

A.P. U.S. History Syllabus

Course Themes

There are several themes interwoven throughout this curriculum through the use of lessons, readings, historical simulations, and exams. The primary themes of focus include but are not limited to *American Diversity, American Identity, Regionalism, Culture, Economic Transformations, Politics and Citizenship, Reform, Religion, and Slavery and Its Legacies in North America*. Many of these themes will be addressed through the use of traditional textbooks (such as *Give Me Liberty*, by Eric Foner) and comparing these texts to *A People's History of the United States*, by Howard Zinn. The course will also emphasize regional conflict in America through the use of authors such as Colin Woodard, David Hackett Fischer, Martin H. Quitt, and Robert D. Mitchell. As their final assignment before the A.P. exam, the students will be asked to argumentatively categorize several U.S. historical figures into the eleven regional cultures outlined in the book *American Nations*, by Colin Woodard, with a political, social, and economic rationale for each categorization.

Unit 1: Colonial History to 1763

Objectives: In order to understand the genesis of American history, the student will be able to:

- A. Analyze the issues and conflicts of transatlantic contact between various civilizations.
- B. Describe the establishment of American colonies by the European nations during the sixteenth century.

Reading Assignments: Enduring Vision (chapters 1–4); “Serving Time in Virginia” (After the Fact); “The Otherside” (Native American perspective on Jamestown, Va.); and “The Root of the Problem” (impact of Africans in Jamestown) Time Magazine, April 2007.

Discussion Topics: Meso-American culture; transatlantic encounters; purposes of colonization (Spain, Portugal, France, England) push-pull factors for colonization; establishment of English colonies, comparison of southern, middle, and northern colonies (religion, economics, political); cultural differences between Americans, Europeans, and Africans

Activities: “Colonial newspaper.” Students are provided with newsprint and assigned to create their own newspaper with hard news articles on a variety of colonies. Students are also required to include typical features such as interviews, editorials, advertisements, letters to the editor, and cartoons. The content should approximate the style and contents of a modern newspaper as closely as possible but be based only on information from the colonial period. Reading and note-taking on scholarly monographs from colonial history; maps, charts, and data on colonial settlement patterns

Unit 2: The American Revolution (1763–1783)

Objectives: In order to understand the economic and political relationship between England and its colonies that would ultimately lead to the American Revolution, the student will be able to:

- A. Explain the relationship between England and its colonies, and their cultural development during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.
- B. Identify the causes and results of war and the American Revolution.

Reading Assignments: “A Kind of Revolution” and “Tyranny is Tyranny” (A People’s History of the U.S.) “Choosing Sides in the Revolution” (American Issues)

Discussion Topics: The origins of resistance; the British response; the decision for independence; the military course of the war; and peace negotiations. Content: Mercantilism, colonial wars, French and Indian War, colonial unification,

Activities

- “Who Fired That Shot?”—a class analysis and discussion based on eyewitness accounts of hostilities at Lexington and Concord.
- Document Shuffle—the causes of the American Revolution from British, American, and Tory perspectives. In these small-group sessions, groups of four or five students are provided with a packet of 12 to 15 documents, a large piece of newsprint, a glue stick, and a marker. Each group is asked to distribute the documents equitably, determine the “document messages,” deciphering the categories into which the documents fall, and submit a group report on the newsprint.

Unit 3: The Republican Experiment (1781–1789)

Objectives: To recognize the importance of the forging of the American nation, the student will be able to:

- A. Discuss the various issues involving the establishment of the American government and Constitution.
- B. Compare and contrast the administrations of Washington and Adams in the first years of the Republic. [C1]

Reading Assignments: Text (7); Chapters 6 and 7 (American Issues); “Were the Founding Fathers Democratic Reformers?” (Taking Sides, Volume I)

Discussion Topics: The structure of the government under the Articles of Confederation; weaknesses and accomplishments of the Articles’ government; foreign affairs in the Confederation period; the nationalist critique and the role of Hamilton and Madison; the Constitutional Convention; and the debate over ratification.

Activities: Document shuffle entitled “Feds vs. Antifeds”—all documents used here are contemporary letters to newspapers during the ratification debate.

Unit 4: The Federalist Era (1788-1800)

Discussion Topics: The new government’s structure; an overview of the Constitution of 1787; Hamilton versus Jefferson; the rise of political parties; foreign affairs with Great Britain, France, and Spain; the “Revolution of 1800”

Activities- take-home DBQ—Students are asked to compare the relative effectiveness of U.S. foreign policy toward Great Britain and France under Washington and Adams versus under Jefferson and Madison (1800–1835)

Unit 5: Republicans in Power (1801–1828)

Key Discussion Topics Explain the impact of the Madison administration in regard to the causes and results of the War of 1812 [C3]

- C. Characterize the major accomplishments of the Monroe administration re-garding foreign policy and domestic issues
 - 1. Treaties (Anglo-American Convention, Adams–Onis Treaty, Rush–Bagot Agreement)
 - 2. Foreign Policy (The Monroe Doctrine)

3. Domestic Issues (The Missouri Compromise, 1820)

Required Reading:

- Chapters 8 and 9 in Divine
- “Tecumseh, the Shawnee Prophet and American History” in Retracing the Past

Special Activity: Document shuffle—recognizing and differentiating among aspects of nationalism and sectionalism.

Unit 6: The Jacksonian Era (1828–1840)

Objectives: In order to understand the development and evolution of democratic institutions in the United States, the student will be able to:

- A. Characterize the rise to political prominence of Andrew Jackson
- B. Evaluate Jackson’s domestic and foreign policies
- C. Analyze the issues involved in the elections of 1836 and 1840
- D. Explain the causes and results of reform movements in the United States during the early to mid-nineteenth century

Reading Assignments

Text (9, 10, 11); “People’s Choice” (Smithsonian, October 2005); “Trail of Tears” and “Utopian Communes” (The Social Fabric, Volume I)

Key Discussion Topics: Mass democracy; Jackson versus Calhoun; the Bank War; the Indian removal; the rise of the working class; the Whig alternative; and the reformist “benevolent empire.”

Special Activity Take-home DBQ the College Board’s 1990 Jackson DBQ.

Unit 7: Manifest Destiny and Sectionalism

Objectives

To recognize the importance of westward expansion and the looming issue of slavery in the United States, the student will be able to:

- A. Identify the causes and results of American settlers’ moving west
- B. Discuss the causes and results of the Mexican–American War [C3]
- C. Analyze the issues involving slavery and potential disunion during the late 1840s and through the decade of the 1850s

Reading Assignment-Chapter 2 in Divine; Chapter 8 in A People’s History of the United States

Key Discussion Topics- Revolution in Texas, Mexican–American War, development of third parties, popular sovereignty, Compromise of 1850, Kansas–Nebraska Act, Election of 1856, Dred Scott, John Brown, Lincoln–Douglas debates, Harper’s Ferry, Election of 1860, secession and the beginnings of the Civil War

Special Activity Free-Response Essay on Sectional Crisis

Unit 8: The Civil War and Reconstruction (1861–1877)

Objectives

In order to understand the conflict and reconstruction of the United States from 1860 to 1877, the student will be able to:

- A. Characterize the demographic makeup of the Old South and the social relationships between blacks and whites
- B. Identify the causes and results of the Civil War
- C. Evaluate Reconstruction and its impact on the nation as a whole

Reading Assignments Chapter 5 (The American Political Tradition); “Did Abraham Lincoln Free the Slaves?” and “Was it Wrong to Impeach Andrew Johnson?” (Taking Sides, Volume I)

Key Discussion Topics: The South’s chance of victory; a question of leadership; Lincoln versus Davis; emancipation; the military course of the war in brief; Reconstruction; the sharecropping system; the “crime” of ’76; and the Compromise of 1877

Special Activities:

- Review Document Shuffle—Student groups are asked to categorize documents representing a series of events of the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s through the eyes of a freedman, a Ku Klux Klan member, Andrew Johnson, Thaddeus Stevens, and W. E. B. Du Bois.
- Free Response Essay on Reconstruction

Unit 9: The Gilded Age (1865-1900)

Objectives

- A. Describe the events leading to and resulting from American industrialization
- B. Explain the significance of the influx of immigrants and their impact on urbanization in America
- C. Identify the various cultural developments around the turn of the century

Reading Assignments: Chapters 17, 18, 19, and 20 in Divine. “Robber Barons and Rebels” in Chapter 11 of A People’s History

Key Discussion Topics: Settling the West: a question of exploitation; laissezfaire and social Darwinism; the rise of the industrialists; labor’s response; urbanization; immigration and “Tweedism”; the “Social Gospel” [CR2] ; the politics of the 1890s: big government Republicans and the Populists.

Special Activity: Document Shuffle—Events of the Gilded Age as seen through the eyes of Bryan, Coxey, and Debs.

Unit 10: The Progressive Era and American Foreign Policy (1900-1920)

Objectives: To understand the emergence of the modern United States, the student will be able to:

- A. Compare and contrast the administrations’ attitudes towards domestic reforms during the Progressive Era, paying special attention to:

1. Local and state progressive movements and initiatives
2. National Progressive programs
 - a. Theodore Roosevelt and his administration
 - b. Howard Taft and his administration
 - c. Woodrow Wilson and his administration
- B. Explain the causes and results of American imperialism
 1. Foreign policy and Asia
 2. Central and South American foreign policy
 3. The Spanish-American War
- C. Describe American attitudes toward and involvement in World War I

Reading Assignments: Text (20, 21, 22); Chapters 9 and 10 (American Political Tradition); “Did the Progressives Fail?” (Taking Sides); “The Needless War with Spain” (Historical Viewpoints)

Key Discussion Topics Local and state progressive reforms (types of municipal governments, mayors, state governors and representatives), national progressivism plans and programs (Roosevelt, Taft, Wilson), The Square Deal, New Freedom, muckrakers, women’s issues, consumer protection, political corruption, environmental protection, business and labor issues, American imperialism (Asia, Central, and South America), long-term causes for American imperialism, causes and results of the Spanish-American War, neutrality during World War I (WWI), causes of American entry into WWI, Wilson’s 14 points, negotiations of the Treaty of Versailles, conflict between Wilson and Congress over the treaty, and the League of Nations.

Unit 11: The Roaring ’20s and The Great Depression

To recognize the importance of the 1920s and the significance of the Great Depression’s impact on the United States socially, politically, and economically, the student will be able to:

- A. Describe the domestic and foreign policies of the 1920s
- B. Explain cultural developments during the “Roaring ’20s”
- C. Analyze the causes of the Great Depression
- D. Compare and contrast the attempts of both Hoover and FDR at bringing the United States out of the depths of the Great Depression

Key Discussion Topics: Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover: “Republican Orthodoxy”; normalcy; the “Red Scare”; immigration legislation; the “new” Ku Klux Klan; the Harlem Renaissance and Countee Cullen; the crash of the stock market and the onset of the Great Depression; and Hoover and Voluntarism; Franklin Roosevelt and the “Hundred Days”; relief, recovery, and reform; critics of the New Deal — the “Economic Royalists” on the right and Long, Townsend, and Coughlin; the Supreme Court fight and the end of the New Deal.

Reading Assignments: Text (23 and 24); “Women and Housework in the 1920s” (Social Fabric, Volume II); “Sacco and Vanzetti” (After the Fact) “Depression and New Deal” (American Issues); Twelve readings from the Golden Owl Publishing Company’s Jackdaw entitled “The New Deal,” which include all six “Broadsheet” essays on various aspects of

the Depression and New Deal as well as the transcript of a “fireside chat,” a speech by Huey Long, and entries from Harry Hopkins’s diary, among other items.

Special Activities:

- Document Shuffle in which groups are asked to categorize documents representing key issues of the 1920s from either a “traditional rural” or “modern urban” point of view.
- Small-group Document Shuffle entitled: “The New Deal: Measures and Criticisms.”
- In-class DBQ using the documents and question from the 1984 AP Exam which asked students to characterize FDR and Hoover in terms of the labels “liberal” and “conservative.”

Unit 12: America and the World (1921–1945)

Objectives: In order to understand American society before, during, and after World War II (WWII), the student will be able to:

- A. Describe the events leading up to World War II
- B. Analyze the causes and results of American involvement in World War II
- C. Evaluate the motivations of the United States in rebuilding Europe and other nations after WWII

Reading Assignments: “The Decision to Drop the Bomb” (After the Fact); “Homefront: The Experience of Total War” (American Issues)

Key Discussion Topics: Isolationism, pacifism, and neutrality and their ramifications for U.S. policy in Europe, Latin America, and Asia during the 1920s and early 1930s; neutrality legislation of the 1930s; undeclared war in Europe and the course of U.S.–Japanese relations in the late 1930s; Pearl Harbor; halting the German blitz; turning the tide in the Pacific and the decision to drop the A-bomb; the war on the home front; wartime diplomacy.

Special Activity: Debate—Resolved: “Harry S. Truman was a War Criminal.”

Unit 13: The Cold War and 1950s Prosperity

Objectives: To understand the impact of the Cold War and the cultural shifts taking place in the United States during the 1950s, the student will be able to:

- A. Explain the origins of the Cold War
- B. Analyze the culture of the postwar United States (compare and contrast with post-WWI culture)
- C. Describe the reactionary culture beginning to develop during the 1950s

Reading Assignments “The Cold War” (American Issues); “The GI Bill of Rights” (Social Fabric Volume II); “Were the 1950s America’s ‘Happy Days’?” (Taking Sides, Volume II)

Discussion Topics: Election of 1948, Truman, Truman Doctrine, Containment Policy, NATO, Warsaw Pact, Red China, Korea, Baby Boom, GI Bill of Rights, election of 1952, peaceful coexistence, HUAC, McCarthyism, modern media,

advertising, cultural development (appliances, housing, suburbia, jobs, television, fast food, hotel chains, cars, etc.), interstate highways, Beatniks and the beginning of counterculture, the beginning of the modern civil rights movement, the Warren Court, Brown vs. Board of Education, and societal changes after WWII

Unit 14: The 1960s and the Civil Rights Movement, Counterculture, and Vietnam

Objectives: To recognize the importance of societal shifts, domestic programs, and foreign policy during the 1960s, the student will be able to:

A. Evaluate domestic programs and foreign policies of the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations:

1. The New Frontier, Civil Rights
2. Cuban Missile Crisis, Bay of Pigs
3. The Great Society (Medicare, Medicaid, etc.)
4. Early Vietnam

B. Analyze the causes and results of the American Civil Rights Movement

C. Analyze the beginning and development of “the counterculture”

D. Evaluate the causes and results of American involvement in the Vietnam War

Reading Assignments: “The Struggle for Civil Rights,” “The Counterculture” (Social Fabric, Volume II); “The Vietnam War and Political Crisis” (American Issues)

Discussion Topics U2 incident, civil rights and civil liberties, public and government responses to social changes, election of 1960, Kennedy’s New Frontier, Kennedy assassination, the election of 1968, Johnson’s Great Society programs, War on Poverty, election of 1968, Freedom Summer, SNCC, CORE, SCLC, sit-ins, Black Panthers, Martin Luther King Jr., March on Washington, Malcolm X, Civil Rights Act of 1964, and changing social mores.

Special Activities: students are given short biographical sketches of 10 important historical figures from the 1950s and 1960s. They are also given 10 quotations taken from the writing and speeches of the same 10 figures. The students’ assignment is to write a paper of two to three pages attributing the quotes to the proper author and explaining why the attributions are the correct ones. The task is made more difficult by the inclusion of people with fairly similar views, such as Thurgood Marshall and Earl Warren.

Unit 15: Nixon, Ford, and Carter in the Seventies

Objectives: To understand the role of America and its future in the world today, the student will be able to:

A. Explain the causes and results of the downfall of the Nixon administration

B. Characterize society under the Ford and Carter administrations

Reading Assignments: “Will History Forgive Richard Nixon?” (Taking Sides, Volume II); “Breaking into Watergate” (After the Fact); “Culture War” (Social Fabric, Volume II) Special Activity: Document shuffle in which groups are asked to differentiate among statements and policies of the two one-term presidents of the 1970s—Ford and Carter.

Discussion Topics: OPEC and the oil shock; inflation and the new economy; the start of affirmative action; setbacks and gains for women; the election of 1976; Carter; Sadat; Khomeini; and disillusionment and the renewed Cold War.

Special Activity: Document shuffle in which groups are asked to differentiate among statements and policies of the two one-term presidents of the 1970s Ford and Carter.

Unit 16: The 1980s and Beyond

Objectives: In order to understand the changing social trends of the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the role of the United States in world affairs on the threshold of the twenty-first century, the student will be able to:

- A. Characterize society and foreign policy under the Reagan and Bush I Administrations
- B. Evaluate the Clinton Administration regarding domestic and foreign policy of the '90s
- C. Analyze issues, both domestic and foreign, facing the United States today and in the near future

Reading Assignments: “Challenges of a Changing World” (American Issues); “Were the 1980s a Decade of Greed?” (Taking Sides, Volume II)

Discussion Topics: Election of 1980, Reaganomics, the Strategic Détente Initiative, perestroika/glasnost, end of the Cold War, Iran-Contra Affair, election of 1988, Bush and economic policies, fall of Communism, Operation Desert Shield, Operation Desert Storm, election of 1992, Clinton Administration, Somalia, Kosovo, terrorist hijackings and bombings, scandals, health care system, election of 2000, Bush II, 9-11, “war on terror,” foreign policy, civil liberties, globalization, new world role.

Unit 17: Review and Synthesis

The final reading assignment will be given to the students in the final weeks leading up to the A.P. exam. The students will be assigned several chapters out of the book *American Nations: A history of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America*, by Colin Woodard. This book does an efficient job of reviewing material that has not been covered since the beginning of the school year while synthesizing a great deal of content in very few pages through the theme of *regionalism*. In this book Woodard sectionalizes the U.S. into eleven distinct regional cultures. As their final assignment before the A.P. exam, the students will be asked to categorize several historical figures into those eleven regional cultures, with a political, social, and economic rationale for each.