

History is a race between education and catastrophe. (HG Wells)

Spring 2023

Dear AP European History Student:

We welcome you into the world of Advanced Placement European History, a fascinating, exciting and challenging study of the events and individuals who have shaped our world since 1450. For better and for worse, Europe has been a driving force in the world for the last 500 years. Many of the most dominant ideas in the world today [liberalism, industrialism, capitalism, communism, the scientific method] have their origin in modern Europe. The world is changing and will not stop. For many people, change happens to them. By being informed, AP European History empowers you to impact that change.

The study of the past to better understand the present and prepare oneself for the future is one definition of history that we find acceptable. We challenge you to reach back into your past (brief, we know) and examine why you presently find yourself enrolled in AP European History. Obviously, you have an interest in history, and our job will be to sharpen your skills as an historian and raise that interest level. We guarantee you that if you are willing to engage, develop self-management skills, and put forth a sincere effort, you will have fun while learning in our class.

On average, Stevenson students who have taken AP European History have repeatedly earned among the highest AP scores in the nation. Furthermore, these students have traditionally made the transition to AP US History with great success. Finally, with writing now an integral part of the SAT, AP European students are in an ideal program to help prepare them for the SAT exam. Congratulations on your choice to join a program we are very proud of as you continue your education and growth at Stevenson.

SUMMER READING

With this letter, you will receive a PDF copy of Chapter 14 of the course textbook, *A History of Western Society Since 1300 for AP*, by John McKay. You are to read and annotate Chapter 14 “European Exploration and Conquest, 1450-1650” in the McKay textbook before the first day of class in August. You should be prepared for an assessment on Ch. 14 on the first day so we can measure a starting point for your learning journey and celebrate your growth over time.

Here are some guidelines to follow as you read Ch. 14:

- The chapter is divided up into five sections with red headings to help you break down the material into smaller units. Each heading comes with a Focus Question that you should specifically answer in the margin after reading the section. When you are done reading chapter 14, you should be able to answer the Focus Questions and be familiar with the bold terms.
- You are expected to highlight and annotate as you read. For the PDF, you can annotate digitally or print a copy and annotate on paper. As a general rule, highlight the most significant idea from each paragraph. Be selective; if you highlight too much you’re not thinking actively and therefore just wasting ink. At least once for each column of text, write an annotation that connects specific ideas to the broader themes of the section. Finally, write an annotation for every image, map, or chart that links the image to ideas in the text.
- Most importantly, you should be able to explain (in your own words, citing specific examples) the answer to the following question: **“Between 1450 and 1650, how did global power shift from the trading world of the Indian Ocean to Europe and the Atlantic?”** This chapter is all about “change,” so look for which countries and groups of people gained and lost power. How did those changes affect attitude beliefs about race? These questions are crucial to understanding the origins of European history in our period of focus.

We would be happy to answer any questions about the course or assignment. Feel free to contact any of the instructors at (847) 415-4000 or by email.

We look forward to seeing you in class.

Sincerely,

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