AP U.S. History Essay Questions, 1994–present

Although the essay questions from 1994-2014 were taken from AP exams administered before the redesign of the curriculum, most can still be used to prepare students for the current exam. Teachers should make sure the content of the question conforms to the redesigned concept outline from AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description. Teachers are also advised to change the wording of the question to include a historical thinking skill from the AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description.

Document-Based Questions

2017
Evaluate the extent of change in ideas about American independence from 1763 to 1783.

2016
Explain the causes of the rise of a women’s rights movement in the period 1940-1975.

2015

2014
How and why did the goals of United States foreign policy change from the end of the First World War (1918) to the end of the Korean War (1953)?

2013
Analyze the causes of growing opposition to slavery in the United States from 1776 to 1852. In your response, consider both underlying forces and specific events that contributed to the growing opposition.

2012
In the post–Civil War United States, corporations grew significantly in number, size, and influence. Analyze the impact of big business on the economy and politics and the responses of Americans to these changes. Confine your answer to the period 1870 to 1900.

2011
Analyze the international and domestic challenges the United States faced between 1968 and 1974, and evaluate how President Nixon’s administration responded to them.

2010
In what ways did ideas and values held by Puritans influence the political, economic, and social development of the New England colonies from 1630 through the 1660s?
2009
From 1775 to 1830, many African Americans gained freedom from slavery, yet during the same period the institution of slavery expanded. Explain why BOTH of those changes took place. Analyze the ways BOTH free African Americans and enslaved African Americans responded to the challenges confronting them.

2008
Analyze the ways in which the Vietnam War heightened social, political, and economic tensions in the United States. Focus your answer on the period 1964 to 1975.

2007
Analyze the ways in which technology, government policy, and economic conditions changed American agriculture in the period 1865-1900. In your answer be sure to evaluate farmers’ responses to these changes.

2006
Discuss the changing ideals of American womanhood between the American Revolution (1770's) and the outbreak of the Civil War. What factors fostered the emergence of “republican motherhood” and the “cult of domesticity”? Assess the extent to which these ideals influenced the lives of women during this period. In your answer be sure to consider issues of race and class.

2005
To what extent did the American Revolution fundamentally change American society? In your answer, be sure to address the political, social, and economic effects of the Revolution in the period from 1775 to 1800.

2004
In what ways did the French and Indian War (1754-1763) alter the political, economic and ideological relations between Britain and its American colonies? Use the documents and your knowledge of the period 1740-66 in constructing your response.

2003
Analyze the responses of Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration to the problems of the Great Depression. How effective were these responses? How did they change the role of the federal government? Use the documents and your knowledge of the period of 1929-1941 to construct your essay.

2002
“Reform movements in the United States sought to expand democratic ideals.” Assess the validity of this statement with specific reference to the years 1825-1850. Use the documents and your knowledge of the period 1825-1850 in constructing your response.

2001
What were the Cold War fears of the American people in the aftermath of the Second World War? How successfully did the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower address these fears? Use the documents and your knowledge of the years 1948-1961 to construct your response.
2000
How successful was organized labor in improving the position of workers in the period from 1875 to 1900? Analyze the factors that contributed to the level of success achieved. Use the documents and your knowledge of the period from 1875 to 1900 to construct your answer.

1999
To what extent had the colonists developed a sense of their identity and unity as Americans by the eve of the Revolution? Use the documents and your knowledge of the period 1750 to 1776 to answer the question.

1998
With the respect to the federal Constitution, the Jeffersonian Republicans are usually characterized as strict constructionists who were opposed to the broad constructionism of the Federalists. To what extent was this characterization of the two parties accurate during the presidencies of Jefferson and Madison? In writing your answer, use the documents and your knowledge of the period 1801-1817.

1997
To what extent did economic and political developments as well as assumptions about the nature of women affect the position of American women during the period 1890-1925? Use the documents and your knowledge of the history of the years 1890-1925 to construct your response.

1996
In what ways and to what extent did constitutional and social developments between 1860 and 1877 amount to a revolution? Use the documents and your knowledge of the period from 1860 to 1877 to answer the question.

1995
Analyze the changes that occurred during the 1960s in the goals, strategies, and support of the movement for African American civil rights. Use the documents and your knowledge of the history of the 1960s to construct your response.

1994
To what extent was late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century United States expansionism a continuation of past United States expansionism and to what extent was it a departure? Use the documents and your knowledge of United States history to 1914 to construct your answer.
Long Essay Questions

2017
2. Evaluate the extent to which the market revolution marked a turning point in women’s lives in the United States. In the development of your argument, explain what changed and what stayed the same for women as a result of the market revolution within the period 1800-1850. (Historical thinking skill: Periodization)

3. Evaluate the extent to which the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which guaranteed women the right to vote, marked a turning point in United States women’s history. In the development of your argument, explain what changed and what stayed the same from the period immediately before the ratification of the amendment (1865-1920) to the period immediately after (1920-1940). (Historical thinking skill: Periodization)

2016
2. Evaluate the extent to which the ratification of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution marked a turning point in the history of United States politics and society. (In the development of your argument, explain what changed and what stayed the same from the period immediately before the amendments to the period immediately following them. Historical Thinking Skill: Periodization)

3. Evaluate the extent to which United States participation in the First World War (1917-1918) marked a turning point in the nation’s role in world affairs. (In the development of your argument, explain what changed and what stayed the same from the period immediately before the amendments to the period immediately following them. Historical Thinking Skill: Periodization)

2015
2. Evaluate the extent to which the Seven Years’ War (French and Indian War, 1754-1763) marked a turning point in American relations with Great Britain, analyzing what changed and what stayed the same from the period before the war to the period after it.

3. Evaluate the extent to which the Mexican-American War (1846-1848) marked a turning point in the debate over slavery in the United States, analyzing what changed and what stayed the same from the period before the war to the period after it.

2014
2. Choose TWO of the following and analyze their impact on colonial North American development between 1620 and 1776.
   Puritanism
   The Enlightenment
   The First Great Awakening

3. Compare and contrast the Jacksonian Democratic Party and the Whig Party of the 1830s and 1840s. Focus on TWO of the following.
   The role of the federal government in the economy
   Social reform
   Westward expansion
4. To what extent were the goals of Reconstruction (1865–1877) regarding African Americans achieved by 1900?
5. Explain the social, economic, and foreign policy goals of New Right conservatives from the 1960s to the 1980s and assess the degree to which the Reagan administration succeeded in implementing these goals in the 1980s.

2013
2. Analyze the role of trans-Atlantic trade and Great Britain’s mercantilist policies in the economic development of the British North American colonies in the period from 1650 to 1750.
3. Analyze the ways in which the United States sought to advance its interests in world affairs between 1789 and 1823.
4. Analyze the impact of technological innovations on the lives of TWO of the following groups. Confine your answer to the period 1865–1920.
   - Factory workers
   - Middle-class urban residents
   - Midwestern farmers
5. Between 1945 and 1975 various groups in the United States engaged in protest. Analyze the reasons that protest emerged in this period for TWO of the following groups.
   - African Americans
   - College students
   - Latino Americans
   - Women

2012
2. Analyze the effect of the French and Indian War and its aftermath on the relationship between Great Britain and the British colonies. Confine your response to the period from 1754 to 1776
3. Analyze how western expansion contributed to growing sectional tensions between the North and the South. Confine your answer to the period from 1800 to 1850.
4. Analyze the origins and outcomes of the intense cultural conflicts of the 1920s. In your response, focus on TWO of the following.
   - Immigration
   - Prohibition
   - Religion
5. Compare and contrast the Cold War foreign policies of TWO of the following presidents.
   - Harry Truman (1945-1953)
   - Dwight Eisenhower (1953-1961)

2011
2. Analyze the origins and development of slavery in Britain’s North American colonies in the period 1607 to 1776.
3. To what extent did political parties contribute to the development of national unity in the United States between 1790 and 1840?
4. Compare and contrast the ways that many Americans expressed their opposition to immigrants in the 1840s–1850s with the ways that many Americans expressed their opposition to immigrants in the 1910s–1920s.

5. African American leaders have responded to racial discrimination in the United States in a variety of ways. Compare and contrast the goals and strategies of African American leaders in the 1890s–1920s with the goals and strategies of African American leaders in the 1950s–1960s.

2010

2. Analyze the political, diplomatic, and military reasons for the United States victory in the Revolutionary War. Confine your answer to the period 1775–1783.

3. Analyze the ways in which controversy over the extension of slavery into western territories contributed to the coming of the Civil War. Confine your answer to the period 1845–1861.

4. Analyze the roles that women played in Progressive Era reforms from the 1880s through 1920. Focus your essay on TWO of the following.
   - Politics
   - Social conditions
   - Labor and working conditions

5. Explain the causes and consequences of TWO of the following population movements in the United States during the period 1945–1985.
   - Suburbanization
   - The growth of the Sun Belt
   - Immigration to the United States

2009

2. Analyze the ways in which British imperial policies between 1763 and 1776 intensified colonials’ resistance to British rule and their commitment to republican values.

3. Analyze the social, political, and economic forces of the 1840s and early 1850s that led to the emergence of the Republican Party.

4. Choose TWO of the following organizations and explain their strategies for advancing the interests of the workers. To what extent were these organizations successful in achieving their objectives? Confine your answer to the period from 1875 to 1925.
   - Knights of Labor
   - American Federation of Labor
   - Socialist Part of America
   - Industrial Workers of the World

5. Analyze the home-front experiences of TWO of the following groups during the Second World War.
   - African Americans
   - Japanese Americans
   - Jewish Americans
   - Mexican Americans
2008

2. Early encounters between American Indians and European colonists led to a variety of relationships among the different cultures. Analyze how the actions taken by BOTH American Indians and European colonists shaped those relationships in TWO of the following regions. Confine your answer to the 1600s.
   - New England
   - Chesapeake
   - Spanish Southwest
   - New York and New France

3. Analyze the impact of the market revolution (1815-1860) on the economies of TWO of the following regions.
   - The Northeast
   - The Midwest
   - The South

4. Following Reconstruction, many southern leaders promoted the idea of a “New South.” To what extent was this “New South” a reality by the time of the First World War? In your answer be sure to address TWO of the following.
   - Economic development
   - Politics
   - Race relations

5. Presidential elections between 1928 and 1948 revealed major shifts in political party loyalties. Analyze both the reasons for these changes and their consequences during this period.

2007

2. Settlers in the eighteenth-century American backcountry sometimes resorted to violent protest to express their grievances. Analyze the causes and significance of TWO of the following:
   - March of the Paxton Boys
   - Regulator movement
   - Shays’ Rebellion
   - Whiskey Rebellion

3. In what ways did the Second Great Awakening in the North influence TWO of the following?
   - Abolitionism
   - Temperance
   - The cult of domesticity
   - Utopian communities

4. To what extend did the role of the federal government change under President Theodore Roosevelt in regard to TWO of the following.
   - Labor
   - Trusts
   - Conservation
   - World affairs

5. “Landslide presidential victories do not ensure continued political effectiveness or legislative success.” Assess the validity of this statement by comparing TWO of the following presidential administrations.
   - Franklin Roosevelt (1936)
2006
2. Analyze the differences between the Spanish settlements in the Southwest and the English colonies in New England in the seventeenth century in terms of TWO of the following:
   Politics
   Religion
   Economic development
3. Explain why and how the role of the federal government changed as a result of the Civil War with respect to TWO of the following during the period 1861-1877?
   Race relations
   Economic development
   Westward expansion
4. Historians have argued that Progressive reform lost momentum in the 1920's. Evaluate this statement with respect to TWO of the following
   Regulation of business
   Labor
   Immigrants
5. While the United States appeared to be dominated by consensus and conformity in the 1950's, some Americans reacted against the status quo. Analyze the critiques of United States society made by TWO of the following.
   Youth
   Civil Rights Activists
   Intellectuals

2005
2. Compare and contrast the ways in which economic development affected politics in Massachusetts and Virginia in the period from 1607 to 1750.
3. To what extent did the debates about the Mexican War and its aftermath reflect the sectional interests of New Englanders, westerners, and southerners in the period from 1845 to 1855.
4. Describe the patterns of immigration in TWO of the periods listed below. Compare and contrast the responses of Americans to immigrants in these periods.
   1820 to 1860
   1880 to 1924
   1965 to 2000
5. Analyze the extent to which TWO of the following transformed American society in the 1960's and 1970's.
   The Civil Rights movement
   The antiwar movement
   The women's movement

2004
2. Analyze the impact of the American Revolution on both slavery and the status of women in the period from 1775-1800.
3. Analyze the effectiveness of political compromise in reducing sectional tensions in the period 1820 to 1861.

4. Compare and contrast the programs and policies designed by reformers of the Progressive era to those designed by reformers of the New Deal period. Confine your answer to programs and policies that addressed the needs of those living in poverty.

5. Analyze the success and failures of the United States Cold War policy of containment as it developed in TWO of the following regions of the world during the period 1945 to 1975.
   - East and Southeast Asia
   - Europe
   - Latin America
   - Middle East

2003

2. Evaluate the extent to which the Articles of Confederation were effective in solving the problems that confronted the new nation.

3. In what ways did developments in transportation bring about economic and social change in the United States in the period 1820 to 1860?

4. Evaluate the impact of the Civil War on political and economic developments in TWO of the following regions.
   - The South
   - The North
   - The West
   Focus your answer on the period between 1865 and 1900.

5. Compare and contrast United States society in the 1920's and the 1950's with respect to TWO of the following:
   - race relations
   - role of women
   - consumerism

2002

2. Compare the ways in which religion shaped the development of colonial society (to 1740) in TWO of the following regions:
   - New England
   - Chesapeake
   - Middle Atlantic

3. Analyze the contributions of TWO of the following in helping establish a stable government after the adoption of the Constitution.
   - John Adams
   - Thomas Jefferson
   - George Washington


5. How did the African-American Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s address the failures of Reconstruction?
2001
2. How did economic, geographic, and social factors encourage the growth of slavery as an important part of the economy of the southern colonies between 1607 and 1775?
3. The Jacksonian Period (1824-1848) has been celebrated as the era of the “common man.” To what extent did the period live up to its characterization? Consider TWO of the following in your response:
   - Economic development
   - Politics
   - Reform movements
4. How and why did transportation developments spark economic growth during the period from 1860 to 1900 in the United States?
5. Describe and account for the rise of nativism in American society from 1900 to 1930.

2000
2. Analyze the cultural and economic responses of TWO of the following groups to the Indians of North America before 1750.
   - British
   - French
   - Spanish
3. Assess the moral arguments and political actions of those opposed to the spread of slavery in the context of TWO of the following.
   - Missouri Compromise
   - Mexican War
   - Compromise of 1850
   - Kansas-Nebraska Act
4. To what extent did the United States achieve the objectives that led it to enter the First World War?
5. Discuss, with respect to TWO of the following, the view that the 1960’s represented a period of profound cultural change.
   - Education
   - Gender roles
   - Music
   - Race relations

1999
2. How did TWO of the following contribute to the reemergence of a two party system in the period 1820-1840?
   - Major political personalities
   - States’ rights
   - Economic issues
3. How were the lives of the Plains Indians in the second half of the nineteenth century affected by technological developments and government actions?
4. In what ways did economic conditions and developments in the arts and entertainment help create the reputation of the 1920s as the Roaring Twenties?
5. Assess the success of the United States policy of containment in Asia between 1945 and 1975.
1998
2. Analyze the extent to which religious freedom existed in the British North American colonies prior to 1700.
3. Analyze the impact of any TWO of the following on the American industrial worker between 1865 and 1900.
   - Government actions
   - Immigration
   - Labor union
   - Technological changes
4. To what extent and why did the United States adopt an isolationist policy in the 1920s and 1930s?
5. “1968 was a turning point for the United States.” To what extent is this an accurate assessment? In your answer, discuss TWO of the following:
   - National politics
   - Vietnam War
   - Civil Rights

1997
2. Analyze the extent to which the American Revolution represented a radical alteration in American political ideas and institutions. Confine your answer to the period 1775-1800.
3. Discuss the impact of territorial expansion on national unity between 1800 and 1850.
4. Analyze the economic consequences of the Civil War with respect to any TWO of the following in the United States between 1865 and 1880.
   - Agriculture
   - Labor
   - Industrialization
   - Transportation
5. How do you account for the appeal of McCarthyism in the United States in the era following the Second World War?

1996
2. Analyze the degree to which the Articles of Confederation provided an effective form of government with respect to any TWO of the following.
   - Foreign relations
   - Economic conditions
   - Western lands
3. Analyze the extent to which TWO of the following influenced the development of democracy between 1820 and 1840.
   - Jacksonian economic policy
   - Changes in electoral politics
   - Second Great Awakening
   - Westward movement
4. Analyze the ways in which the Great Depression altered the American social fabric in the 1930s.
5. Analyze the influence of TWO of the following on American-Soviet relations in the decade following the Second World War.
   - Yalta Conference
   - Communist revolution in China
   - Korean War
   - McCarthyism

1995
2. For the period before 1750, analyze the ways in which Britain’s policy of salutary neglect influenced the development of American society as illustrated in the following.
   - Legislative assemblies
   - Commerce
   - Religion
3. Analyze the ways in which supporters of slavery in the nineteenth century used legal, religious, and economic arguments to defend the institution of slavery.

4. Analyze the reasons for the emergence of the Populist movement in the late nineteenth century.

5. Assess the relative influence of THREE of the following in the American decision to declare war on Germany in 1917.
   - German naval policy
   - American economic interests
   - Woodrow Wilson’s idealism
   - Allied propaganda
   - America’s claim to world power

1994
2. Analyze the ways in which TWO of the following influenced the development of American society.
   - Puritanism during the seventeenth century
   - The Great Awakening during the eighteenth century
   - The Second Great Awakening during the nineteenth century

3. Evaluate the relative importance of domestic and foreign affairs in shaping American politics in the 1790s.

4. Compare and contrast the attitudes of THREE of the following toward the wealth that was created in the United States during the nineteenth century.
   - Andrew Carnegie
   - Eugene V. Debs
   - Horatio Alger
   - Booker T. Washington
   - Ida M. Tarbell

5. To what extent did the decade of the 1950s deserve its reputation as an age of political, social, and cultural conformity.