

Advanced Placement US History

Course description from the College Board: In AP U.S. History, students investigate significant events, individuals, developments, and processes in nine historical periods from approximately 1491 to the present. Students develop and use the same skills and methods employed by historians: analyzing primary and secondary sources; developing historical arguments; making historical connections; and utilizing reasoning about comparison, causation, and continuity and change. The course also provides eight themes that students explore throughout the course in order to make connections among historical developments in different times and places: American and national identity; work, exchange, and technology; geography and the environment; migration and settlement; politics and power; America in the world; American and regional culture; and social structures.

This is a year-long class, traditionally taken junior year, that prepares students for success on the national AP Exam in May, but also provides an opportunity to acquire critical thinking skills, to participate in class discussions, and to analyze complex primary sources and texts. This class satisfies the graduation requirement in US History. Students do not need to have taken a previous social studies AP class to be eligible for this class.

Successful AP US students have the following characteristics.

- Students should be interested in and curious about US History.
- Students should be organized and meet deadlines. Effective time management and ability to prioritize tasks are important. This means – keeping class materials readily at hand, keeping up with the unit calendar, making up work quickly when absent.
- Students should be willing to participate in class discussions, debates, presentations, and other active learning.
- Students should have strong reading comprehension skills. Textbook reading will be done outside of class. Class time and assessments will require analyzing and evaluating shorter primary and secondary documents.
- Students should have strong writing skills. They should be able to formulate a persuasive thesis statement and support their argument with evidence, also responding to opposing arguments or counterclaims.
- Students should be able to move beyond memorized material and answer a variety of stimulus-based multiple-choice questions, interpreting reading passages, graphs, tables, maps, and charts.

Homework Expectations:

- Students are expected to read 30-40 pages per week (equivalent to 1-2 textbook chapters). This breaks down to 25-35 minutes per day if it is spread evenly throughout the week.
- The reading needs to be thorough, with an emphasis on taking notes (with a study guide).
- In-class time is dedicated to active listening and participation in discussion, debates, presentations.

Assessments:

- Minor assessment quizzes will be given over the textbook reading. (Hand-written notes will be allowed.)
- There will be 5 units in the fall semester and 3 units in the spring semester covering substantial content. Each major assessment test will mimic parts of the national AP exam.
 - Day 1 will be 40-50 stimulus based multiple-choice questions (SBMCQ) that must be completed in 50 minutes.
 - Day 2 will be a 40-50 minute timed writing assignment. These writing assignments will primarily be LEQs - long essays (4 paragraphs) and DBQs - document based questions (4 paragraphs incorporating a given set of primary and secondary sources). These writing assignments will involve making an historically accurate argument and supporting it with quality supporting evidence.
- There may also be some SAQs – short answer questions which are sets of 3 questions related to a topic, reading, graph, map or chart.
- Each semester will have a review project that will be counted as a major assessment.