Summer Assignment - AP US History

Welcome to AP US History! I look forward to seeing you this fall and embarking on an exciting and in-depth exploration of the history of our country. To prepare for this journey, you need to begin reading the AP US History text. Covering some of the text over the summer allows us time to focus on specific issues during the school year. Additionally, this will allow our class some much-needed review time for the AP test in May.

Part 1 – Chapter Reading & Notes

1. Over the summer months, you will be required to read **Chapters 1-2** of the online AP US History resource book – the American Yawp. (American Yawp).

2. After you complete each chapter reading, you will be required to take notes on each chapter. Practicing this will serve you well, as we will be building and using your notes throughout the year in your AP US History class. Listed below are the specific requirements for each of the required chapter notes.

    a. Two Chapters = 3-4 pages of notes **per** chapter. Make sure you don't overdo it. Writing 7-8 pages of notes will not be a useful study tool.
    b. Your notes should be able to cover the following topics:
        - Compare and contrast the different regions of North America regarding native societies and their environments.
        - The context of the Old World (Europe, Africa, and Asia) prompted European exploration in the 1400s.
        - The primary objectives of Spanish exploration and colonialism
        - Effect of the Columbian Exchange on both the Old and New Worlds
        - The role of race and ethnicity in Spanish colonial society
        - The development of race-based chattel slavery in the New World.
        - Comparison of Spanish, French, and English colonialism – goals, economic activities, relations with Native Americans
        - Comparing English colonial regions: economic activities, religious and social makeup in Jamestown and New England

    b. All of your notes **must be handwritten**, as neatly as possible. **(Typed notes will not be accepted for this assignment)**
    c. **All of your notes must be original or rephrased from the text**. Obviously copying key terms, sub-chapter headings, etc. is okay. However simply copying large areas of text, definitions from the glossary, timelines, PowerPoints or PDFs from the internet, will not be accepted.
    d. Your notes should summarize the main concepts and terms from each chapter. Make sure to skip no more than 1 line when organizing your notes.
    e. Notes will be turned in to Schoology during the first week of class in August **by taking pictures or scanning a PDF of your notes**. If you need assistance with this, please ask Mr. Nelson.

Part 2 – The Narrative of US History essay

History is not merely a collection of dates, names, and places. Every historian chooses a narrative theme when they write about historical topics. A thematic approach allows the historian to create a contextual spine they can use to make connections between historical eras and ideas. For example, Columbia University historian, Eric Foner's text, *The Story of American Freedom* chooses to look at American History through the lens of the concept of freedom (the expansion and contraction of it throughout the nation's development).

For this part of the summer assignment, you will choose a narrative theme, and write a 3-4 page (750 -1000 word) essay that tells the story of America. Understandably, covering 400 years of American history in a short essay means that you will have to leave many events out of your story. That is why the idea of a narrative theme is critical. Possible themes might include (but are not limited to):

- American Identity, Power, Migration, Settlement, Geography, and the Environment

However, this is ***your*** version of America's story, so choose a theme that you feel strongly about or interests you.

This is not a creative writing exercise. No fiction accepted. You are writing a very short history of the United States from pre-1492 (Columbus) to today. It is impossible to cover everything, which is why you must have a theme to help you select what makes the historical cut.

DUE DATE / GRADING

By choosing to take AP, you are expected to complete this assignment. Your chapter notes and Narrative Essay will be due the first day of class, which at this point is **Tuesday, August 25, 2026.** Your summer assignment is considered homework and **may not be turned in late. If any part of your project is found to be plagiarized or copied, you will receive a zero for the summer assignment**.

QUESTIONS / SUGGESTIONS

Please take time to enjoy your summer. But don't wait until the last minute to start your summer assignment. AP US History is going to be fun and challenging, and I want you to start the fall semester successfully. To that end, I would suggest spending a week on each portion of the assignment. Breaking the project up into small pieces will help you complete the assignment on time and will keep your stress level at a minimum. **If you have any questions regarding the summer assignment, please feel free to contact Mr. Nelson via email at cjnelson@vischool.org.**

Grading Rubric – AP US History Summer Assignment

History of America Rubric

	6	5	4	3	2	1
Ideas & Content	Focus, extensive knowledge, and thoughtful insight on historical topic are clear and definite. Approach is uncommon and original in order to engage and hold the reader's attention.	Demonstrates comprehensive knowledge about the topic. An original approach engages reader's attention. Theme is clear.	Demonstrates a general knowledge about topic. The approach is original and engaging. Theme is present.	Demonstrates some knowledge about the topic but lacks insight and thought. Approach is common and unoriginal but maintains the reader's attention. Theme is present, but difficult to decipher.	Knowledge is lacking so that the approach is unoriginal and detracts from reader's engagement. Theme is possible, but sketchy and convoluted.	Seems to have no background knowledge. Approach is unoriginal and boring. Theme is undecipherable.
Development	Ideas & content are developed thoroughly throughout, and originally. Effective establishment of a historical theme that embraces complexity.	Ideas & content are developed thoughtfully and thoroughly. Establishment of a historical theme that embraces complexity.	Ideas and content are developed thoroughly using some good techniques to establish theme.	Theme is somewhat developed using some techniques.	Development of theme and content is lacking. Very few techniques used.	Development of ideas and content is absent.
Organization	Exhibits a well-developed structure with an interesting opening, evidence, and conclusion.	Structure is thoughtfully developed. Pacing is logical and effective.	Opening, evidence and resolution are all developed. Pacing is logical and effective.	Elements of structure are mostly developed, lacking in some parts. Lacks effectiveness.	Some elements of structure are present, but some are partially or entirely missing. Ineffective.	Elements of structure are not present and/or confusing, boring, or seem to make no sense at all.
Language Use	Writer's voice is expressed confidently and connects to the reader through word choice that is intentional and precise. Sentences are smooth and varied in length.	Writer's voice exhibits personality and precise vivid word choice. Sentences are varied in structure and length.	Personality is present in writer's voice. Word choice is precise and focuses on details. Sentence length is varied.	Writer's voice is present with some personality but lacks confidence. Word choice is somewhat intentional and precise but does not provide details.	Writer's voice lacks clear personality and emotion. Word choice lacks intentionality and thought.	Voice is not present at all. Word choice does not convey intended meaning.
Conventions	A strong grasp of standard writing conventions is apparent with no errors: capitalization is accurate, punctuation is smooth, and enhances meaning, spelling is correct, grammar is essentially correct, usage is correct.	A strong grasp of most or almost all standard writing conventions is apparent, even when using sophisticate language with almost no errors.	A basic grasp of almost all the standard writing conventions is apparent with few errors that do not hinder reader comprehension.	Grasps only some of the standard writing conventions with errors that occasionally hinder reader comprehension.	Grasp of standard writing conventions is lacking, exhibiting errors that often hinder reader comprehension.	Shows no grasp of the standard writing conventions, making frequent errors that hinder overall reader comprehension.