

# UNDERSTANDING THE GOALS OF AP UNITED STATES HISTORY

Advanced Placement US History (APUSH) is a one year survey course on the events, people, and ideas that comprise the history of the United States. To get a firm grasp on what is expected in APUSH one must understand the goals of the course. They are divided into three categories: historical thinking skills, thematic learning objectives, and a chronology of historical key concepts.

## Nine Historical Thinking Skills

- I. **Historical Causation** – the ability to identify, analyze, and evaluate the relationships among multiple historical causes and effects, distinguishing between those that are long term and proximate, and among coincidence, causation, and correlation.
  - A. Students should be able to:
    1. Compare causes and/or effects, including between short and long-term effects
      - a) analyze and evaluate the interaction of multiple causes and/or effects
      - b) assess historical contingency by distinguishing among coincidence, causation, and correlation, as well as critiquing existing interpretations of cause and effect.
    2. Advance from merely describing causes and effects to analyzing and evaluating multiple causes and effects
- II. **Patterns of Continuity and Change over Time** – the ability to recognize, analyze and evaluate the dynamics of historical continuity and change over periods of time, as well as the ability to relate these patterns to larger historical processes or themes.
  - A. Students should be able to:
    1. Analyze and evaluate historical patterns of continuity and change over time
    2. Connect patterns of continuity and change over time to larger historical processes or themes
  - B. While world history focuses on very large patterns of continuity and change across centuries, U. S. history often focuses on individuals and a smaller scale of time
- III. **Periodization** – the ability to describe, analyze, evaluate, and construct models that historians use to organize history into discrete periods, including the identification and analysis of “turning points” and to recognize how the choice of dates gives a higher value to one narrative, region or group than to others.
  - A. Students should be able to:
    1. Explain ways that historical events and processes can be organized within blocks of time.
    2. Analyze and evaluate competing models of periodization of U. S. history.
  - B. Students should be aware of competing models of periodization used by historians and how the choice and labeling of periods can alter the historical narrative and give greater weight or value to one period over another
- IV. **Comparison**
  - A. Students should be able to:

1. Compare related historical developments and processes across place, time, and/or different societies or within one society.
  2. Explain and evaluate multiple and differing perspectives on a given historical phenomenon.
- B. Students should reach a level of sophisticated analysis that will allow them to compare related historical developments and processes across more than one variable, such as geography, chronology, and different societies, recognize multiple and differing perspectives on a given historical phenomenon.
- V. **Contextualization** – the ability to connect historical events and processes to specific circumstances of time and place and to broader regional, national or global processes.
- A. Students should be able to:
1. Explain and evaluate ways in which specific historical phenomenon, events, or processes connect to broader regional, national, or global processes occurring at the same time.
  2. Explain and evaluate ways in which a phenomenon, event, or process connects to other, similar historical phenomena across time and place.
- B. Students should be able to articulate how the history of a particular group, region, or era fit into the larger story of the development of the United States. Twentieth Century US history may include a more global contextualization as would any discussion of American foreign policy.
- VI. **Historical Argumentation** – the ability to define and frame a question about the past and to address that question through the construction of an argument which must have a clear, comprehensive and analytical thesis, supported by relevant historical evidence.
- A. Students should be able to:
- a) Analyze commonly accepted historical arguments and explain how an argument has been constructed from historical evidence.
  2. Construct convincing interpretations through analysis of disparate, relevant, historical evidence.
  3. Evaluate and synthesize conflicting historical evidence to construct persuasive historical arguments.
- B. Students should advance from descriptions of conflicting material to evaluating evidence used in making plausible historical arguments.
- VII. **Appropriate Use of Relevant Historical Evidence** – the ability to describe and evaluate evidence about the past from diverse sources, paying attention to the source, point of view, content, purpose, format and audience of such sources.
- A. Students should be able to:
1. Analyze features of historical evidence such as audience, purpose, point of view, format, argument, limitations and context germane to the evidence considered.
  2. Based on analysis and evaluation of historical evidence, make supportable inferences and draw appropriate conclusions.
- B. Students should move from mere acceptance of facts to a critical examination of their validity and understand and explain the factors that makes some evidence more useful in historical interpretation than others.
- VIII. **Interpretation** – the ability to describe, analyze, evaluate and construct diverse interpretations of the past and to be aware of how particular circumstances and contexts in which individual

historians work and write also shape their interpretations.

A. Students should be able to:

1. Analyze diverse historical interpretations
2. Evaluate how historians perspectives influence their interpretations and how models of historical interpretation change over time.

B. Students should be able create their own interpretation of American history and to move from mere description of events to addressing how the context of their own generation and cultural bias may tilt an historical interpretation.

IX. **Synthesis** – the ability to draw from all of the thinking skills and on ideas and methods from different fields of inquiry and disciplines and creatively fusing disparate, relevant, and sometimes contradictory evidence into a new understanding of the past.

A. Students should be able to:

1. Combine disparate, contradictory evidence from primary and secondary sources in order to create a persuasive understanding of the past.
2. Apply insights about the past to other historical contexts or circumstances including the present.

B. Students should use information and ideas from a wide variety of sources to challenge accepted historical interpretations and thus develop a better understanding of their place in an increasingly globalized and diverse world.

# Thematic Learning Objectives

All questions on the APUSH Exam will be based on and measure students understanding of one or more of the following thematic learning objectives.

## I. Identity

The theme of identity focuses on the formation of both American national identity and group identities. Students should be able to explain how various identities, cultures, and values have been preserved or changed in different contexts of U. S. history, with special attention given to the formation of gender, class, racial and ethnic identities and explanation of how these sub-identities have interacted with each other and the larger conceptions of American identity

### A. Overarching Question: How and why have debates over American national identity changed over time?

1. Analyze how competing conceptions of national identity were expressed in the development of political institutions and cultural values from the late colonial through the antebellum periods
2. Assess the impact of Manifest Destiny, territorial expansion, the Civil War, and industrialization on popular beliefs about progress and the national destiny of the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Analyze how U. S. involvement in international crises such as the Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II, the Great Depression, and the Cold War influenced public debates about American national identity in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### B. Overarching Question: How have gender, class, ethnic, religious, regional, and other group identities changed in different eras?

1. Explain how conceptions of group identity and autonomy emerged out of cultural interactions between colonizing groups, Africans, and American Indians in the colonial era.
2. Analyze the role of economic political, social, and ethnic factors on the formation of regional identities in what would become the United States from the colonial period through the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Analyze how migration patterns to, and migration within, the United States have influenced the growth of racial and ethnic identities and conflicts over ethnic assimilation and distinctiveness.
4. Analyze how changes in class identity and gender roles have related to economic, social, and cultural transformations since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.
5. Explain how civil rights activism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century affected the growth of African American and other identity based political and social movements.

## II. Work, Exchange And Technology

Focusing on the development of American economics based on agriculture, commerce and manufacturing, this theme requires students to examine ways that different economic and labor systems, technological innovations and government policies have shaped American society. Within this theme comes the lives of working people and the relationships among social classes, racial and ethnic groups, and men and women, including the availability of land and

labor, national and international economic developments, and the role of government support and regulation.

**A. Overarching Question: How have changes to markets, transportation, and technology affected American society from colonial times to the present day?**

1. Explain how patterns of exchanging commodities, peoples, diseases, and ideas around the Atlantic World developed after European contact and shaped North American colonial-era societies.
2. Analyze how innovations in markets, transportation, and technology affected the economy and the different regions of North America from the colonial period through the end of the Civil War.
3. Explain how changes in transportation, technology, and the integration of the U. S. economy into world markets have influenced U. S. society since the Gilded Age.

**B. Overarching Question: How have debates over economic values and the role of government in the United States economy affected politics, society, the economy and the environment?**

1. Explain how arguments about market capitalism, the growth of corporate power, and government policies influenced economic policies from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
2. Compare the beliefs and strategies of movements advocating changes to the U. S. economic system since industrialization, particularly the organized labor, Populist, and Progressive movements.
3. Explain how and why the role of the federal government in regulating economic life and the environment has changed since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### III. Peopling

This theme focuses on why and how the various people who move to, from and within the United States adapted to their new social and physical environments. Students examine migration across borders and long distances, including the slave trade and internal migration, and how both newcomers and indigenous inhabitants transformed North America. The theme also illustrates how people responded when “borders crossed them.” Students explore the ideas, beliefs, traditions, technologies, religions, and gender roles that migrants/immigrants and annexed people brought with them and the impact these factors had on both these peoples and on U. S. society

**A. Overarching Question: Why have people migrated to, from, and within North America?**

1. Explain how and why people moved within the Americas (before contact) and to and within the Americas (after contact and colonization).
2. Explain how changes in the numbers and sources of international migrants in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries altered the ethnic and social makeup of the U. S. population.
3. Analyze the causes and effects of major internal migration patterns such as urbanization, suburbanization, westward movement and the Great Migration in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**B. Overarching Question: How have changes in migration and population patterns affected American life?**

1. Analyze the effects that migration, disease, and warfare had on the American Indian population after contact with Europeans.
2. Explain how free and forced migration to and within different parts of North America caused regional development, cultural diversity and blending, and political and social conflicts through the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Analyze the role of both internal and international migration on changes to urban life, cultural developments, labor issues, and reform movements from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.
4. Explain how and why debates over immigration to the United States have changed since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **IV. Politics and Power**

Examine ongoing debates over the role of the state in society and its potential as an active agent for change. This includes mechanisms for creating, implementing, or limiting participation in the political process and the resulting social effects, as well as the changing relationships among the branches of the federal government and among national, state, and local governments. Trace efforts to define or gain access to individual rights and citizenship and survey the evolution of tensions between liberty and authority in different periods of United States history.

##### **A. Overarching Question: How and why have different political and social groups competed for influence over society and government in what would become the United States?**

1. Analyze the factors behind competition, cooperation, and conflict among different societies and social groups in North America during the colonial period.
2. Explain how and why major party systems and political alignments arose and have changed from the early Republic through the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Analyze how and why the New Deal, the Great Society, and the modern conservative movement all sought to change the federal government's role in U. S. political, social, and economic life.

##### **B. Overarching Question: How have Americans agreed on or argued over the values that guide the political system as well as who is a part of the political process?**

1. Analyze how arguments over the meaning and interpretation of the Constitution have affected U. S. politics since 1787.
2. Analyze how debates over political values (such as democracy, freedom, and citizenship) and the extension of American ideals abroad contributed to the ideological clashes and military conflicts of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Analyze how debates over civil rights and civil liberties have influenced political life from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century through the early 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### **V. America in the World**

This theme focuses on the global context in which the United States originated and developed as well as the influence of the United States on world affairs. Students should examine how various world actors (such as people, states, organizations, and companies) have competed for the territory and resources of

the North American continent, influencing the development of both American and world societies and economies. Students should also investigate how American foreign policies and military actions have affected the rest of the world as well as social issues within the United States.

**A. Overarching Question: How have events in North America and the United States related to contemporary developments in the rest of the world?**

1. Explain how imperial competition and the exchange of commodities across both sides of the Atlantic Ocean influenced the origins and patterns of development of North American societies in the colonial period.
2. Explain how the exchange of ideas among different parts of the Atlantic World shaped belief systems and independence movements into the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Explain how the growing interconnection of the United States with worldwide economic, labor, and migration systems affected U. S. society since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.
4. Explain how the U. S. involvement in global conflicts in the 20<sup>th</sup> century set the stage for domestic social changes.

**B. Overarching Question: How have different factors influenced U. S. military, diplomatic, and economic involvement in international affairs and foreign conflicts, both in North America and overseas?**

1. Analyze the motives behind, and results of, economic, military, and diplomatic initiatives aimed at expanding U. S. power and territory in the Western Hemisphere in the years between independence and the Civil War.
2. Analyze the major aspects of domestic debates over U. S. expansionism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Analyze the goals of U. S. policymakers in major international conflicts, such as the Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II and the Cold War, and explain how U. S. involvement in these conflicts has altered the U. S. role in world affairs.
4. Explain how U. S. military and economic involvement in the developing world and issues such as terrorism and economic globalization have changed U. S. foreign policy goals since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **VI. Environment and Geography – Physical and Human**

Examine the role of environment, geography, and climate in both constraining and shaping human actions. Students should analyze the interaction between the environment and Americans in their efforts to survive and thrive. Students should also explore efforts to interpret, preserve, manage, or exploit natural and man-made environments, as well as the historical contexts within which interactions with the environment have taken place.

**A. Overarching Question: How did interactions with the natural environments shape the institutions and values of various groups living on the North American continent?**

1. Explain how the introduction of new plants, animals, and technologies altered the natural environment of North America and affected interactions among various groups in the colonial period.
2. Explain how the natural environment contributed to the development of distinct regional group identities, institutions, and conflicts in the pre-contact period through the

independence period.

3. Analyze the role of environmental factors in contribution to regional economic and political identities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and how they affected conflicts such as the American Revolution and the Civil War.

**B. Overarching Question: How did economic and demographic changes affect the environment and lead to debates over use and control of the environment and natural resources?**

1. Analyze how the search for economic resources affected social and political developments from the colonial period through Reconstruction.
2. Explain how and why debates about and policies concerning the use of natural resources and the environment more generally have changed since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **VII. Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture**

Explore the roles that ideas, beliefs, social mores, and creative expression have played in shaping the United States. Students should examine the development of aesthetic, moral, religious, scientific, and philosophical principles and consider how these principles have affected individual and group actions. Students should analyze the interaction between beliefs and communities economic values, and political movements, including attempts to change American society to align it with specific ideals.

**A. Overarching Question: How and why have moral, philosophical, and cultural values changed in what would become the United States?**

1. Compare the cultural values and attitudes of different European, African American, and native peoples in the colonial period and explain how contact affect intergroup relationships and conflicts.
2. Analyze how emerging conceptions of national identity and democratic ideals shaped value systems, gender roles, and cultural movements in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Explain how cultural values and artistic expression changed in response to the Civil War and the postwar industrialization of the United States.

**B. Overarching Question: How and why have changes in moral, philosophical, and cultural values affected U. S. history?**

1. Analyze how changing religious ideals, Enlightenment beliefs, and republican though shaped the politics, culture, and society of the colonial era through the early Republic.
2. Analyze ways that philosophical, moral, and scientific ideas were used to defend and challenge the dominant economic and social order in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.
3. Analyze the role of culture and arts in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century movements for social and political change.
4. Explain how and why “modern” cultural values and popular culture have grown since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and how they have affected American politics and society.

# APUSH Periodization Chart and Period Weight

**Period 1** begins in 1491. Therefore you will be responsible for having some understanding of the Pre-Columbian lives of Native Americans in what is now the United States.

**Period 2** covers the first settlement at Jamestown to the beginning of the French and Indian War.

**Period 3** focuses on the gradual creation of the United States and the forces that led to independence, the making of the Constitution and the early Republic.

**Period 4** deals with the change in demographic patterns with the first waves of non English immigration, early industrialization, and the expansion of the United States for the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean fulfilling the concept of Manifest Destiny.

**Period 5** elaborates the antebellum years, the regional tensions over slavery that led to the American Civil War and Reconstruction.

**Period 6** often known as the “Gilded Age” features the development of the American West, growth of cities, the second industrial revolution, the effect of technology in transportation and steel making, and in the development of national markets.

**Period 7** identifies the factors that led to populism, progressivism, and American imperialism. It covers the change from isolationism to world leader during World War I, the Roaring Twenties, the Great Depression and World War II.

**Period 8** covers the rise of the United States as a super power and the Cold War, McCarthyism, civil rights struggles, gender equality issues, the wars in Korea and Vietnam and the rise of conservative political power.

**Period 9** follows the Reagan Presidency and changes in the American political, economic and social scenes, the end of the Cold War and discovering the new role for the United States on the world scene.

Period	Date Range	Approximate Percentage of ...	
		Instructional Time	AP Exam
1	1491-1607	5%	5%
2	1607-1754	10%	45%
3	1754-1800	12%	
4	1800-1848	10%	
5	1844-1877	13%	
6	1865-1898	13%	45%
7	1890-1945	17%	
8	1945-1980	15%	
9	1980-present	5%	5%

Notice the overlap in Periods 4 and 5.