

Advanced Placement U.S. History Exam

Overview

The AP U.S. History Exam is designed by the Test Development committee to cover the period from 1491 to the recent past, though the greatest attention has been given to the 19th and 20th centuries. Every multiple-choice question and essay is tied to the Historical Thinking Skills and Thematic Learning Objectives. The exam is taken in two parts as seen below:

Section	Questions	% of Test	Time
Section I	(Part A) 55 Multiple-choice questions	40%	55 minutes
	(Part B) 3 Short answer questions	20%	40 minutes
Break			5-10 minutes
Section II	(Part A) 1 DBQ (Document based question)	25%	60 minutes
	(Part B) 1 LEQ (Free response “long” essay)	15 %	40 minutes
Total:		3 hours, 15 minutes	

Section I:

Part A: Multiple-Choice (55 minutes, 40% of the exam score)

The Multiple-choice section consists of 55 questions covering the period 1491-the “present,” with emphasis on the period from 1754-1980. The percentage distribution roughly breaks down as follows:

Historical Periods	Approximate % of Test (Multiple-Choice Only)
Period 1: Pre-Colombian to 1607	4-6%
Period 2: 1607-1754	6-8%
Period 3: 1754-1800	10-17%
Period 4: 1800-1848	10-17%
Period 5: 1844-1877	10-17%
Period 6: 1865-1898	10-17%
Period 7: 1898-1945	10-17%
Period 8: 1945-1980	10-17%
Period 9: 1980-Present	4-6%

The multiple-choice section may have a few questions on material after 1980, but none of the essays will deal exclusively with material from this period. The multiple-choice section and the essays will address the following themes:

Thematic Learning Objectives

- American/National Identity (NAT)
- Work, Exchange, and Technology (WXT)
- Migration and Settlement (MIG)
- Politics and Power (PCE)
- American in the world (WOR)
- Environment and Geography-Physical and Human (GEO)
- American and Regional Culture (ARC)
- Social Structures (SOC)

This part is designed to test your factual knowledge, breadth of preparation, and knowledge-based analytical skills. Questions are not necessarily presented in chronological order or by degree of difficulty. The most common error made is the failure to carefully read the entire question and all of the detractors. Few students make a perfect score and questions range in difficulty from about 15% to 90% of students choosing the correct answer.

Scoring: There is no penalty for guessing! 1 point is deducted for each question left blank or answered incorrectly, therefore, it is best to go ahead, and “guess” should you run out of time.

Part B: 3 Short-Answer Questions (40 minutes, 20% of the exam score)

“Short-answer questions will directly address 1 or more of the thematic learning objectives for the course.” Each short answer essay question will have 2-3 parts, so you should plan to spend 10-12 minutes on each of them. Responses should be between 3 and 6 sentences long and do not require a formal thesis statement. Questions 1 (secondary sources), 2 (primary sources) have designated time periods. Question 3 is the student’s choice of two period ranges.

Section II:

Part A: Document Based Essay/DBQ (60 minutes, 25% of the exam score)

The DBQ is designed to test your ability to effectively analyze and synthesize historical data. There is only one DBQ; all students answer this prompt which focuses on a major historical period or theme and thus relates the documents to major issues. DBQ’s consist of the prompt and 8-12 primary sources (including mostly documents, but also including illustrations, political cartoons, charts, etc.). Students are required to develop a strong thesis, then support that thesis with information from both the documents included and relevant outside information.

Scoring: Included in your packet is the DBQ rubric which should serve as your checklist for achieving a perfect score of seven.

Part B: Long Essay Question/LEQ (40 minutes, 15% of the exam score)

The LEQ requires students to relate developments in different areas, to analyze common themes in different time periods, or to compare individual or group experiences that reflect cultural differences. Essays are generally judged on the strength of the thesis developed, the quality of the historical argument, and the evidence offered in support of the argument, rather than specific factual information. Often questions require the student to address two different time periods as a comparison or illustration of a major theme. Students will have a choice among 3 questions, each covering a different period range, allowing them to demonstrate what they know best.

Scoring: LEQ’s are graded by targeting skills using the rubric included in your packet.

What to bring to the exam:

- Several sharpened No. 2 pencils with erasers, along with a separate eraser (preferably white)
- Several black or dark-blue ballpoint pens. Do not use erasable ink pens
- Your school code
- A watch (silent) to keep track of time
- Your social security number
- A photo ID

What NOT to bring to the exam:

- Watches with alarms
- Laptops (unless you qualify for the disabilities allowance)
- Books, notes, dictionaries

- Highlighters, correction fluid
- Scratch paper
- Portable listening devices (iPods, MP3 Players)
- Cameras, beepers, electronic assistants (ie: Blackberry), cell phones, “smart” watches
- Clothing with subject-related information

Sources (other than this instructor): College Board AP. *2023 AP U.S. Handbook.*
Dornbush, Krista. *Kaplan: AP U.S. History 2015.*