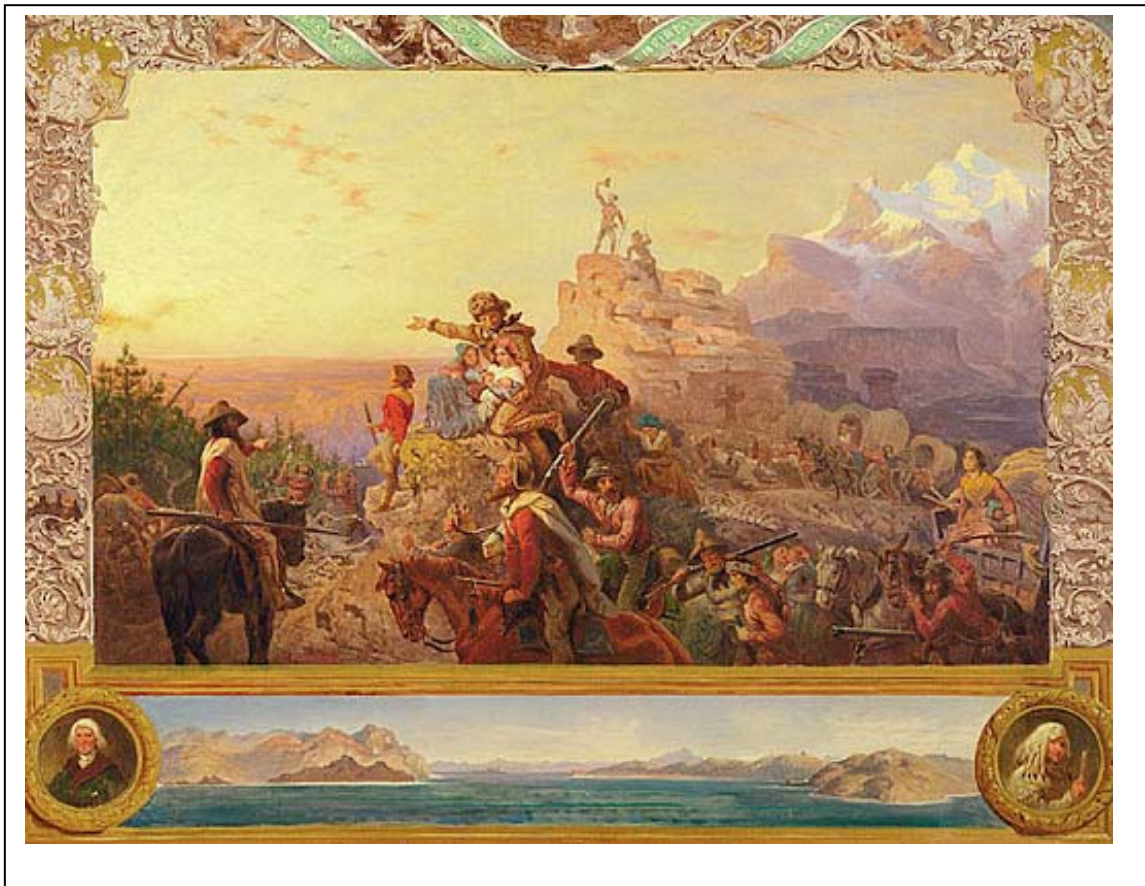


AP U.S. History Student Handbook 2012-13



Boise High School
Mr. Stan Wiens

Welcome to Advanced Placement History!!!!

AP U.S. History at Boise High School is a one year course with the national AP exam occurring in May. The course work is designed to be more rigorous than a high school honors course and on par with introductory college U.S. History courses. After passing the course work, students will be better prepared for the study, reading, and writing load commonly encountered at four year universities.

At the end of the junior year, AP students will review for and take the national AP exam. The exam is a three hour test containing three timed parts: multiple choice questions, a Document Based Question requiring document analysis and an essay, and two essay questions. Exam scores are on a scale of 1 to 5 with a score of a 3, 4, or 5 considered “passing.”

With a passing grade, most colleges and universities exempt you from taking introductory level courses and grant permission to take higher level courses, enabling you to move ahead in areas of interest and perhaps complete your degree early. More than 3,000 colleges and universities grant credit, in varying amounts, for a score of “3, 4, or 5” on an AP national test. Many institutions grant up to a year of credit for a sufficient number of qualifying grades.

Why take AP U.S. History?

- You love history and want to learn an in-depth account of the history of the United States.
- You will develop strong writing skills, learning to focus on organizing your thoughts in essay form.
- You will learn important analytical and synthesis skills that will assist you in all your courses in high school and college.
- You will have a better chance at admission to the college of your choice with a passing grade on the AP exam.
- The college credit will save you time and money once you start college.
- Studies say you will be more likely to complete more course work, take a greater number of higher level college courses and to graduate with a double major.

Class Expectations for AP U.S. History

AP U.S. History is a rigorous course in which your score on the AP exam is directly related to your efforts in class. The focus is not on student behavior but on learning the material. Students who do not respect this will be asked to join a regular U.S. History course.

Attendance: Your attendance in class is extremely important! You are expected to be in class every day with the exception of a sickness or a field trip. When a day is missed, it is *your* responsibility to make up the work missed immediately.

Before participating in a field trip or other activities that take you away from class, consider how it will affect your goal of earning a passing grade on the AP exam!

Grading: Grades will be broken down as follows:

- Study Guides 20%
- Historian Points 10%
- Weekly quizzes on class prep/reading 10%
- Essays/quick writes 25%
- Multiple Choice exams 25%
- Semester EOC 10%

In order to align student progress with AP test expectations, every grade in this class will be scored on the AP 0-9 scale. It is different than the traditional scale used in most classes but is quite effective once understood. The scale below shows you how the AP scoring relates both to success on the AP exam and traditional class grading.

Traditional Grade	Your assignment =	Predicted AP Test Score	=	Class Grade
100%	9			A
	8	5	Extremely well qualified	A
	7			A
90%	6	4	Well qualified	A
	5	4		B
80%	4	3	Qualified	B
	3	3	Possibly qualified	C
70%	2	2		C
60%	1	1	No recommendation	D or F
	0			

Study Guides: Study Guide assignments are due on Turnitin.com on the morning of the day before the unit test. The work is to be a student's *own responses* to the questions provided. Students are encouraged to "work together" to formulate responses but the final product must be unique for each student.

Top level study guide responses use lots of unit vocabulary and provide narration that thoroughly discusses the question. They are meant to be "mini essays" that help you explore the subject, not simply answer the question.

Historian Points: Students will develop the analytical and interpretive skills used by professional historians during the year through historian group activities, occasional projects, and Wikispace entries.

Quizzes: are given every week, seek to test student’s preparedness for class, and will be given in several forms including multiple choice, short answer, definition, or identification.

Essays are graded using the AP scoring system adapted for this course. See the Essay rubric for a generic example of AP essay scoring.

There will be three different types of essay events: short writes, 5-6 paragraph argumentative essays, and Document Based Question essays. Each will have a different weight in a student’s final grade.

Note: AP Test readers have stringent standards. An 8 or 9 essay is equal to an “A” essay written at one of the best universities. A high school student should be able to write a 6 or 7 essay in this class and therefore will receive an A for this. However, your first few essays may receive low scores while you improve your historical analysis and writing skills. DO NOT be alarmed as they will get better and your first quarter grade will reflect your improvement.

Multiple Choice tests are either 40 or 80 multiple choice questions and are graded based on percentage correct which is then converted to an AP score:

<u>% MC Test Score</u>	<u>=</u>	<u>AP Score</u>	<u>Traditional Grade</u>
95-100		9	A
90-94		8	A
85-89		7	A
80-84		6	A
75-79		5	B
69-74		4	B
65-68		3	C
60-64		2	C
55-59		1	D
0-54		0	F

Redo/Revisit:

Learning is dynamic and occurs over time. Students may redo some assignments within an appropriate amount of time for one grade higher.

- Essays may be rewritten with substantial improvement to receive at most 2 points higher.
- Study Guides may be rewritten, focusing on highlighted problem areas.
- Unit exams may be “corrected” by researching the correct answer and providing support from a source. Students may earn up to 2 AP points higher for their grade.

Please note: you must maintain a “C” grade in this course to remain in the course. Your progress will be evaluated at each quarter and semester end. Students who fail to make progress in APUSH will be counseled to switch out of the course at an appropriate time.

Skills: To do well in this course and on the national AP exam, you must develop your reading, writing, and analysis skills. The following skills are quite important:

- Read large amounts of text for factual content, ideas, and implied meaning.
- Memorize facts, dates, and important events.
- Analyze historical documents for bias, implied meaning, controversy, and context; synthesize differences and similarities between documents.
- Write essays with proper organization, grammar, and developed ideas.
- Recognize trends, philosophies, theories, and movements in U.S. history.

It is expected that you will both develop these skills through the exercises given in class and work on advancing these skills in your other classes and at home.

Homework: Until you take the national AP exam, you will always have homework for this class!!!!!!
*It is expected that you will spend at least **4 hours a week** reading for and working on this class.* Use the following as a guide:

- One or two chapters (20-50 pages) of reading a week; reading assignments to be done before class discussions
- Several documents to read and analyze per week
- One or more essays to write per week
- Twenty or more vocabulary words to memorize per week
- Model AP exams at unit and semester end to prepare for

In AP History, it is not a matter of whether you did it or not but how well you did it! Mr. StanWiens will give you assignments to complete that will help you learn the material but the ultimate responsibility for preparing your own knowledge is up to you. If your essay is not complete, if you do not know the vocab words, or you are not ready for the test, you need to put more effort into preparing for the class.

Academic Honesty

It is expected that both teachers and students at Boise High will conduct themselves honorably and ethically in their pursuit of knowledge and hold each other accountable to high academic and behavioral expectations.

Two of the most common forms of academic dishonesty are cheating and plagiarism. It is the responsibility of those participating in the BHS APUSH program to recognize ALL incidents of academic dishonesty and resist any behaviors that break either the letter or the spirit of the BHS Honor Code. Two good questions to ask yourself are: 1) Is this my work? 2) Did I have prior knowledge that give me an unfair advantage? Mr. StanWiens will follow the BHS Academic Honor Code in regards to academic honesty.

The National AP Test:

All students who complete AP U.S. History are expected to sit for the AP National Exam in May of their junior year.

I Have a Question!!

- Look through your resources thoroughly for the answer.
- Call a fellow student or member of your historian group
- Join the class website at <http://boiseapush.wikispaces.com/> Weekly schedules, reminders, student conferences, links and teacher contact will be facilitated through this site.
- See Mr. StanWiens before school, after class, during lunch, or after school.
- Write Mr. StanWiens an email at boiseapush@gmail.com or doug.stanwiens@boiseschools.org (I will check email each night until 9:30PM)

Technology for APUSH

The use of technology is quickly becoming more important in our educational environment. Using technology effectively is now a required skill for high school graduation and success in post secondary education and the workplace. I have chosen several websites that will help facilitate your learning and will extend the classroom environment. Therefore, success in APUSH will require using the following at some level:

- Infinite Campus (grades, assignments)
- Google Gmail, Calendar, Documents, and Photos (data management, presentations)
- Turnitin.com (assignment management)
- Wikispace (curriculum exploration, course scheduling)

Password Reminders

Site	Username	Password
Infinite Campus		
Google		
Turnitin.com		
Wikispace		

Technology is a tremendous learning tool. It will be used in APUSH for that purpose only and will be considered as an extension of the BHS APUSH classroom, with all school rules applying.

Along with learning applications of technology, we must accept and follow certain guidelines for using technology in an academic setting. Therefore, APUSH students shall refrain from using technology for APUSH for any of the following:

- Plagiarism/Cheating as defined in the BHS Honor Code
- Posting or promoting of school inappropriate materials
- Purposefully insulting or offending fellow students or teachers
- Destroying or altering without permission other students' work
- Any violation of the BHS student handbook

AP U.S. History Syllabus: To achieve success in this class, it is important for each student to understand the expectations and to use all resources available to them. Towards that goal, I ask that both the student and parents become familiar with the course expectations. If you have any questions about the course expectations, please email Mr. StanWiens at doug.stanwiens@boiseschools.org Thank you!

I understand the above expectations.

I understand the above expectations.

Student

Parent

Date

Class Period

The Historian Group/Historian Points

Americans love history but often hate their history class in high school. Why? Because U.S. History students are often told to memorize the “facts” of history in a passive way, not participate in uncovering history in a dynamic and interesting way. This class is different in that regard. Here are some key points about APUSH:

- History occurs because humans are dynamic, emotional, motivated, incentivized, and often controversial
- *Humans* repeat themselves, therefore history follows trends over time
- Historians don't record history, they interpret what happened
- The study of history is therefore *what* happened AND *why* it happened
- Historians state theses and ask other historians “What do you think about my thesis?”
- Events, facts, data etc can always be connected to other events, facts, and data.
- Facts matter, but how facts are organized matters more

APUSH students are thus asked to conduct themselves as historians in moving through and uncovering the APUSH curriculum. To do this, students are asked to become historians much like professional historians who write the history books, produce the videos, and make the movies that Americans so enjoy.

APUSH moves forward using student Historian Groups. These groups are 4-5 students who support, quiz, challenge, and teach each other for 2 consecutive units. Students will often be asked to read, highlight, or interpret history in their historian groups and work completed as a group will be assessed using Historian Points for a student's grade.

The Wikispace is a web space for each individual historian to “do history” using web technology. Historians will be asked to find and analyze documents, collect and interpret historical events or concepts, and highlight stories from history as relates to them on their Wikispace. These activities will also count towards Historian Points.

Historian Points:

- 10% of a student's grade
- Grades from Historian Group work
- Wikispace work

Study Suggestions

1. Complete reading before coming to class.
 - Pre-read the text by scanning for headings, picture captions, bold words. Get an idea of what the chapter is about.
 - Read the text by focusing on the first and last sentences of the paragraphs and sections. These tell you the main ideas.
 - Review the main ideas of the text.
2. Take notes on your reading and review them.
 - Copy down key words, ideas, theories. Highlight them and review them periodically
3. Keep study cards of vocabulary words and definitions
 - As we do vocabulary words, write them down on a note card and place definition on the backside.
 - Study these cards before quizzes, tests, and national exam.
4. Memorize the most important stuff!
 - It is highly recommended that you quickly memorize all the U.S. Presidents and their terms of office and the order in which the states joined the union and their dates.
5. Use your historian groups
 - Use your friends in class to help you study. Schedule regular study groups.
6. Always understand the question before answering
 - Make sure you thoroughly understand what is being asked. Analyze the intent of the question. What is the author asking exactly?
7. Always place facts in context
 - Tie facts, events, and people with the time period. What was going on when George Washington was president? What period was it?
8. Read and define critically: On the surface, between the lines, beyond the lines.
 - What is the literal translation and meaning of the term or text?
 - What is the author trying to say without saying it?
 - What are the author's biases? When was the text written? By whom? Why?
 - What was the impact of this person, event, or writing? How did it affect its time?
9. Always ask questions!!!!!!
 - Ask the teacher, other teachers, parents, fellow students, the librarian. ASK!

Date _____ Unit _____

Concept/Question _____

Vocab Related to SG Questions about material	Notes (In Class and While Reading)
Summary:	

3 Levels of Questioning

Level 1 – Recall

the answer is in the text; explicit, fact (fully and clearly expressed; leaving nothing implied)

- What were her slippers made out of?
- How did Cinderella get to the ball?

Level II – Analysis Inference (*The act or process of deriving logical conclusions from premises known or assumed to be true*)

implicit or what is implied; analysis, ask how and why, require analysis of the text, reading between the lines, hidden meaning (understood though not directly expressed)

- Why does Cinderella stepmother care whether or not she went to the ball?
- Why did everything turn back the way it was except the glass slipper?
- Why don't the stepsisters like Cinderella?

Level III – Synthesis

Go beyond the text and inquire into the value, importance and application of the information presented

- Does a women's salvation always lie with a man?
- What does it mean to live happily ever after?
- Does good always overcome evil?

Guide to taking the AP Examination Multiple Choice Section

The first section of the national AP U.S. History exam is multiple choice. The section has *80 questions* and you are allowed *55 minutes* to finish the section. This section counts for *50 percent of your grade*.

Should I guess on the questions I don't know? To correct for haphazard guessing, the test scorers will subtract one quarter of the total number of incorrect questions from your total of correctly answered questions. Therefore, haphazard guessing does not help. But educated guessing does help. Try to narrow the answers down to 2 or 3 choices by eliminating the answers you know are not correct. Then make an educated guess about the correct answer from the information you know.

Some helpful suggestions:

1. Study your vocabulary: People, Places, Events, Dates, Major Issues
2. Understand why someone did something. For example, one past multiple choice question was:
Jefferson's purchase of Louisiana had its origins in his desire to _____

Can you answer this question without the choices in front of you?

3. The multiple choice questions will come from each part of U.S. History including into the late 1970's. One half of the questions will come from the time period 1790-1914.
4. The questions cover everything from politics to art. Know a wide spectrum of history facts.
5. Take sample tests!

Included is a sample test based on the national test.

The Nine Types of History Essay Questions

1. Change Over Time

Example: “The period from 1783 to 1815 was a period of evolution to economic maturity for the infant United States. Assess the validity of this view.”

This type of question asks you to measure the degree of change over a period of time. First ascertain what you are assessing. Next identify the key words. Did other major events occur within these dates that had an impact on the period? Why did the question select these dates? Do they mark turning points, beginnings, ends, dramatic shifts, or a convenient time period? Remember to cover the entire period of the questions. If it asks for 1783-1815, do not concentrate on the 1790's. Change over time assumes that something changed over the time period. It is possible some ideas or policies did not change.

Example: “Between 1790 and 1870 the economic growth of the United States was significantly stimulated by governmental aid. Assess the validity of this statement.”

What is meant by governmental aid-tariffs, internal improvements, public land policy, land grants to railroads, subsidies, Bank of the U.S., etc? The key words are the dates, economic growth, stimulated, and governmental aid. Why pick these dates? What is meant by stimulated? What governments are involved-state, local, or national? What does the phrase economic growth mean? Was the stimulus uneven, sporadic, or even counterproductive? Why the use of “significantly?” Could the governmental aid have been insignificant? Were factors at work stimulating the economy other than governmental aid?

2. Cause and Effect

Example: “Why did the United States enter the First World War?”

In this question be sure to balance immediate and long range causes. How are the causes related? Can you group them under broad ideas? An essay on the American entry into the First World War should not begin with the German resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare in January, 1917 but do not find causes too far back in history. If you blame the initial arrival of blacks in 1619 for the Civil War, you have given yourself the responsibility for filling in the years between 1619 and 1861.

Nothing is so simple that it has one cause. Always answer cause and effect questions with multiple causation. Rank the relative importance of the causes and explain your choice. Include the consequences of ideas, actions, and events to emphasize the effect. A discussion of the causes of the Civil War should conclude that it resolved the dilemma of slavery in the territories. Remember feedback from the effect to the cause. The original system for election the president produced the tie vote in the electoral college of 1800. The procedure changed. The 1800 election result ended that cause of a tie in future electoral college votes.

Example: “What caused the Civil War?”

Think of broad categories for causes and decide which categories to emphasize and which facts to emphasize within each category. A good answer considers the following: slavery in the territories; the clash of economic systems; Southern nationalism versus Northern dominance; race, slavery, and the future of blacks in America; Northern abolitionism and Southern reaction; and the failure of democracy or the triumph of democracy. Conclude your essay with a look at the broad issues resolved by the Civil War and a peek at new issues raised by the struggle.

3. Compare and Contrast

Example: “Compare and contrast Jacksonian Democracy and Jeffersonian Democracy.”

To contrast is to compare with respect to differences. “Compare” emphasizes likenesses over differences. In a sense, therefore, “compare and contrast” is redundant. No matter how the question is phrased, though, the student must include both similarities and differences in a “compare,” “contrast” or “compare and contrast” question. Often students concentrate on only half of the question. Ask yourself what is comparable among the choices given. Are there obvious differences or similarities? Do you organize the answer by developing a description of each separately or by linking both for each concept? A fresh approach is needed if the question is phrased in a manner you never considered. For example, compare Jacksonian Democracy and Populism, or compare and contrast colonial immigration with 19th century immigration.

Example: “Compare and contrast three colonies-Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts.”

Create a list of conceptual comparisons. Decide which are the most important and defend them well. You should consider the following: motives of the founders; influence of climate and geography; economies; political systems; closeness to the British colonial ideal; religions; morals; social structure; and education systems. All of these conceptual ideas are significant enough to require a separate paragraph. Some should be grouped together, however, according to the wording of the question, your degree of knowledge, and the amount of time. Two paragraphs that cover religion and the economy merely introduce the subject. Strive for a broad range of concepts to compare and contrast.

4. Define and Identify

Example: “Discuss Jacksonian Democracy.”

Ask yourself what were the traits, leaders, characteristics, origins, results, or issues involved. A define and identify question is often worded as “describe” or “discuss.” “Discuss Jacksonian Democracy” does not mean telling a series of pleasant stories about Jackson. Zero in, and define and identify Jacksonian Democracy through its origins, leaders, characteristics, issues, and policies. Sometimes a define and identify question is limited to one or two qualities. To answer the question, “What were the characteristics of colonial religion?” you must identify, define, and explain the characteristics. In response to the question, “What were the results of Reconstruction?” you should carefully define Reconstruction and include the issues that had an impact of the results of Reconstruction.

Of all the possible wordings that are used, “define and identify” most easily degenerates into a pleasant narrative. Remember that defining and describing means ranking and explaining the traits, characteristics, results, issues, origins, or leaders. Jackson’s attack on the Bank of the United States may be a symbol of Jacksonian Democracy or an aberration. To write that Jackson attacked the Bank is not enough. Why did he, what did he or his supporters gain, and what beliefs did the attack illustrate?

5. Statement, React to It

Example: “Presidents are rarely successful in both foreign and domestic policy. Assess the validity of this statement.”

These questions are usually worded as statements followed by either “explain,” or “assess the validity.” You may react to the statement as valid, invalid, or partially valid. Avoid the trap of the simplistic answer which blandly declares with little support the statement valid or invalid. The best answers select the partially valid choice, address the opposite position, or state a strong support.

Example: “Slavery was the sole cause of the Civil War. Evaluate this statement.”

If you defend the statement, define slavery broadly and consider its ramifications broadly. The best essays discuss slavery as one cause and then discuss other causes. Remember to look for key words in the statement. In this example it is “sole.” If you disagree with the statement, do not write an analysis of the causes of the Civil War and ignore the issues of slavery. You may justify other causes, but do not neglect slavery as a cause.

6. Evaluation

Example: “Pick three of the following and evaluate their effectiveness as political leaders.”

George Washington	Henry Clay	John C. Calhoun
John Quincy Adams	Thomas Jefferson	Daniel Webster

Evaluation questions are worded as “evaluate,” “assess the significance,” or “assess the validity.” You control your answer because you determine the conceptual criteria and factual support. A quick path to an “F” on this essay is to write in the “it was good, it was really good, or it was bad” mode. “Evaluate” or “assess” demands an evaluation, not an evasion. “Evaluate Jacksonian Democracy” means that you decide what criteria to use to evaluate Jacksonian Democracy. Do not glibly stamp Jacksonian Democracy as “good.”

Example: “Was colonial society democratic?”

You must first deal with the ambiguous word democratic. Carefully create a workable definition of democracy. Next, identify conceptual categories for your evaluation of colonial democracy—religious, political, social, economic. A good essay suggests that some aspects of colonial society were democratic, some were not, and changes occurred throughout the colonial period.

7. A Statement from a Particular Viewpoint

Example: “Defend British policies during the period from 1763 to 1776.”

The secret to this question is to place yourself in the asked for position. In order to do that you must clearly understand the view stated and be able to defend it. These questions frequently confuse students momentarily because the question may be worded in a manner that the student has never considered.

Example: “According to a radical historian, what have been the foreign policy objectives of the United States in the twentieth century?”

Do you know the basic tenets of the radical critique of American foreign policy? If so, this may be easy; otherwise....! An answer to this question emphasizes the aggressive, expansionist, and imperialistic nature of our foreign policy, the elite control of decision making, our anti-democratic posture, and our internal oppression of workers and minorities. Even if you disagree with the radical critique of our foreign policy, do not forget that your primary purpose is to answer the question. The question tests your knowledge, not your patriotism. Do not make the mistake of writing a critique of the radical critique instead of answering the question. Add a statement to your conclusion that gives your opinion in a discreet manner if you wish. For example, write, "The radical critique of 20th century foreign policy more aptly applies to communist nations than the United States."

8. Given Framework

Example: "The powers of the President grew because of war and foreign crises. Evaluate this statement."

A given-framework question limits your range of conceptualization because you must write within the defined framework.. Otherwise, a long essay proudly submitted may be returned with a single terse comment, "You failed to answer the question." You may disagree with the statement that the powers of the President have expanded because of war and foreign crises, but that places upon you the burden of showing that war and foreign crises did not cause the growth of presidential power. You cannot answer the question by stating the opposite, that domestic problems are the primary cause for the growth of presidential power. That approach fails to address the question.

Example: "The United States displayed all the typical characteristics of a new nation during the early republic, 1789-1823. Assess the validity of this view."

This framework suggests that the experiences of the infant United States have a modern counterpart in the nascent nations of the Third World. Either make a brief reference to new Third World nations in you conclusion or introduction or sprinkle remarks throughout you essay. An adequate answer includes the attempts to avoid superpower struggles, to expand the economy, to achieve neutrality, to spread our unique ideology, and to expand our territory.

9. Problem-Solution

Example: "What causes of the Civil War were resolved by the Civil War and Reconstruction?"

In a problem-solution question a defined problem leads to a proposed solution that then resolves the problem, generates new problems, or both. The chief difficulty for a student is accurately identifying the relationship between the problem and the solution. The second difficulty is judging if the solution resolved the issue.

Example: "The Progressive movement solved problems that rose from industrialization. Discuss this statement."

What aspects of the Progressive movement concerned themselves with industrialization? An adequate answer includes political manipulation of legislatures, inspection of products, safety of workers, maldistribution of wealth, neutrality in labor disputes, control of Wall Street, antitrust;

etc. In an essay you should evaluate the solutions, and identify those that were successful and those which led to new problems, such as meat inspection laws aiding the consolidation of the meat-packing industry.

Ingredients to a “9” Essay:

- Strong thesis that *answers the essay question* with a statement of opinion
- Topic sentences that connect directly back to the thesis (see above) using that same wording and/or key phrases
- Six or more paragraphs: each paragraph acts as a separate argument of the thesis
- Each paragraph has five or more sentences of information that supports the topic sentence argument
- 4 or 5 vocabulary words (ie. dates, names, events, policies etc) in each paragraph
- Direct statements that reinforce your thesis in each paragraph
- Proper interpretation, discussion, and analysis of the vocabulary words used and how they support your argument
- Concession to alternative or contrary arguments to thesis followed by thoughts as to why they don't negate thesis
- No errors of organization
- No errors of argument
- New and/or unique ideas/opinions/arguments that go beyond the book or class discussions
- Proper spelling and grammar

Rubric FOR A.P. ESSAYS

The 8-9 essay:

- contains sophisticated thesis which guides development of argument throughout the essay.
- demonstrates well-reasoned interpretation and analysis and reaches, firm, fully supported conclusions.
- provides abundant, appropriate, and accurate specifics, deals with all aspects of prompt.
- communicates clearly and effectively, using precise language and cohesive organization.
- may contain minor errors.

The 5-7 essay:

- contains a clear thesis which sets the direction for the essay; connection between thesis and evidence may not be clearly and directly made.
- supports thesis with some factual information.
- analysis may be limited or superficial.
- limited understanding of complexity; in questions requiring balance, may give more attention to one part of the question.
- may contain errors that do not detract from overall essay/argument.

The 2-4 essay:

- thesis may be confused or undeveloped, or lacks a thesis.
- information provided is minimal, or lacks supporting information, or contains information that is not relevant to the question.
- may not connect aspects of the topic, or ignores complexity, may concentrate on only one part of the question, or discuss areas in a general and/or superficial way.
- may contain major errors.

The 0-1 essay:

- incompetent response
- may simply paraphrase or restate the question
- little or no understanding of the question

AP U.S. History

Guide to Answering the DBQ

The first section of the AP U.S. History exam is called a “document based question,” herein after referred to as a “DBQ.” The DBQ requires you to write an essay using documents supplied to you by the writers of the exam and your own knowledge. Note: using the documents alone, without your own knowledge is not sufficient. You must be able to display historical knowledge of the era or event involved in addition to the information contained in the documents.

There are three sections to a document based question. First, the DBQ provides you with a set of instructions which must be read carefully. Second, the DBQ states the question you are to answer. Third, the documents are provided for your analysis and use.

First, the DBQ comes in a green booklet with instructions printed on the cover. The instructions tell you that you have 15 minutes to read and analyze the documents and plan your answer. The green booklet is yours and you may make any notes you want to in the green booklet. When the test is over you may take the green booklet with you. The instructions then direct you to break the seal on the “pink free response booklet.” You must answer the question in the pink booklet to receive credit. Do not write your answer on the blank pages of the green booklet. You will have 45 minutes to write your answer to the DBQ.

The DBQ essay instructions direct you to:

“Construct a coherent essay that integrates your interpretations of the documents and your knowledge of the period referred to in the questions. High scores will be earned only by essays that both cite key pieces of evidence from the documents and draw on outside knowledge of the period.”

The intention of the DBQ is to test your ability to analyze documents and incorporate them with your own knowledge to construct a unified essay expressing your position on the question asked. The DBQ does not ask you to simply explain the content of the documents.

The second part of the DBQ is the question itself. The most important step in answering the DBQ is to carefully read the question. Remember you are answering the question, not responding to the documents. If you are going to be able to effectively use the documents in answering the question, you must understand the questions. As you read the question begin to develop a tentative thesis statement to respond to the questions. In your analysis of the question look for clues that DBQ questions often provide. These questions usually provide “categories” around which you can organize your answer. In the 1995 DBQ the question asks you for information involving the Civil Rights movement of the 1960’s in the areas of “goals, strategies and support for the movement.” Therefore, as you begin to formulate your thesis and evaluate the documents you must take these categories into mind as you organize your answer. If a question asks that your answer respond in three areas, then your thesis and answer must respond in all three areas. DBQ’s are also frequently “change over time” questions. In this type of question you must account for changes that occur, or do not occur, during a chronological period.

Third, as you read the documents you must sort them into the categories called for by the question and your thesis. Be aware that as you analyze the documents and fit them into the categories and your thesis, your thesis may be modified. It is important that you not lock yourself into a thesis and stubbornly maintain it in spite of facts to the contrary. Be flexible and adapt your thesis as you analyze the documents.

Take special note of the documents you are analyzing. Many documents share “tags,” or identifying notes. The tag tells you such vital information as the date, source, author, associated event, or information relevant to bias. Some documents also have notes of explanation containing additional information revealing historical settings, background or context of the event. These are of critical importance to your answer. Use this information I you answer to tie your essay together, but do not merely restate it. Neither the notes nor the documents constitute the answer to the question.

Graders of the AP exam have found that students tend to emphasize the first document they read. Document “A” is a document, not “the” document. You must consider all of the documents in answering the question. No one document in a DBQ is absolutely necessary. Some documents will be more valuable and reliable than others.

You need to make that point as you write your essay, by dismissing the less valuable and emphasizing the more important. As you read the documents try to extract one fact, concept or idea from each. If you read a document and it doesn’t make sense to you, skip it and come back to it later. Look for contradictions between documents and be prepared to explain them. Be skeptical and critical as you read the documents. Is the document reliable, of value or biased?

As you write your answer be sure that you do not simply write a “laundry list” of documents where you try to explain each document. Do not quote long passages from the documents. Paraphrase where necessary, or simply explain the content in your own words as briefly as possible. In writing your answer you must account for the documents in the DBQ. This may be done in a number of ways. First, as you write refer to the documents by author and date, or by event. You can also refer to the documents by letter such as (A) or (Doc. A). Try to be as brief in your identification of documents as possible since this takes time away from the real content of your essay. Pick and choose the documents you use and arrange the documents to meet your needs, not the needs of the author of the question. Take control and write your answer.

DBQ Summary Rules

1. Read the instructions and the question carefully.
2. Understand the question and answer it with outside information.
3. Look for categories in the question to organize your answer.
4. State your main idea first, then reference the document using a document “tag” and notes to understand and organize your answer.
5. Don’t make a “laundry list” of documents for your answer. Don’t base your answer on a single document.
6. Look for contradictions between documents and explain them.
7. Prioritize the documents for your answer in terms of least or most valuable.
8. Account for a majority of the documents in your answer and identify them.
9. Be skeptical as you read the documents, look for bias, corroboration and reliability.
10. Proofread your answer if you have time.

AP US History Generic DBQ Essay Rubric

The 8-9 Essay

- Contains a well-developed thesis that addresses all parts of the question
- Supports the thesis with effective analysis
- Effectively uses a substantial number of documents
- Supports thesis with substantial and relevant outside information
- May contain minor errors
- Is clearly organized and well written

The 5-7 Essay

- Contain a thesis that addresses part of the question
- Has limited or implicit analysis of these ideals
- Effectively uses some documents
- Supports the thesis with some relevant outside information
- May have errors that do not seriously detract from the quality of the essay
- Shows acceptable organization and writing; language errors do not interfere with the comprehension of the essay

The 2-4 Essay

- Contains a limited or underdeveloped thesis
- Lack analysis; deal with the question in a general, simplistic, incomplete, or superficial manner.
- Merely paraphrases, quotes, or briefly cites documents
- Contains little outside information, or information that is inaccurate or irrelevant
- May contain major errors
- May be poorly organized and/or poorly written

The 0-1 Essay

- Lacks a thesis or simply restates the question
- Exhibits inadequate or incorrect understanding of the question
- Has little or no understanding of the documents or ignores them completely
- Contains no outside information