8: SOCIAL STRUCTURES (SOC)

This theme focuses on how and why systems of social organization develop and change as well as the impact that these systems have on the broader society.

Spiraling the Themes

The following table shows how the themes spiral across units.

Theme	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5	Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9
	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
 American and National Identity NAT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Work, Exchange, and Technology WXT	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Geography and the Environment GEO	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Migration and Settlement MIG	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Politics and Power PCE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
America in the World WOR	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
American and Regional Culture ARC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social Structures SOC	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Course at a Glance

Plan

The Course at a Glance provides a useful visual organization of the AP U.S. History curricular components, including:

- Sequence of units, along with approximate weighting and suggested pacing. Please note: Pacing is based on 45-minute class periods, meeting five days each week for a full academic year.
- Progression of topics within each unit.
- Spiraling of the themes and historical thinking skills across units.

Teach

HISTORICAL THINKING SKILLS

Historical thinking skills spiral across units.

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 Developments and Processes | 4 Contextualization |
| 2 Sourcing and Situation | 5 Making Connections |
| 3 Claims and Evidence in Sources | 6 Argumentation |

THEMES

Themes spiral across units.

- | | |
|---|--|
| NAT American and National Identity | PCE Politics and Power |
| WXT Work, Exchange, and Technology | WOR America in the World |
| GEO Geography and the Environment | ARC American and Regional Culture |
| MIG Migration and Settlement | SOC Social Structures |

Assess

Assign the Personal Progress Checks—either as homework or in class—for each unit. Each Personal Progress Check contains formative multiple-choice and free-response questions. The feedback from the Personal Progress Checks shows students the areas where they need to focus.

UNIT 1 Period 1:
1491–1607

~8 Class Periods 4–6% AP Exam Weighting

4	1.1 Contextualizing Period 1
GEO 1	1.2 Native American Societies Before European Contact
WOR 1	1.3 European Exploration in the Americas
GEO 3	1.4 Columbian Exchange, Spanish Exploration, and Conquest
SOC 5	1.5 Labor, Slavery, and Caste in the Spanish Colonial System
WOR 3	1.6 Cultural Interactions Between Europeans, Native Americans, and Africans
6	1.7 Causation in Period 1

Personal Progress Check Unit 1

- Multiple-choice:** ~15 questions
Short-answer: 2 questions
- Primary source (partial)
 - Primary source (partial)
- Free-response:** 1 question
- Long essay (partial)

UNIT 2 Period 2:
1607–1754

~14 Class Periods 6–8% AP Exam Weighting

4	2.1 Contextualizing Period 2
MIG 1	2.2 European Colonization
GEO 3	2.3 The Regions of British Colonies
WXT 5	2.4 Transatlantic Trade
WOR 2	2.5 Interactions Between American Indians and Europeans
WXT SOC 5	2.6 Slavery in the British Colonies
ARC NAT 1	2.7 Colonial Society and Culture
6	2.8 Comparison in Period 2

Personal Progress Check Unit 2

- Multiple-choice:** ~20 questions
Short-answer: 2 questions
- Primary source
 - Primary source
- Free-response:** 1 question
- Long essay (partial)

NOTE: Partial versions of the free-response questions are provided to prepare students for more complex, full questions that they will encounter on the AP Exam.

UNIT
3

Period 3:
1754–1800

~17 Class Periods

10–17% AP Exam Weighting

4	3.1	Contextualizing Period 3
WOR 1	3.2	The Seven Years' War (The French and Indian War)
WOR 2	3.3	Taxation Without Representation
NAT 2	3.4	Philosophical Foundations of the American Revolution
WOR 6	3.5	The American Revolution
SOC WOR 3	3.6	The Influence of Revolutionary Ideals
PCE 3	3.7	The Articles of Confederation
PCE 3	3.8	The Constitutional Convention and Debates over Ratification
PCE 5	3.9	The Constitution
WOR PCE 2	3.10	Shaping a New Republic
ARC 1	3.11	Developing an American Identity
MIG SOC 5	3.12	Movement in the Early Republic
6	3.13	Continuity and Change in Period 3

Personal Progress Check Unit 3

Multiple-choice: ~30 questions

Short-answer: 2 questions

- Primary source
- Primary source

Free-response: 1 question

- Long essay (partial)

UNIT
4

Period 4:
1800–1848

~17 Class Periods

10–17% AP Exam Weighting

4	4.1	Contextualizing Period 4
PCE 2	4.2	The Rise of Political Parties and the Era of Jefferson
PCE 2	4.3	Politics and Regional Interests
WOR 2	4.4	America on the World Stage
WXT 6	4.5	Market Revolution: Industrialization
SOC 5	4.6	Market Revolution: Society and Culture
PCE 1	4.7	Expanding Democracy
PCE 3	4.8	Jackson and Federal Power
ARC 4	4.9	The Development of an American Culture
ARC 5	4.10	The Second Great Awakening
ARC 3	4.11	An Age of Reform
SOC 3	4.12	African Americans in the Early Republic
GEO 1	4.13	The Society of the South in the Early Republic
6	4.14	Causation in Period 4

Personal Progress Check Unit 4

Multiple-choice: ~35 questions

Short-answer: 2 questions

- Primary source
- Secondary source

Free-response: 1 question

- Long essay (partial)

UNIT
5

Period 5:
1844–1877

~17 Class Periods

10–17% AP Exam Weighting

4	5.1	Contextualizing Period 5
GEO 1	5.2	Manifest Destiny
WOR 3	5.3	The Mexican–American War
NAT 4	5.4	The Compromise of 1850
ARC SOC 2	5.5	Sectional Conflict: Regional Differences
PCE 5	5.6	Failure of Compromise
PCE 4	5.7	Election of 1860 and Secession
WOR 5	5.8	Military Conflict in the Civil War
NAT 2	5.9	Government Policies During the Civil War
PCE 3	5.10	Reconstruction
NAT 3	5.11	Failure of Reconstruction
6	5.12	Comparison in Period 5

Personal Progress Check Unit 5

Multiple-choice: ~30 questions

Short-answer: 2 questions

- Secondary source (2 sources)
- No stimulus

Free-response: 2 questions

- Long essay (partial)
- Document-based (partial)

UNIT
6

Period 6:
1865–1898

~18 Class Periods **10–17%** AP Exam Weighting

4	6.1 Contextualizing Period 6
MIG 1	6.2 Westward Expansion: Economic Development
MIG 3	6.3 Westward Expansion: Social and Cultural Development
NAT 2	6.4 The “New South”
WXT 5	6.5 Technological Innovation
WXT 4	6.6 The Rise of Industrial Capitalism
WXT 6	6.7 Labor in the Gilded Age
MIG 3	6.8 Immigration and Migration in the Gilded Age
MIG 5	6.9 Responses to Immigration in the Gilded Age
SOC 4	6.10 Development of the Middle Class
SOC 2	6.11 Reform in the Gilded Age
PCE 4	6.12 Controversies over the Role of Government in the Gilded Age
PCE 3	6.13 Politics in the Gilded Age
6	6.14 Continuity and Change in Period 6

Personal Progress Check Unit 6

Multiple-choice: ~35 questions

Short-answer: 2 questions

- No stimulus
- Primary source

Free-response: 1 question

- Document-based (partial)

UNIT
7

Period 7:
1890–1945

~21 Class Periods **10–17%** AP Exam Weighting

4	7.1 Contextualizing Period 7
WOR 2	7.2 Imperialism: Debates
WOR 2	7.3 The Spanish–American War
PCE GEO 2	7.4 The Progressives
WOR 2	7.5 World War I: Military and Diplomacy
MIG 3	7.6 World War I: Home Front
WXT 5	7.7 1920s: Innovations in Communication and Technology
MIG ARC 4	7.8 1920s: Cultural and Political Controversies
WXT 5	7.9 The Great Depression
PCE 5	7.10 The New Deal
WOR 1	7.11 Interwar Foreign Policy
SOC 1	7.12 World War II: Mobilization
WOR 6	7.13 World War II: Military
WOR 2	7.14 Postwar Diplomacy
6	7.15 Comparison in Period 7

Personal Progress Check Unit 7

Multiple-choice: ~40 questions

Short-answer: 2 questions

- Secondary source
- No stimulus

Free-response: 1 question

- Document-based

UNIT
8

Period 8:
1945–1980

~20 Class Periods **10–17%** AP Exam Weighting

4	8.1 Contextualizing Period 8
WOR 2	8.2 The Cold War from 1945 to 1980
NAT 2	8.3 The Red Scare
WXT MIG 2	8.4 Economy after 1945
ARC 4	8.5 Culture after 1945
SOC 5	8.6 Early Steps in the Civil Rights Movement (1940s and 1950s)
WOR 3	8.7 America as a World Power
WOR 1	8.8 The Vietnam War
PCE MIG 5	8.9 The Great Society
SOC PCE 5	8.10 The African American Civil Rights Movement (1960s)
SOC 5	8.11 The Civil Rights Movement Expands
ARC 5	8.12 Youth Culture of the 1960s
GEO 5	8.13 The Environment and Natural Resources from 1968 to 1980
PCE ARC 4	8.14 Society in Transition
6	8.15 Continuity and Change in Period 8

Personal Progress Check Unit 8

Multiple-choice: ~40 questions

Short-answer: 2 questions

- No stimulus
- Primary source

Free-response: 1 question

- Long essay

UNIT
9

Period 9:
1980–Present

~8 Class
Periods

4–6% AP Exam
Weighting

4	9.1 Contextualizing Period 9
PCE 3	9.2 Reagan and Conservatism
WOR 1	9.3 The End of the Cold War
WXT 1	9.4 A Changing Economy
MIG 2	9.5 Migration and Immigration in the 1990s and 2000s
WOR 2	9.6 Challenges of the 21st Century
6	9.7 Causation in Period 9

Personal Progress Check Unit 9

Multiple-choice: ~20 questions

Short-answer: 2 questions

- Secondary source
- No stimulus

Free-response: 1 question

- Document-based