

A.P. US History 2026-2027: Summer Assignment

The Course

The AP United States History course is described very well here, so take some time this summer to take a look at the link below:

<https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/apcourse/ap-united-states-history>

Course Description

AP US History is a college-level course that aims to survey a period roughly from 1491 to the present. It is one of the challenging courses offered at SJC. Success requires a self-discipline in the face of a high volume of reading and writing. This course is a serious time commitment and it is your responsibility to manage your own schedule to make certain you complete assigned work on time.

Goals

- Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of American history from 1500-Present.
- Critically analyze and interpret primary and secondary sources for relevance, reliability, and significance in the evaluation of historical questions.
- Understand the importance of historiography and the influence of various schools of thought on the study of US History.
- Write clear, persuasive, and detailed essays.
- **Prepare for and successfully complete the AP Exam offered by the College Board**

Expectations

- APUSH students can expect homework every day, weekend and extended vacation.
- You will have at least one project and large assessment every quarter, and during the second semester, write bi-weekly essays that include analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- All tests and quizzes will be comprehensive (includes all previous material). Students must continually add to their base of knowledge and reinforce prior learning in order to succeed on the College Board Exam. (For example, tests from Unit 8 may require knowledge from Unit 6.)
- The key to success in AP US combines detailed memorization with the ability to wield historical thinking skills to assess information and construct well-reasoned, fact-based historical essays. Successful students review for months prior to the AP Exam.
- Completion of the Summer Project is mandatory for enrollment.

Questions? E-mail us!

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APUSH SUMMER PROJECT

1. Purchase the textbook: AMSCO Advanced Placement edition United States History – Fourth Edition – Physical copy required (you can get the online one as a bonus if you like)

- <https://www.perfectionlearning.com/advanced-placement-united-states-history-4th-edition-t1688-g.html>

2. Guided Notes on AMSCO

- Use your AMSCO textbook to complete the guided notes for Unit 1.
- These guided notes are attached on pages 2-10 of this PDF.

3. Unit 1 Heimler Notes

- Take notes on the **six (6)** APUSH Unit 1 Heimler videos to review key concepts and strengthen historical thinking skills for the AP exam.
- https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEHRHjICEfDUkwLhx0SF4-dgPI82_Wn3

4. Illustrated Timeline of Unit 1

- This should be completed on a poster board or blank paper - **not digital**
- Create an illustrated timeline covering key events, people, and developments from APUSH Unit 1 (1491–1607)
 - Include **at least 6 major events or developments** (different Native societies, different European exploration, Columbian Exchange)
 - Place events in **chronological order** with **dates** where possible
 - Provide a **brief description** (1–2 sentences) for each event explaining its historical significance
 - Include an **illustration or symbol** for each item (hand-drawn or printed)
 - Clearly label each section and make the timeline organized and accurate

5. Purchase and read *Democracy in America* by Alexis de Tocqueville

This book is widely regarded as a key text in the repertoire of any students of American history. The unique perspective provided by de Tocqueville as a young Frenchman of noble descent, travelling the American countryside has shown the tremendous durability of *Democracy in America* as a text that remains insightful and thought provoking nearly 200 years on.

You will be asked to read and annotate the abridged text that can be found [here](#) or [here](#).

Due on the first day of class will be:

- **Your physical proof of having annotated and read *Democracy in America* (book check)**
- **Your Unit 1 notes (digitally submitted to Canvas) and timeline (photo upload to Canvas)**

“How much/what do I need to annotate?”

This question is a bit subjective to each individual reader, but you should be highlighting key claims, underlining key passages, and writing questions that may be prompted by your reading in the margins. This is an abridged version of the full text, so you should be dealing with the most direct and historically consequential claims of the book. We are not looking for a total number of marks per page or chapter but instead are looking to see if you have been engaging with the text and asking specific questions that are prompted by your reading.

Questions to guide you reading:

What does de Tocqueville see in the future regarding the momentum of democratic revolution? Has democratic revolution been successful in the intervening 170 years?

What does de Tocqueville mean when he talks about the “equality of conditions”? Do you think Americans still have “equality of conditions”? Did they ever?

What are the conclusions to draw from de Tocqueville’s observations on group dynamics and organizations in America? Provide some examples of social organizations that you think mirror or contradict de Tocqueville’s observations of early America.

De Tocqueville remarks on the “revolution...in the name of law” which are elections. What conclusions about Americans does he draw from observing elections? Are the same conclusions reflected today?

The “tyranny of the majority” was a lasting concern of the founding generation. Are those fears echoed by de Tocqueville? If yes, how so?

What institutions exist in American society to check this “tyranny of the majority”? Have there been any modern developments that accent or diminish this “tyranny of the majority”?

Are there benefits to an aristocratic regime over a democratic one?

What is the relationship between religion and democracy?

According to de Tocqueville can a democratic society be maintained without a religious population?

TOPIC 1.2: NATIVE AMERICAN SOCIETIES BEFORE EUROPEAN CONTACT

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Explain how various native populations interacted with the natural environment in North America in the period before European contact.

LAND BRIDGE

CULTURES OF CENTRAL & SOUTH AMERICA

MAYA,
AZTEC &
INCA

MAIZE

CULTURES OF NORTH AMERICA

GENERAL PATTERNS

LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES

REGIONAL IDENTITIES OF NORTH AMERICAN NATIVES

NORTHWEST

SOUTHWEST

GREAT
BASIN &
GREAT
PLAINS

MISSISSIPPI
RIVER
VALLEY

NORTHEAST

ATLANTIC
SEABOARD

LIST 3 WAYS NATIVE AMERICANS CULTURE & LIFESTYLE WERE AFFECTED BY THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

TOPIC 1.3: EUROPEAN EXPLORATION IN THE AMERICAS

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Explain the causes of exploration and conquest of the New World by various European nations.

THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT FOR EXPLORATION

CHANGES IN THOUGHT & TECHNOLOGY	RELIGIOUS CONFLICT

EXPANDING TRADE

**ECONOMIC
MOTIVES**

**NEW
ROUTES**

**SLAVE
TRADING**

**DEVELOPING
NATION-
STATES**

DIVIDING THE AMERICAS

TREATY OF TORDESILLAS

ENGLISH CLAIMS

FRENCH CLAIMS

TOPIC 1.4: COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE, SPANISH EXPLORATION & CONQUEST

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Explain causes of the Columbian Exchange and its effect on Europe and the Americas during the period after 1492.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

1492 VOYAGE: GOALS & OUTCOME

THE COLUMBIAN EXCHANGE

THE RISE OF CAPITALISM

JOINT STOCK COMPANIES

TOPIC 1.5: LABOR, SLAVERY & CASTE IN THE SPANISH COLONIAL SYSTEM

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Explain how the growth of the Spanish Empire in North America shaped the development of social and economic structures over time.

SPANISH EXPLORATION & CONQUEST

EXPLORERS & CONQUISTADORES



THE ENCOMIENDA SYSTEM



ENSLAVED AFRICAN LABOR



THE SPANISH CASTE SYSTEM



TOPIC 1.6: CULTURAL INTERACTIONS IN THE AMERICAS

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Explain how and why European and Native American perspectives of others developed and changed in the period.

CONFLICTING WORLDVIEWS

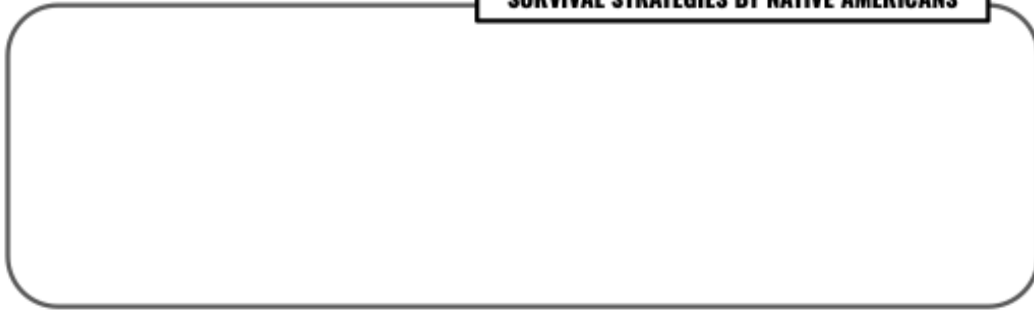
EUROPEAN TREATMENT OF NATIVE AMERICANS

BARTOLOME DE LAS CASAS & THE VALLADOLID DEBATE

ENGLISH POLICY

FRENCH POLICY

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES BY NATIVE AMERICANS



THE ROLE OF AFRICANS IN AMERICA



TOPIC 1.7: CAUSATION

ANSWER ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:

1. Explain the factors that resulted in various Native American groups developing their own unique cultures.
2. Explain a significant development in Europe by the 15th and 16th centuries that caused a surge in exploration.
3. Explain the extent to which the Columbian Exchange had beneficial effects on both the Native Americans and Europeans.

