

# Helpful Study Tips

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These methods have helped students in the past and are offered to help you achieve successful results in this course. They are especially helpful for students who don't have a strong background in U.S. History.

## HOW TO UNDERSTAND HISTORY

- History is not about “memorizing” data, facts, names, and dates.
- History is about knowing and understanding the past and its impact on the present, by answering these questions:
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  - whathappened?
  - when and where did the event occur?
  - who was involved?
  - what motivated the participants? (and, also important: what motivated some people NOT to participate in an event?)
  - whydid the events happen?
  - what were the consequences (that is, the outcomes) of the events?
  - why are these events significant (that is, why do you need to know about these events in history)?
- In order to understand and enjoy history, focus on knowing the “who, what, when, where and why” but also understand the “motivations”, and the “consequences (short-term and long-term)” of the events of the past.
- Memorizing can be helpful, but it will not give you a complete understanding of history.

## HOW TO EFFECTIVELY READ THE TEXTBOOK

- Pay attention to the title of the chapter. It gives you a preview of what the chapter is about and what time period is covered.
- The chapter is divided into Sub-sections, with a heading (title) for each section. Pay attention to the Sub-titles of each sub-section in the chapter. They give clues to the important themes and major events of a chapter.
- Pay attention to the first paragraph of each section - here you will usually find the thesis, or “main point” of a section. The main point/thesis tells you why the information in the paragraph is important.
- Textbook chapters start with general information, and then in each section, the chapter gives you the historical “details”, like the names, dates, and other details of events. The chapter progresses from the general to the specific.

## READING THE CHAPTER

- BEFORE you even look at the Study Questions, read the chapter all the way through.
- While you're reading, keep in mind the following: GENERALLY, what's going on in this chapter? what time period does it cover? what are the major events? who are the major people in the chapter?
- Read the chapter through once to get a good "overview" – or, understanding – of the material. THEN go back and read the chapter a SECOND time – to find answers to the study questions.
- having a good overview helps when you take the test. There may be 2 answers to a test question that both look right but you can't quite figure out which one is correct. Having a good "overview" of the time period can help you to "infer" the correct answer.
- As you read, you may encounter words or phrases whose meanings you don't know. Write them down and then when you're done reading, go back and look them up in a dictionary.
- Your main goal is probably to do well on the exams – but remember that you're also trying to build a good foundation of knowledge. No doubt you'll see these words again sometime in the future – so why not look them up and learn what they mean NOW?

## THE STUDY QUESTIONS

- FIRST, make sure you know WHAT the study question is asking. Is it asking you to list the components of a particular law - or is it asking you to discuss the IMPACT/ consequences of a particular law? There's a difference.
- write or type the study question answers (some people just highlight them in the textbook but this is not the best way to learn the material)
- don't copy long sentences and paragraphs from the textbook.
- write the answers in brief, bulleted ("list") format. Writing them as a "list" makes the material a lot easier to remember than long sentences and paragraphs.
- However, if the question asks you to "explain" or "discuss", make sure that you don't give one-word answers.
- For example, if the question asks you to explain Kennedy's Cold War policy, don't just say "flexible response" - give a short description – or at least know what that phrase means. That will help to ensure that you understand the question and the answer.
- Make sure that you give complete answers to the study question. Many of the questions have a multi-part answer, so you should have several "bullet points" in your answer.
- For example, a study question might ask you to define "cold war" and discuss how a cold war is "fought". So, make sure you answer both parts of the question.
- One of the biggest problems students have is that they write incomplete answers to their study questions. And because of that, they're NOT studying the CORRECT and COMPLETE answer. It's important to study the correct – and the complete – answers.
- put the answers into your own words. By putting the answer into your own words, it helps to ensure that you understand what you're writing.
- Again, the exam question is not worded exactly like the study question, so memorizing an answer that you don't understand is not going to help you. Understanding it will help you when you're deciding which test answer is best.
- For example, what is meant by "free silver"? If you don't understand the paragraph in the textbook, look it up in an online dictionary of history or encyclopedia - or ask me or ask a tutor.

## GET HELP

- If there's anything you don't understand, contact me.

- You can also seek help from a history tutor and work with the tutor on a regular basis.
- Also, see <https://www.austincc.edu/students/tutoring/online> (<https://www.austincc.edu/students/tutoring/online>)