

AP Human Geography: To take or not to take?

Mill Valley is pleased to be offering a new AP course available to freshmen in the 2024-2025 school year. As 8th grade students begin to sign up for their freshman classes, it's time to consider whether your child should register for an Advanced Placement course next year.

The AP curriculum, administered by the College Board, consists of standardized high school courses that are roughly equivalent to undergraduate college courses. After completing an AP class, students typically take the AP exam in that subject, which can earn them credits and accelerated placement in college if they perform well on the AP test, which is given in May.

To help your student decide if an AP course is right for your child, we answer some frequently asked questions about Advanced Placement:

Who should take an AP class?

The Advanced Placement experience is not for every student. Before choosing to enroll your child in an AP course, consider these factors:

- Your child's past performance in the subject area. If a student has always excelled at social studies, AP Human Geography may be a great idea.
- Your child's skills. AP Human Geography will require heavy amounts of reading and writing. Is your student prepared for long, difficult reading assignments, multiple essays, and in-depth research papers?
- Your child's schedule. A student who plays sports year-round, holds leadership positions in one or more extracurricular activities, and/or has a part-time job may find it difficult to meet the sizable obligations of an AP class.
- Your child's GPA. No student should take an AP course if it's likely to lower his or her overall GPA. College admissions officers want to see students taking challenging courses, but they also want to see strong grades. If your child is worried about maintaining decent grades in an AP course, it might be wise to stay with a grade level course.

Why take an AP class?

- Be challenged. Advanced Placement classes are rigorous and demanding, offering an intellectual stimulation that students won't get in regular high school courses.
- Improve college admissions chances. AP classes will raise the "wow" factor of a student's high school record. If a student does well in an AP class, it's a signal to admissions counselors that he or she is ready for the pressures of college study.
- Arrive at college better prepared. AP classes sharpen students' writing skills, teach them how to think critically, and improve their problem-solving abilities. AP students learn to navigate the academic expectations they'll encounter in college courses.
- Earn college credit. AP exams are scored on a scale of 1 (lowest) through 5 (highest). If a student earns a 3 or higher, he or she can receive course credits, advanced placement, or both upon arriving at college. AP policies vary from school to school, but the majority of colleges in the U.S. (as well as colleges and universities in 40 other countries) grant credit and/or accelerated placement for AP exams.

- Win scholarships. AP courses and exam scores help students qualify for scholarships. According to the College Board, 31 percent of colleges and universities look at AP experience when making scholarship decisions.
- Save money. Students with AP experience and credits are more likely to graduate from college in four years. Extra semesters (or years) at college can put a heavy financial burden on families.