

Introduction to the Advanced Placement Program

What Is AP?

The Advanced Placement program is an educational testing program that offers college-level curricula to secondary school students. It is based on a fundamental premise: Motivated high school students are capable of doing college-level work while still attending high school. The program also grew from the belief that students were not being sufficiently challenged academically, especially in their last years of high school.

Advanced Placement (AP) officially started in 1955. Beginning with eleven subjects (United States History was not one of the originals), 1229 students took the first AP tests in May 1956. The exams are constructed and administered by Educational Testing Service (ETS) under the aegis of the College Board. The exams define the knowledge and skills of a freshman-level college course. Students who qualify on the exam (scoring three or better on a five-point scale) are recommended for college credit and placement. The final decision on awarding credit or placement rests with the college or university that the test taker plans to attend, however. The College Board reports the scores and makes its recommendations, but the Board cannot offer college credit or placement itself. Worldwide, over twenty-nine hundred colleges and universities have AP credit and placement policies.

As it approaches its fiftieth anniversary, AP has become the standard of excellence for American secondary education. In 2003 there were thirty-four AP courses and students took 1,737,231 million exams worldwide. Over fourteen thousand high schools participate in the AP program, with 60 percent of all U.S. high schools offering at least one AP class.

What Benefits Does AP Offer Students?

AP classes offer students many benefits and opportunities. First, and most importantly, AP is an outstanding educational program that introduces college courses into high schools. Students are given instruction in content and skill development that they would normally receive only in their first year of college. AP courses go into greater depth and detail than regular high school courses as they offer more stimulating and challenging curricula. In short, AP provides high school students with a superior academic experience.

Other benefits include:

- By qualifying on the end-of-the-year exam, students can receive college credit and placement while still in high school.
- With sufficient numbers of AP courses and qualifying scores, students can earn sophomore standing at over fourteen hundred colleges and universities. This can be a substantial tuition savings. (Mom and Dad really like this one.)
- Students can exempt introductory college courses and begin studying in their major field of interest earlier and/or they can explore other academic areas of interest.
- With AP credits, students increase their opportunity for double majors and to participate in off-campus programs without jeopardizing their timely progress towards college graduation.
- On a transcript, AP courses serve as an indicator to college admission officers that students are dedicated and willing to accept challenges in their education.
- AP courses provide students with a national standard by which to measure their academic progress.
- AP offers the opportunity for self-discovery. Through the AP challenge, students can better define their scholarly strengths and weaknesses and see themselves more clearly in comparison to other students around the country and the world.

Introduction to AP History

What Are Student Expectations of the Class?

An AP history class is an intensive study of the history of the United States from 1600–1985. It makes the same academic demands that both parts of a college survey class would involve.

In general, you will be asked to:

- read thirty to sixty pages from a college-level, history textbook per week;
- outline or take reading notes from the textbook assignments;
- establish relationships among facts and be able to formulate concepts and generalizations about events, people, and ideas in American history;
- take notes from classroom lectures;
- understand and analyze primary sources including documents, cartoons, charts, and graphs;
- think historically—that is, determine validity, point of view, and bias; weigh evidence; evaluate conflicting positions; and make inferences;
- write coherent, persuasive, analytical essay answers about historical problems;
- utilize primary source materials along with relevant outside information and write analytical essays about historical problems.

How Does a Student Succeed in the Course?

A simple truth exists about AP United States History: There are no shortcuts or “magic bullets” that lead to a good grade or a qualifying score on the test. In order to succeed, a student must commit to a year-long protocol of nightly study, periodic review, and intense application of the content and skills taught in the course.

The most important path to success is to stay current with the reading and complete all assignments in a timely fashion. Cramming will not work in AP United States History. You should allocate at least one to two hours of preparation for your AP history class per night.

On a regular basis, you must write in-class essays on significant history problems. In addition, you must write document-based essays. All writing must have a strong thesis that is thoughtfully developed and defended. Students must heed the advice of their teacher to improve and strengthen their writing skills.

A consistent and regular review schedule should be established. You should periodically look back on previous materials and relate them to current classroom work. The creation of outlines, charts, and other graphic organizers is an excellent means of review. Review of content should not be left until the end of the year, as the exam approaches. It must be a regular weekly or biweekly activity during the year. The formation of a study group is an excellent means to structure a review program. The group should meet at least once a month in the first semester and twice a month as the exam approaches.

The AP United States History Examination

The AP exam consists of two sections: a multiple-choice section and an essay section, which is divided into two parts. The first segment of the essay section requires students to write a Document-Based Question (DBQ), and the other part consists of choosing between two sets of essays and answering one question from each set. Each part of the exam will be described in the pages that follow.

The Multiple-Choice Section

Mastery of the multiple-choice questions is critical to qualifying on the AP exam. The section consists of eighty items that are given in the first fifty-five minutes of the testing session. This part of the test counts 50 percent of a student's grade. Further, there is a positive correlation between scores on the multiple-choice portion of the exam and the essay sections. Often, a student who scores high on the multiple-choice will score high on the essays. Beyond the statistics, this makes sense. The essays require strong factual support for competent answers. Thus, a student who knows details should be able to answer multiple-choice questions and write convincing essay answers as well.

The multiple-choice questions will ask you to identify trends, causes, results, and relationships between events. There are few questions that test simple recall of people, events, or dates. In addition, less than 15 percent of the questions are negative types of questions (e.g., "which was NOT" or "all of the following EXCEPT"). Such questions can be daunting to answer even when you know the topic, but they do not predominate on the test.

In general, a student who answers 50–60 percent of the multiple-choice questions correctly and does reasonably well on the three essays (a score of five or better on a nine point scale) is likely to qualify on the test. For example, on the 2001 examination, there was a 77.2 percent probability that students with multiple-choice scores between 34 and 44 would receive a 3, 4, or 5 grade on the overall test. In contrast, students with scores of 15 to 33 had only a 12.2 percent probability of qualifying.

In its course description of United States History, the College Board offers the following breakdown of the chronological eras and content areas on the AP United States History exam:

17 percent of the multiple-choice questions deal with the years 1607–1789.

50 percent of the multiple-choice questions deal with the years 1790–1914.

33 percent of the multiple-choice questions deal with the years 1915–present.

In addition,

35 percent of the questions address political institutions and behavior.

35 percent of the questions are concerned with social change.

15 percent of the questions are about diplomatic events.

10 percent of the questions test economic issues.

5 percent of the questions deal with cultural/intellectual topics.

This breakdown suggests that the multiple-choice section focuses on political and social relationships from the establishment of nation under George Washington to the eve of the Great War in Europe. While mastery of this material alone will not guarantee success on the exam, these are the areas of greatest emphasis on the test and the foundation upon which competency must be built.

Two other questions concerning the multiple-choice section often arise:

1. Should the course begin with 1763, ignoring the colonial period?
2. Should the course deal with the most recent political and social events by the date of the test?

Looking at the two most recently published tests (1996, 2001) for answers, we find that among the 160 multiple-choice items, 8.1 percent (13/160) came from the years 1607–1763 and 5.6 percent (8/160) of the questions were about events after 1968. This suggests that excluding the colonial period would not be wise, since

one of every twelve questions comes from this era. Thus, colonial topics such as Jamestown, Bacon's Rebellion, the Mayflower Compact, and the Great Awakening should be an important part of your review.

At the other end of the course, you will be well-prepared for most of the multiple-choice questions if you finish the 1960s or early 1970s by test day. Very few questions are asked about the last quarter of the twentieth century. After the test, students often recall those few questions they had not studied and exaggerate their numbers. You may hear there are many questions on Jimmy Carter or Ronald Reagan on the multiple-choice section. This is simply not accurate. There will be only two or three questions at most about events in the post-1975 era.

Another issue that arises concerning the multiple-choice section is whether you should try to finish the entire eighty questions. The multiple-choice questions will become increasingly difficult as you proceed through the test. For example, the first ten multiple-choice questions on the 2001 exam had a 75.3 percent rate of correct response, while the last ten questions had 35.9 percent rate. However, you should make sure to look at every question on the test. You should not simply decide to do only the first sixty questions because they are easy and ignore the last twenty because they are likely to be too hard. We will examine the issue of guessing and omitting questions later. For now, however, make sure that you look carefully at every multiple-choice question on the examination.

Types of Questions

An alternative categorization system of the multiple-choice questions offers trends and patterns slightly

different from those presented in the College Board course description book. As part of a study, I examined the multiple-choice section of the test from 1960 to 1983. I also used the published exams in 1984, 1988, 1996, and 2001 in a long-range search for trends in the multiple-choice section in the last four decades.

In my analysis, I divided the multiple-choice into six categories:

1. Primary-documents questions, which were based on reading passages from diaries, state and national laws, speeches, court rulings, and government documents. Students were asked to identify the speaker, point of view, or significance of the source.
2. Historiographic questions, which asked students about the history of history as well as schools of historical interpretation
3. Symbolic representation questions, which asked students to interpret cartoons, graphs, and maps
4. Arts and humanities questions, which asked students about literature, architecture, painting, and sculpture
5. Social science questions, which were not based on reading passages, maps, graphs, or cartoons and asked students about social history involving economics, labor relations, minority groups, women, Native Americans, and monetary policy
6. Traditional questions, which were not based on reading passages, maps, cartoons, or graphs and asked students about political parties, legislation, presidential administrations, armed conflicts, and foreign relations

Table 1. Distribution of Multiple-Choice Questions, 1960–2001

Years	Total No. of Questions	Primary Documents	Historiographic	Social Science	Arts/ Humanities	Symbolic Representation	Traditional Questions
1960–1964	300	118 (39.2%)	2 (1.0%)	43 (14.2%)	4 (1.3%)	37 (12.3%)	96 (32.0%)
1965–1969	375	130 (34.6)	1 (0.5)	62 (16.5)	10 (2.6)	55 (14.6)	117 (31.2)
1970–1974	375	107 (28.6)	17 (4.5)	59 (15.8)	14 (3.7)	53 (14.1)	125 (33.3)
1975–1979	485	108 (22.3)	15 (3.1)	121 (24.9)	25 (5.2)	32 (6.6)	184 (37.9)
1980–1984	500	65 (13.0)	8 (1.6)	137 (27.4)	39 (7.8)	39 (7.8)	212 (42.4)
1988/1996 2001*	260	6 (2.3)	0 (0.0)	89 (34.2)	12 (4.6)	9 (3.5)	144 (55.4)

* Last three published examinations

Table 1, Distribution of Multiple-Choice Questions, 1960–2001, presents several interesting patterns. First, the multiple-choice section has been heavily weighted with questions about politics and diplomatic/military issues. Second, there has been a steady rise in questions from social history and aspects of the social sciences. Third, the number of questions based on reading passages has shown a steady decline, especially since the 1970s. Fourth, historiography has dwindled and vanished from the multiple-choice section. Finally, both arts/humanities and symbolic representation have faded in importance on the multiple-choice section.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the table:

1. Questions about politics and diplomacy are very numerous, and a strong grounding in these topics must be the core of classroom instruction in order to master the multiple-choice section.
2. Social history topics and social science types of questions appear in increasing numbers on the test. The role of minorities, women, Native Americans, and working people must be included in your AP history course.
3. Historiography is no longer significant on the multiple-choice section. This is an area that might be de-emphasized in course study without seriously jeopardizing performance on the multiple-choice component.
4. Questions on the arts and humanities are not numerous on the test. While some preparation in these areas is worthwhile, it should not come at the expense of political, diplomatic, and social history topics.
5. While primary documents play an important role elsewhere on the test (Document-Based Questions), they are not likely to appear on the multiple-choice section. Classroom activities and teacher-made tests that ask multiple-choice questions about reading passages are not likely to prepare you for the multiple-choice component.
6. Although symbolic representations have generally declined on the test, you should receive specific instruction in interpreting cartoons, charts, and graphs. These types of items still appear on the multiple-choice section and are frequently found as sources on the Document-Based Question (DBQ) part of the test.

Strategies for the Multiple-Choice Section

The bottom line on guessing: Do not do it!

The College Board makes it clear that “It is improbable that mere guessing will improve your score significantly: it may even lower your score. . . .” To discourage guessing, there is a penalty assessed for all wrong answers on the multiple-choice section. For example:

- If you answer four multiple-choice questions correctly, you add four points to your overall raw multiple-choice score.
- If you omit four questions, you add no points to your overall raw score.
- If you guess at four questions and are wrong, you are penalized $\frac{1}{4}$ point for each wrong answer. You **LOSE** one point from your overall raw score.

Thus, wrong answers hurt your score, while omitted questions are neutral. The final determination of your multiple-choice score is calculated by taking the total right answers, subtracting one-fourth of the wrong answers, and multiplying that number by 1.125. This coefficient makes the multiple-choice section 50 percent of your final grade. (We will discuss the overall grading of the test later in the book.) You maximize your score on this section of the test by answering as many questions as possible correctly, while minimizing the number you attempt and get wrong. It is not expected that you will answer every multiple-choice question in order to score high on the test. Omitting even as many as ten questions is unlikely to jeopardize a score of four or five on the test.

While indiscriminate guessing is not a good idea, you should make educated guesses where you can on the exam. That is, when the correct response is not a certainty, try to eliminate some of the distractors and then select from the remaining choices. For example, if you can reduce the five choices to two or three, you probably will improve your multiple-choice score by attempting to answer the question.

Here are a few tips on making educated guesses:

- Read the stem of the question at least twice to determine quickly its time frame and content area. For example, try to assess the year, decade, or century of concern and whether the question is asking about politics, economics, art, civil rights, etc.
- Read all five choices before selecting the correct answer. Do not jump at the first answer that seems correct. You are looking for the BEST

answer, and there may be a better answer as you read through all the choices.

- Always start by eliminating wrong choices and then selecting from the remaining possibilities.
- Eliminate choices first that are outside the chronological period. For example, if the question deals with colonial religious development, a choice about George Washington's presidency would be the first to go.
- Eliminate choices that are wrong under any and all circumstances. If, in the example just cited, you see a choice about Alexander Hamilton's support of limiting the power of government, that should go into the answer-choice trash can quickly.
- Eliminate choices that are not on the topic of the question. For example, if a question concerns religious development, you can quickly eliminate choices about nullification or Social Darwinism or other political and economic matters.
- Eliminate choices that have absolutes in them, such as *never*, *always*, and *forever*.

Once you have winnowed down the alternatives, you should be able to select from the remaining two or three options. Generally, your first choice of these is most likely to be correct. Most of the time, if you go back and change an answer about which you have some lingering doubt, you'll get it wrong. Research says to stay with your first choice.

Pacing Yourself on the Exam

It is important to pace yourself on the test. Do not get bogged down on a single question. It is imperative that you read every question on the test. If you find a question without a ready answer, mark it and move on. Even though the last twenty questions are difficult, they are not impossible. You may find many questions to which you know the answer. Make sure that you work through the entire test.

On test day, do not forget your watch. Monitor your progress carefully so that you complete the first forty-five questions within the first twenty minutes. They are the easiest items and should go quickly. Within thirty-five minutes you should read about seventy percent of the exam (questions 55 to 65). At this pace, you will finish reading all the questions at least once in forty-five minutes, and then you can go back to look again at questions that stumped you initially and proofread your answer sheet.

Essay Sections

The Document-Based Question

The DBQ first appeared on the AP test in May 1973. It grew from concerns by the test committee that AP students were not thinking historically on the essay portion of the exam. Rather, students were regurgitating memorized information and parroting facts, with little real understanding. The committee decided to construct an essay question that required students to move beyond simple recall and analyze and synthesize primary sources. Students would use their knowledge and seventeen to twenty documents to address problems.

The intellectual origins of the DBQ came from the "new social studies" movement of the 1960s. This inquiry-oriented pedagogy called for students to set aside textbooks and use primary sources in their study of history. The "new history" component of this approach required students to test hypotheses, make generalizations, and de-emphasize rote factual recall. Several members of the test committee, who taught in secondary schools and had inquiry experience, brought these ideas to the test development meetings. After much discussion the DBQ was created and first appeared on the test in 1973.

The DBQ requires students to analyze sources such as documents, cartoons, tables, graphs, photographs, and posters. In addition, students employ the historian's craft of sorting, weighing, and evaluating materials as they synthesize these sources into an essay about a historical issue.

The original DBQ format was modified in 1982 because its length made it difficult for students to do more than summarize the seventeen-to-twenty documents in the time available. They did not have an opportunity to analyze and evaluate issues. In 1982, the number of documents was reduced to eight or nine, and greater reliance was placed on outside information. In its current form, the DBQ seems secure as an integral part of the AP exam.

Tackling the DBQ

The DBQ is a required essay. It counts 22.5 percent of your overall grade on the AP exam. Keep in mind that it is an essay question, and that the strategies and approaches you use with other essays apply here. Also remember that the documents are to be used as only part of the support for your thesis. **Don't forget to use outside information as well as the documents in support of your argument.**

Here are some important ideas to keep in mind as you write the DBQ. We will discuss and model many of these later in the book.

1. Read the statement carefully, noting the time frame and the guiding elements of the statement. It maybe helpful to write yourself a short summary or question about the issues at hand.
2. Write down all the facts you can think of about the time period—not just the topic of the question.
DO NOT LOOK AT THE DOCUMENTS YET.
3. Reread the statement, look at the facts you have listed, and write a thesis statement that can be supported from these ideas.
4. Summarize the documents using the strategies suggested later in this book. As you read the documents, also make inferences about the sources. (Again, we will discuss this idea later.)
5. Look at your thesis and make a chart of the facts and documents that support your thesis and, on the other side, those that challenge the thesis.
6. Although it is not required, try to use all the documents. Probably one or two will challenge your thesis. Don't ignore them. Be prepared to write a contrary paragraph toward the end of the paper to account for these documents. This paragraph should not refute your thesis, but it should deal with the complexity of the issue. (This will show the reader that you understand that history is not always right or wrong, black or white.)
7. As you use outside information, you should underline it. This will give you a visual map of how much outside information you are including in your paper. It will also help the reader as he or she evaluates your paper. Obviously, if you do not have much underlined, you need to dig a little deeper.
8. Integrate the documents into the text of the essay. Use the documents and your outside information to support your thesis. Generally, documents belong in the middle or at the end of a sentence.
Don't start a sentence with "Document A says . . ."
9. Do not copy large sections of the documents into your essay. If you wish to use the whole idea of the document, allude to it and then put "(Doc. A)" after your paraphrase. If you are using only a phrase from a document, put it in with quotation marks around it. The reader will recognize the document from which you are quoting.

10. The documents should be blended with outside information. **Do not just summarize the documents and call it a DBQ answer.**
11. A general outline of a DBQ response is:
 - a. Introductory paragraph
 - b. Background paragraph: Here you set the stage and load up on outside information.
 - c. Two to five paragraphs of support
 - d. Possible contrary paragraph to account for wayward documents
 - e. Conclusion

DBQ Topics, 1982–2003

Tables 2 and 3 show the distribution of DBQs since the shorter format was introduced in 1982.

Table 2. Recent DBQ Topics

1982	John Brown's raid and the changing relationship between the sections, 1859–1863
1983	Farmers' problems, 1880–1900
1984	Hoover, a conservative; FDR, a liberal
1985	The Articles of Confederation and their effectiveness, 1781–1789
1986	Tensions in the 1920s
1987	The Constitution and the 1850s
1988	Decision to use the A-Bomb, 1939–1947
1989	Booker T. Washington vs. W. E. B. DuBois, 1877–1915
1990	The Jacksonians as guardians of the Constitution and liberty, etc., in the 1820s and 1830s
1991	The rejection of the Treaty of Versailles
1992	Environment and the development of the West, 1840s–1890s
1993	Compare and contrast the Chesapeake and New England colonies, 1607–1700
1994	Late nineteenth-century expansion: a continuation and a departure
1995	Changing goals, strategies, and support of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s
1996	Constitutional and social development between 1860 and 1877—a revolution or not?
1997	Economic and social development and women's position in society, 1890–1925

(Continued on next page)

Table 2. (continued)

1998	Jeffersonian Republicans as strict constructionists, 1801–1817
1999	The extent to which the colonists developed an identity and unity, 1750–1775
2000	The extent to which organized labor improved the position of workers, 1875–1900
2001	Cold War fears and Eisenhower's relative success in dealing with them, 1948–1961
2002	Reform movements and expansion of democratic ideals, 1825–1850
2003	The New Deal's effectiveness and the changing role of government, 1929–1941

Free-Response Essays

Format of the Section

After completing the DBQ, you must write two shorter essays. There is a choice between two sets of essays, with the student selecting one question from the first set and one from a second pair. Generally, the first two essays come from the colonial period through the Civil War and Reconstruction. The second set concern events after 1877 through the 1970s. The time frame of the DBQ impacts on the choices in the free-response section, however. For example, a DBQ on the last quarter of the nineteenth century would eliminate that era as a possible free-response question in section two and a student could find two questions exclusively from the twentieth century.

Once students select their questions, they write an analytical response. The two essays count 27.5 percent of the overall final grade. It is recommended that you spend between thirty and thirty-five minutes on each essay. The questions will ask you to evaluate developments, explain causes, and analyze results of historical events. Most of the time, the questions deal with a twenty- to thirty-year period, and you must assess some element of change during that time. Occasionally, you will be asked to compare and contrast events. For example, recently a question asked students for a comparison of American foreign policy after World War I and World War II. The essays require strong content information, and students are expected to cite specific data to support their thesis.

The colonial period has been a very popular topic in the first set of essays. This gives additional support for students' having a strong grounding in the years 1607 to 1763. Since 1994, when this new essay format was estab-

Table 3. DBQs by Chronological Time Periods

1607–1763	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chesapeake/ New England colonies
1763–1800	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Articles of Confederation Colonies/identity/unity
1800–1828	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jeffersonians as strict constructionists
1828–1848	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jacksonians as guardians of democracy Reform and democratic ideals
1848–1877	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Brown's raid Constitution in the 1850s Reconstruction as a revolution
1880–1900	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farmers' problems Washington v. DuBois Environment and the West Expansion and the 1890s Status of Women Organized labor
1900–1930	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tensions of the 1920s Rejection of the Treaty of Versailles
1930–1950	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FDR v. Hoover Use of the A-Bomb New Deal's effectiveness and impact
1950–1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in the Civil Rights Movement (1960s) Cold War fears and Eisenhower

lished, there has been a colonial-era question on the test six of the nine years.

At the other end of the course, since 1994, essays exclusively about post-1970 America have been rare. Only in 1999 did one of the choices ask students to evaluate Asian containment to 1975. In the other eight years, there were either no questions post-1945, or they involved events of the 1950s and 1960s.

You need to be mindful that the suggested time for the two essays is thirty to thirty-five minutes per question. It is critical that time be budgeted properly to allow sufficient attention to write these two questions. The

DBQ is the first essay written, and you are not required to stop working on it and start the free-response essays. It is your responsibility to make sure the entire two hours and ten minutes allotted for section two is not consumed by the DBQ. Remember, the two free-response essays count for 27.5 percent of the final grade on the AP exam.

Types of Free-Response Essays, 1963–2001

The free-response section has undergone a number of transformations since 1963. That was the last year students were asked to write three essays from a choice of eleven. In 1964, they selected three out of twelve, and from 1965 to 1972, there were ten choices, and students wrote on three. In 1973, which was the first year of the DBQ, the number of choices fell to nine, with students choosing one. In 1976, the number of free-response choices went to five, with students choosing one free response and writing the DBQ. That format remained in place until 1994, when the current configuration was introduced. From 1956 to 1982, the essay section accounted for 75 percent of a student’s grade, and since the early 1980s, it has been 50 percent of the final grade.

To analyze the free-response section of the test, I developed a categorization system that produced a matrix of essay questions in five-year periods for forty years. The seven categories of questions were:

1. Intellectual and cultural issues: questions addressing how literature, art, architecture, and religion influenced United States history
2. Minority issues: questions addressing the role of African Americans, women, and Native Americans in the development of the United States
3. Political issues: questions addressing the evolution of political parties, legislative action, Supreme Court rulings, presidential administrations, and reform movements
4. Military and diplomatic issues: questions addressing American involvement in armed conflicts, as well as relations with other nations
5. Historiographic issues: questions addressing the history of history and schools of historical interpretation
6. Economic and business issues: questions addressing employment, monetary policy, labor relations, and industrial and agricultural developments
7. Immigration issues: questions addressing trends in immigration and how immigration influenced American history

Looking at the free-response questions over the forty-year period reveals some interesting patterns and trends.

Table 4. Free-Response Essay Topics by Five-Year Periods

Years	Intellectual/ Cultural	Minority	Political	Military/ Diplomatic	Historiographic	Economic/ Business	Immigration
1963–1967	4 (7.6%)	1 (1.9%)	20 (37.7%)	11 (20.7%)	3 (5.7%)	11 (20.7%)	3 (5.7%)
1968–1972	5 (10.0)	6 (12.0)	18 (36.0)	8 (16.0)	3 (6.0)	10 (20.0)	0 (0.0)
1973–1977	5 (13.5)	6 (16.2)	14 (37.8)	5 (13.5)	0 (0.0)	6 (16.3)	1 (2.7)
1978–1982	2 (8.0)	2 (8.0)	11 (44.0)	5 (20.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (20.0)	0 (0.0)
1983–1987	5 (20.0)	4 (16.0)	7 (28.0)	4 (16.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (16.0)	1 (4.0)
1988–1992	1 (4.0)	3 (12.0)	11 (44.0)	5 (20.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (20.0)	0 (0.0)
1993–1997	1 (4.7)	3 (14.3)	9 (42.8)	4 (19.1)	0 (0.0)	4 (19.1)	0 (0.0)
1998–2002	2 (10.0)	5 (25.0)	5 (25.0)	4 (20.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (15.0)	1 (5.0)

Table 4 suggests several conclusions:

1. Traditional types of questions remain very important on the free-response essay section. The combination of political, diplomatic, and military questions as a “traditional” historical category accounts for 53.6 percent of the free-response essays since the new format was introduced in 1994. While the percentage is down slightly from the past, these types of questions remain the core of this section.
2. Minority questions, which include the new social history of the last thirty years, have continued to grow in significance. In the last ten years, these questions account for almost 20 percent of the free-response choices. These topics continue to play an important role in the AP curriculum.
3. Economic and business questions have maintained their importance as free-response choices as well. The steady numbers in this category reflect the increasing need for consideration of banking, monetary, and labor issues in AP classroom instruction.
4. Intellectual/cultural topics have maintained a small presence in this part of the exam, but they are not growing in importance. Religion continues to be an important topic, especially for the colonial era. Since 1994, there have been three colonial religious questions on the first set of essays.
5. Historiography has disappeared as topic for the free response.
6. Immigration also has faded from the free-response section.

The patterns on the free-response section reinforce the ones we saw in the multiple-choice area. Once again, to be well prepared for the exam, you must be grounded in the political, diplomatic, and social development of the United States. In the crowded AP curriculum, less attention can be given to the arts, historiography, and intellectual development as time constraints intrude during the academic year.

Table 5. AP United States Worksheet for Determining Grades

Multiple-Choice Section

$$\frac{\text{Number Correct} \quad - \quad 1/4 \times \quad \text{Number Wrong}}{\times \quad 1.125 = \quad \text{Multiple-Choice Score} \quad (0-90)}$$

Essay Section

$$\frac{\text{DBQ Score} \quad (0-9) \quad \times \quad 4.5 = \quad \underline{\hspace{2cm}}}{\times \quad 2.75 = \quad \underline{\hspace{2cm}}}$$

$$\frac{\text{1st Free-Response Score} \quad (0-9) \quad \times \quad 2.75 = \quad \underline{\hspace{2cm}}}{\times \quad 2.75 = \quad \underline{\hspace{2cm}}}$$

$$\frac{\text{2nd Free-Response Score} \quad (0-9) \quad \times \quad 2.75 = \quad \underline{\hspace{2cm}}}{\times \quad 2.75 = \quad \underline{\hspace{2cm}}}$$

$$\frac{\text{Total Score on Essays} \quad (0-90)}{\underline{\hspace{2cm}}}$$

Total Score for Essays and Multiple Choice

$$\underline{\hspace{2cm}} \quad (0-180)$$

How is the Exam Graded?

The examination is graded in two phases. Immediately after the May testing, the multiple-choice answer sheets are machine graded by Educational Testing Service in New Jersey. The number of correct responses out of eighty questions minus $\frac{1}{4}$ of the wrong answers is tallied, and that number is multiplied by a coefficient of 1.125. Thus, a perfect score would be ninety (80×1.125) on the multiple choice section, which accounts for 50 percent of the 180 total points a student can accumulate on the test. (See Table 5 for the exact formula.)

The essay portion of the test is shipped by Educational Testing Service to a college campus in Texas, where nearly six hundred high school and college history teachers gather in early June to evaluate the answers. The graders are divided into tables of six or seven readers, with a table leader assigned to each group to ensure productivity and accuracy during the grading. After becoming familiar with the scoring rubric for one of the four free-response essay prompts, the readers begin grading. They work on only one question for the first two to three days of the reading and score the papers on a zero-to-nine scale. Each grader is assigned an identification number to make sure that a reader grades only one of a student's three essays (two free responses and the DBQ). The second free-response essay

and the DBQ are graded at a different table and by different readers. This eliminates the possibility that a student's entire essay grade will be determined by one reader. The table leader periodically rereads selected graded papers at the table to ensure the readers are using the rubric properly and assigning fair and appropriate grades.

After several days with the free-response essay, the readers turn to the Document-Based Question. Again readers become familiar with a scoring rubric specifically constructed for the DBQ and use a nine-point scale to evaluate it. The two free-response essays and the DBQ scores are weighted so that they total ninety points, the same value as the multiple-choice section. (See Table 5.) When all the essays are graded, they are combined with the multiple-choice score to yield a possible overall score of 180 points.

All the student scores are listed in a range from 0–180. From this list, the Chief Faculty Consultant (a.k.a. the Chief Reader) and Educational Testing Service staff establish the specific number of points a student must accumulate in order to score a 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 on the AP test. For example, in most years a student who has a total score above 114 received a five on the test, and students with scores above 92 received fours. These threshold levels vary slightly from year to year, however. The scores are reported to students and their colleges in early July.