

Advanced Placement Policy Guide: History

The Advanced Placement Program® (AP®) provides motivated students with the opportunity to take college-level courses while still in high school. Students demonstrate their mastery of the curriculum by taking AP Exams—34 exams, including U.S. History, European History, and World History, are available in 19 subject areas. In 2003, over one million students took AP Exams worldwide. Of the 1.7 million AP Exams taken in 2003, over 242,000 exams were in U.S. History, over 73,000 in European History, and almost 35,000 in World History. Over 3,000 colleges and universities accept qualifying AP Exam scores for credit, placement, or both, including many international institutions.

Alongside the remarkable growth of the AP Program in recent years, the same strong curriculum and rigorous exams continue to this day. Since its inception in the 1950s, AP has been a respected force in American education due to the critical involvement of college and university faculty members.

History Faculty Involvement in AP®

College and university faculty members play a vital role in every stage of development of an AP course and exam, helping to ensure the high quality of the AP curriculum. Each AP discipline has its own Development Committee—composed of college and university professors and experienced AP teachers—which is responsible for creating the course curriculum and exam questions. College and university faculty members also serve as Chief Readers, responsible for establishing the exam-scoring rubric and overseeing the annual AP Reading of the free-response essays for their academic discipline.

The College Board publication *AP and Higher Education* covers: how to set an AP policy, AP research studies, the development of AP courses and exams, and the AP Exam scoring at greater length. For more information or to request a copy of this publication, please go to apcentral.collegeboard.com/highered.

Recent History Development Committee Members and Chief Readers:

Jonathan Chu, University of Massachusetts Boston
Julia Clancy-Smith, University of Arizona
Kenneth Curtis, California State University, Long Beach
Belinda Davis, Rutgers University
Kathryn Edwards, University of South Carolina Columbia
Mary Frederickson, Miami University of Ohio
Michael Galgano, James Madison University
Christine Heyrman, University of Delaware
Catherine Higgs, University of Tennessee
Raymond Hyser, James Madison University
David Longfellow, Baylor University
Patrick Manning, Northeastern University
John Merriman, Yale University
George Munro, Virginia Commonwealth University
Peter Stearns, George Mason University
Judith Tucker, Georgetown University
Diane Vecchio, Furman University
David Weiland, Utah State University
Anand Yang, University of Washington

“I’ve been involved in AP twice, in the 1980s with the European History AP, and now for some years with World History. AP involvement has provided me with real insights into history teaching and into the achievements of many high school teachers. The results help me think about history learning in general, and about appropriate college programs in particular. It’s simply a very stimulating engagement.”

Peter Stearns, Chair, AP World History Development Committee

Setting an AP Policy

The College Board encourages higher education institutions to base their AP policy decisions on data and research, and recognizes that different institutions and departments will set different policies, based upon factors unique to their institution, student body, and academic discipline. The best way for colleges and universities to determine their AP credit and placement policies is to conduct their own research on the performance of AP and non-AP students at their own institution and in their own department.

Research on AP History Student Performance

Research studies show that students who do well on an AP Exam are academically prepared to place out of a corresponding introductory college course and move on to the next higher-level course in the discipline. According to a recent study, students who received a 3 on the AP U.S. History Exam and bypassed the introductory course, earned an average grade of 2.94 in upper-level courses. Their non-AP peers who completed an introductory course earned a course average of 2.71 in upper-level courses. Students who received a 5 on the exam did significantly better in upper-level classes than non-AP students. (See Table 1.) Performance data is not available for AP European or World History students. The published research report will be available on AP Central® in 2005.

Table 1. GPA in Upper-Level U.S. History Courses: AP U.S. History Students vs. Non-AP Students

| Students | Bypass Intro. Course | Upper-Level Course GPA |
|----------|----------------------|------------------------|
| AP 5 | Yes | 3.62 |
| AP 4 | Yes | 3.25 |
| AP 3 | Yes | 2.94 |
| Non-AP | No | 2.71 |

In addition to research studies on AP student performance, the College Board conducts college comparability studies to measure the degree to which the AP course curriculum and exams are equivalent in content and difficulty to introductory college courses. The AP Exam scoring rubric is established so that the lowest composite score that earns an AP grade of 5 is equivalent to the average score earned by college students who received grades of A in a comparable course. The lowest score that earns an AP grade of 4 is equivalent to the average B, and the lowest score that earns an AP grade of 3 is equivalent to the average C.

“I have always found students with an AP background easy to identify in a college classroom. They usually have a better understanding of historical evidence and how to evaluate various types to form organized, coherent arguments. They have had good experience working with document types and have a sense of historical interpretations as well as how to read critically.”

Michael Galgano, Chair, AP European History Development Committee

The research that the College Board conducts is intended to help institutions and academic departments as they establish appropriate AP policies. AP Central (apcentral.collegeboard.com), the College Board's online home for AP professionals, contains other resources that may assist in this process including Course Description booklets, released exam questions, and sample student responses at different levels of ability.

U.S. History:
apcentral.collegeboard.com/ushist

European History:
apcentral.collegeboard.com/european

World History:
apcentral.collegeboard.com/world

AP Credit Policy Info on the Web

Information about AP credit and placement policies at hundreds of colleges and universities is now available on the College Board's Web site at www.collegeboard.com/ap/creditpolicy.

AP History Curriculum

The three AP History Development Committees determine the curriculum taught in their respective AP History courses, and evaluated on the AP Exams. Periodically, the Committees conduct curriculum surveys, sent to professors of the comparable college-level course, which help ensure that the AP History curriculum remains current with concepts and themes as taught in college and university classrooms. AP History Exams consist of multiple-choice questions and free-response essays, weighted equally. The free-response questions for all history exams include both document-based and thematic essays.

U.S. History

The U.S. History curriculum covers the following topics:

1. Discovery and Settlement of the New World, 1492–1650
2. America and the British Empire, 1650–1754
3. Colonial Society in the Mid-Eighteenth Century
4. Road to Revolution, 1754–75
5. The American Revolution, 1775–83
6. Constitution and New Republic, 1776–1800
7. The Age of Jefferson, 1800–16
8. Nationalism and Economic Expansion
9. Sectionalism
10. Age of Jackson, 1828–48
11. Territorial Expansion and Sectional Crisis
12. Creating an American Culture
13. The 1850s: Decade of Crisis
14. Civil War
15. Reconstruction to 1877
16. New South and the Last West
17. Industrialization and Corporate Consolidation
18. Urban Society
19. Intellectual and Cultural Movements
20. National Politics, 1877–96: The Gilded Age
21. Foreign Policy, 1865–1914
22. Progressive Era
23. The First World War
24. The New Era: The 1920s
25. Depression, 1929–33
26. New Deal
27. Diplomacy in the 1930s
28. The Second World War
29. Truman and the Cold War
30. Eisenhower and Modern Republicanism
31. Kennedy’s New Frontier; Johnson’s Great Society
32. Nixon
33. The United States since 1974

European History

The European History curriculum centers on three major themes:

1. Intellectual and Cultural History, including: changes in religious thought and institutions; secularization; scientific and technological developments and their consequences; trends in literature and the arts; relationship of intellectual and cultural developments to social values and political events; developments in literacy, education, and communication; diffusion of intellectual concepts among different social groups; changes in elite and popular culture; and the impact of global expansion on European culture.
2. Political and Diplomatic History, including: the rise and functioning of the modern state; relations between Europe and other parts of the world; evolution of political elites and development of political parties, ideologies, and mass politics; extension and limitation of rights and liberties; political persecutions; nationalism; political protest, reform, and revolution; relationship between domestic and foreign policies; efforts to restrain conflict; and war and civil conflict.
3. Social and Economic History, including: agricultural production and organization; role of urbanization in transforming cultural values and social relationships; shifts in social structures and changing distribution of wealth and poverty; influence of sanitation and health care practices on society; commercial practices, mass production, and consumption; definitions of and attitudes toward mainstream groups and the “other”; industrialization; changes in demography and reproductive patterns; gender roles and their influence; competition and interdependence in national and world markets; private and state roles in economic activity; and racial and ethnic group identities.

Students are required to address questions of periodization and be able to trace conceptual themes across various periods of European history.

World History

The World History curriculum is structured around the interaction of chronological periodization and six major conceptual themes.

The curriculum covers the following chronological periods:

1. Foundations (pre-1000)
2. 1000–1450
3. 1450–1750
4. 1750–1914
5. 1914 to the present

The following six themes serve as unifying threads helping students put what is particular about each period or society into a larger framework, and provide ways to make comparisons over time:

1. Impact of interaction among major societies
2. The relationship of change and continuity across world history periods
3. Impact of technology and demography on people and the environment
4. Systems of social structure and gender structure
5. Cultural and intellectual developments and interactions among and within societies
6. Changes in functions and structures of states and in attitudes toward states and political identities (political culture), including the emergence of the nation-state (types of political organization).

The College Board: Connecting Students to College Success™

The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 4,500 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves over three million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges through major programs and services in college admissions, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT®, the PSAT/NMSQT®, and the Advanced Placement Program® (AP®). The College Board is committed to the principles of excellence and equity, and that commitment is embodied in all of its programs, services, activities, and concerns. For further information, visit www.collegeboard.com.

How to Get Involved

There are many ways college and university faculty members can help maintain the high standards of the AP Program:

- Participate in a college comparability study
- Be an AP Reader
- Contribute multiple-choice test items for the AP Exam
- Become an AP Faculty Consultant

For more information, please go to

apcentral.collegeboard.com/highered.

Contact Us

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