



History is a race between education and catastrophe . - HG Wells

Spring 2024

Dear AP European History Student:

Welcome to Advanced Placement European History, an engaging, exciting, and challenging study of events and individuals who have shaped our world since 1450. Since then, Europe has been one important region of the world, and many of the most dominant ideas in the world today have their origin in the European past. By taking AP European History, you will better understand the political, economic, and cultural dynamics that are changing our world today. By being informed, AP European History empowers you to impact that change.

The study of the past to better understand the present and empower oneself to change the future is one compelling reason to take AP European History. We also encourage you to reflect on your own reasons for enrolling in AP European History. Whether you have a passion for history, a desire to improve your reading and writing skills, or are seeking a rigorous learning experience at Stevenson, our goal will be to sharpen your academic skills and raise your interest level in social studies. We assure you that if you are willing to engage in learning, develop strong self-management skills, and put forth a sincere effort, you will have both a fun and rewarding experience in AP European History.

AP European History may also be a course that supports your achievement of more short-term academic goals. 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 college entrance exams, AP European students are in an ideal program to help prepare for the college application process. However, we want to emphasize that AP European History is a course for *all* students, and no matter what your current skills and knowledge may be, with motivation to grow you will succeed in this course.

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.

Be prepared for an assessment on Chapter 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 Chapter 14:

- The chapter is divided into five sections with red headings to 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 it may indicate more active thinking is needed to process what information is most significant. At least once for each column of text, write an annotation that explains how specific ideas from the passage connect to the broader themes of the textbook section. Finally, write an annotation for every image, map, or chart that makes a connection between the image and ideas in the related text.
- Most importantly, you should be able to explain (in your own words, and using 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 Ocean?”** This chapter is all about “change,” so look for which countries and groups of people gained and lost power. Also consider how those changes affected attitudes about culture, gender, social class, and 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 using the email addresses below.

Congratulations on your choice to join a program we are very proud of as you continue your education and growth at Stevenson! We look forward to meeting you in August.

Sincerely,

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