

Syllabus Development Guide: AP United States History

To the AP teacher: Please take full advantage of this guide. It is designed to support you as you develop your syllabus for the AP Course Audit. The guide contains the following sections and information:

Curricular Requirements	The curricular requirements are the core elements of the course. Your syllabus must provide clear evidence that each requirement is fully addressed in your course.	Important Considerations	Aligned with the Evaluation Guidelines, these statements provide advice on the type of evidence your syllabus should include.
Scoring Components	Some curricular requirements consist of complex, multi-part statements. These particular requirements are broken down into their component parts and restated as “scoring components”. Reviewers will look for evidence that each scoring component is included in your course.	Reference	As appropriate, references to specific sections of the official AP Course Description or other pertinent publications are included here.
Key Terms	To ensure the clarity of certain terms or expressions that may have multiple meanings, each of these terms is clearly defined.	Samples of Evidence	For each scoring component, three separate samples of evidence are provided. These statements provide either verbatim samples from actual authorized syllabi or clear descriptions of what acceptable evidence should look like.
Evaluation Guidelines	These are the exact guidelines used by reviewers as they evaluate the evidence in your syllabus. Use these to interpret any requirement you may find ambiguous.		

Curricular Requirements	Scoring Components, Key Terms, Evaluation Guidelines, Important Considerations, References and Samples of Evidence			
<p>Curricular Requirement 1: The course includes the study of political institutions, social and cultural developments, diplomacy, and economic trends in U.S. history.</p>	Scoring Component 1*: The course includes the study of political institutions in U.S. History.			
	*Note Each Curricular Requirement may be subdivided into two or more distinct Scoring Components.			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	<p>Political institutions: may be defined in a variety of ways (e.g., government structures, the political process, political issues, the meaning of democracy, and/or political movements).</p>	<p>The syllabus must include topics of study on political institutions and their development over time in U.S. History.</p>	<p>Scoring Component is clear and explicit. No Important Considerations are needed.</p>	<p>For more information see pages 6-13 of the AP U.S. History Course Description.</p>
	Samples of Evidence			
Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3		
<p>The syllabus includes the study of changing and conflicting interpretations of the Constitution and its amendments in the course of US History.</p>	<p>The syllabus' weekly schedule includes the following topics at different points in the course: First and Second Party Systems, the role of third parties in the political process, and important presidential elections.</p>	<p>The weekly schedule includes the study of political movements and ideas (e.g., American Liberalism and conservatism, Populism, Progressivism, New Deal, Old Left, New Left, New Right, New Federalism).</p>		

Curricular Requirement 1 (continued): The course includes the study of political institutions, social and cultural developments, diplomacy, and economic trends in U.S. history.

Scoring Component 2: The course includes the study of social developments in U.S. History.			
Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
<p>Social developments: may be defined in a variety of ways (e.g., social reform, social movements, demography, immigration, class structure, and/or social values).</p>	<p>The syllabus must include topics of study on social developments over time in U.S. History.</p>	<p>Scoring Component is clear and explicit. No Important Considerations are needed.</p>	<p>For more information see pages 6-13 of the AP U.S. History Course Description.</p>
Samples of Evidence			
Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
<p>The syllabus includes the study of issues of gender, race, and ethnicity.</p>	<p>The syllabus includes the study of social reform movements (e.g., abolitionism, temperance, Progressivism, Populism, socialism, civil rights, Great Society).</p>	<p>The syllabus includes the study of immigration patterns, issues of assimilation, and/or the issues of inclusion/exclusion of women, and racial and ethnic minorities in American society.</p>	

Curricular Requirement 1 (continued): The course includes the study of political institutions, social and cultural developments, diplomacy, and economic trends in U.S. history.	Scoring Component 3: The course includes the study of cultural developments in U.S. History.			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	Cultural developments: may be defined in a variety of ways (e.g., art, architecture, intellectual developments, literature, music, leisure activities, sports, popular culture, media, technology).	The syllabus must include topics of study on cultural developments over time in U.S. History.	Scoring Component is clear and explicit. No Important Considerations are needed.	For more information see pages 6-13 of the AP U.S. History Course Description.
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
The syllabus includes the study of popular music (e.g., the development of rock and roll during the 1950s).	The syllabus includes the study of changing values among different socioeconomic classes (e.g., the development of middle-class values in suburban America during the post-World War II period).	The syllabus includes the study of the development of any of the arts (e.g., the Hudson River School of painting) and/or literature (e.g., Harlem Renaissance) or the syllabus compares cultural developments in different periods in American history.		

Scoring Component 4: The course includes the study of diplomacy in U.S. history.				
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
Curricular Requirement 1 (continued): The course includes the study of political institutions, social and cultural developments, diplomacy, and economic trends in U.S. history.	Diplomacy: may be defined in a variety of ways (e.g., nation-state to nation-state interactions, causes and consequences of wars, treaties, the role of the US in the world, contiguous expansion of the US before 1898, overseas expansion after 1898, cultural influence of the US beyond its borders).	The syllabus must include topics of study on diplomacy and its evolution over time in U.S. History.	Scoring Component is clear and explicit. No Important Considerations are needed.	For more information see pages 6-13 of the AP U.S. History Course Description.
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
The syllabus includes the study of major treaties throughout American history.	The syllabus includes the study of the causes and consequences of wars in which the US participated.	The syllabus includes the study of the changing nature of US involvement in international affairs (e.g., neutrality, expansionism, imperialism and colonialism, isolationism, internationalism).		

Curricular Requirement 1 (continued): The course includes the study of political institutions, social and cultural developments, diplomacy, and economic trends in U.S. history.	Scoring Component 5: The course includes the study of economic trends in U.S. history.			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	Economic trends: may be defined in a variety of ways (e.g., relationship between government and the economy, major economic ideas and policies, changes in the US economy over time, nature of work, labor unions, role of technology in the economy).	The syllabus must include topics of study on economic trends across time in U.S. History.	Scoring Component is clear and explicit. No Important Considerations are needed.	For more information see pages 6-13 of the AP U.S. History Course Description.
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
The syllabus includes the study of labor, the changing nature of work, and/or the development of labor unions.	The syllabus includes the study of the changing relationship between the government and the economy (e.g., laissez faire, government intervention to regulate business, the New Deal, the development of the welfare state, the Great Society).	The syllabus includes the study of regional economic interests and national economic interests (e.g., the development of sectional economies in ante-bellum US, the economic causes and consequences of westward expansion, the US role in a global economy).		

Scoring Component 6: The course uses themes and topics such as those listed in the Course Description, selected at the teacher's discretion, as broad parameters for structuring the course.				
Curricular Requirement 2: The course uses themes and/or topics such as those listed in the Course Description, selected at the teacher's discretion, as broad parameters for structuring the course. The themes are designed to encourage students to think conceptually about the American past and to focus on historical change over time. The topic outline is suggested as a general guide for AP teachers in structuring their courses; it is not intended to be prescriptive of what teachers must teach.	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
		<p>Themes: serve as unifying concepts to help students synthesize material and place the history of the United States into a larger analytical context.</p> <p>Discretion: teachers are not required to follow all of the themes and topics suggested in the Course Description, and there is no particular importance placed on any set of themes or topics in the course design. The goal is for teachers and students to examine the American past from a variety of perspectives.</p>	<p>The syllabus must provide explicit evidence of at least one theme connected across time, moving beyond chronological presentation. Such themes should be similar to those in the AP US History Course Description, which reflect concepts or structuring ideas broader than a single topic, but do not need to be the same as the ones in the Course Description.</p> <p>The syllabus may be structured around one or more themes, but at least one theme must be evident throughout the syllabus.</p>	<p>A simple way to demonstrate that at least one theme is addressed throughout the course is to provide a statement in the syllabus introduction which explicitly mentions the theme and how it is incorporated throughout the course. Evidence of the themes should also be present in the related units of study.</p> <p>The topic outline and themes listed in the AP US History Course Description are suggested as a general guide for AP teachers in structuring their courses; they are not intended to be prescriptive of what teachers must teach. "AP US History courses may be constructed using any number of these themes. Teachers and students should also feel free to develop their own course themes as they look at the American past through a variety of lenses and examine U.S. history from multiple perspectives."</p>
Samples of Evidence				
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
	In the syllabus introduction the following explicit statement appears, "Students study issues and events relating to race as a unifying concept throughout the course." In the course outline, the syllabus traces the theme of race over time by mentioning the following topics: development of slavery, free African American society, slave culture and resistance, abolitionism, the impact of Reconstruction on African Americans, the development of Jim Crow, Great Migration, struggles for civil rights in the 19th and 20th centuries.	The syllabus states that Environment is a theme addressed throughout the course and poses the question, "How have Americans affected their natural environment?" This theme is discussed with reference to topics such as colonial settlement and land use, nineteenth-century westward expansion, conservation efforts during the Progressive Era, 19th and 20th century urbanization and suburbanization, and environmentalism of the 1970s.	In the syllabus introduction it states, "The syllabus examines the meaning and process of expansionism in American history during the 19th and 20th centuries." In addition, topics in the course outline include contiguous expansion, interactions with Native Americans, the shift to imperialism during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the development of internationalism after World War II.	

<p>Curricular Requirement 2 (continued): The course uses themes and/or topics such as those listed in the Course Description, selected at the teacher's discretion, as broad parameters for structuring the course. The themes are designed to encourage students to think conceptually about the American past and to focus on historical change over time. The topic outline is suggested as a general guide for AP teachers in structuring their courses; it is not intended to be prescriptive of what teachers must teach.</p>	<p>Scoring Component 7: The themes are designed to encourage students to think conceptually about the American past.</p>			
	<p>Key Term(s)</p>	<p>Evaluation Guideline(s)</p>	<p>Important Consideration(s)</p>	<p>Reference</p>
	<p>Think conceptually: thinking about the American past from multiple perspectives and avoiding a simplistic chronological construction of course material. The emphasis in course design should be in seeing change over time, and in helping students synthesize material from larger contexts.</p>	<p>The syllabus must provide explicit evidence of at least one theme connected across time, moving beyond chronological presentation. Such themes should be similar to those in the Course Description, which reflect concepts or structuring ideas broader than a single topic, but do not need to be the same as the ones in the Course Description.</p>	<p>The themes listed in the Course Description are suggested as a general guide for AP teachers in structuring their courses; they are not intended to be prescriptive of what teachers must teach.</p> <p>The theme(s) may be stated in relation to appropriate topics and/or time periods instead of being referenced in every topic or unit of study.</p> <p>The theme(s) listed in the syllabus should be discussed comparatively across different time periods in U.S. History.</p>	<p>For more information see pages 5-7 of the AP U.S. History Course Description.</p>
	<p>Samples of Evidence</p>			
	<p>Sample 1</p>	<p>Sample 2</p>	<p>Sample 3</p>	
<p>In various units of study, students consider what democracy has meant for American society at different times in U.S. History.</p>	<p>In various units of study, students consider how the United States has been affected by war.</p>	<p>In various units of study, students compare and contrast African Americans' struggle for civil rights during Reconstruction, the 1920s-30s, and the post-World War II period.</p>		

Scoring Component 8: The themes are designed to encourage students to focus on historical change over time.

Curricular Requirement 2 (continued): The course uses themes and/or topics such as those listed in the Course Description, selected at the teacher's discretion, as broad parameters for structuring the course. The themes are designed to encourage students to think conceptually about the American past and to focus on historical change over time. The topic outline is suggested as a general guide for AP teachers in structuring their courses; it is not intended to be prescriptive of what teachers must teach.

Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
All terminology in the Scoring Component is clear. No clarification is needed.	The syllabus must provide explicit evidence of at least one theme connected across time, moving beyond chronological presentation. Such themes should be similar to those in the Course Description, which reflect concepts or structuring ideas broader than a single topic, but do not need to be the same as the ones in the Course Description.	<p>The themes listed in the Course Description are suggested as a general guide for AP teachers in structuring their courses; they are not intended to be prescriptive of what teachers must teach.</p> <p>The syllabus may refer to theme(s) both explicitly and implicitly throughout the course. For example, the introduction to the syllabus might state race as a theme and later reference race through a study of the topics of slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the New Deal's treatment of African Americans, and the civil rights movement of the post-World War II period.</p>	For more information see pages 5-7 of the AP US History Course Description.

Samples of Evidence

Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3
In various units of study, students consider how and why the nature of work changed over time.	In various units of study, students consider how political institutions and the democratic process developed over time.	In various units of study, students consider how the United States' role in international affairs changed over time.

Scoring Component 9: The course teaches students to analyze evidence and interpretations presented in historical scholarship.			
Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
Historical scholarship: using secondary sources beyond just the textbook to provide students with exposure to different perspectives on interpreting the American past.	<p>The syllabus must explicitly reference more than 1 resource that includes interpretations presented in historical scholarship beyond what is found in the textbook.</p> <p>The syllabus must demonstrate how historical scholarship is integrated into the course.</p>	Evidence of historical scholarship can be demonstrated by referencing interpretations, books, articles, and essays by historians beyond the course textbook.	For more information see pages 4, 11 and 13 of the AP U.S. History Course Description.
Samples of Evidence			
Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
The syllabus cites and integrates supplemental books, articles, or handouts that include historians' interpretive essays or contrasting interpretations in the course outline.	The syllabus cites and integrates essays that describe and analyze the points of view of various influential figures relevant to historical interpretations.	The syllabus includes activities such as debates or mock trials that use historical interpretations presented in research. Specific sources used to support such activities are included in the syllabus.	

Curricular Requirement 3: The course teaches students to analyze evidence and interpretations presented in historical scholarship.

Curricular Requirement 4: The course includes extensive instruction in analysis and interpretation of a wide variety of primary sources, such as documentary material, maps, statistical tables, works of art, and pictorial and graphic materials.	Scoring Component 10: The course includes extensive instruction in analysis and interpretation of a wide variety of primary sources, such as documentary material, maps, statistical tables, works of art, and pictorial and graphic materials.			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	Extensive instruction: although there is no requirement regarding the number and frequency of assignments with which different types of sources are used, it should be clear from the course design that students are given the opportunity throughout the course for primary source analysis beyond just the exposure provided in DBQs.	<p>The syllabus must reference specific sources and indicate that assignments involve use of multiple types of sources. Reference to a source reader or single textbook alone is not sufficient evidence.</p> <p>The syllabus must demonstrate how students use the sources in the course.</p>	<p>The syllabus should explicitly reference assignments that use documentary materials.</p> <p>DBQs may be used as assignments in addition to other assignments and lessons that use primary sources. DBQs used only as assessment (e.g., on tests and/or exams), however, should not be the sole means of instruction in the use of a wide variety of primary sources.</p>	<p>For more information see page 11 of the AP U.S. History Course Description.</p>
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
<p>The syllabus describes routine and regular use of primary sources in lessons through discussion, debate, writing, and/or other such assignments.</p>	<p>The syllabus asks student to analyze political cartoons on particular historical topics (e.g., Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists; criticism of the New Deal).</p>	<p>The syllabus includes assignments that use maps, charts, and/or graphs such as assignments that compare economic data in different periods in American history.</p>		

Curricular Requirement 5: The course provides students with frequent practice in writing analytical and interpretive essays such as document-based questions (DBQ) and thematic essays (see the Course Description for more information).	Scoring Component 11: The course provides students with frequent practice in writing analytical and interpretive essays (also called Free-Response Questions).			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	Analytical and interpretive essays: essays that analyze past events and may consider how various historians have interpreted those events.	The syllabus must include specific writing activities. It is not sufficient evidence to provide only a statement indicating that analysis and interpretive writing occurs in the class. Analytical essay writing must take place more than once per course.	The syllabus should reference analytical and interpretive essay assignments throughout the course. Evidence of frequent practice in writing can be demonstrated through the use of thematic essays.	For more information see pages 12-14 and 32 of the AP U.S. History Course Description.
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
The syllabus uses previous AP exam free-response questions in multiple writing assignments.	Free-response-style essays are assigned regularly throughout the syllabus' schedule as in-class writing, independent work, and/or assessment (on tests and exams).	The syllabus describes class activities in which students participate in debates, simulations, or role-playing activities that incorporate analytical and/or interpretive essays. The essay topics are provided.		

<p>Curricular Requirement 5 (continued): The course provides students with frequent practice in writing analytical and interpretive essays such as document-based questions (DBQ) and thematic essays (see the Course Description for more information).</p>	Scoring Component 12: The course provides students with frequent practice in writing analytical and interpretive essays based on primary source materials (for example Document-Based Questions.)			
	Key Term(s)	Evaluation Guideline(s)	Important Consideration(s)	Reference
	All terminology in the Scoring Component is clear. No clarification is needed.	The syllabus must include specific writing activities. It is not sufficient evidence to provide only a statement indicating that analysis and interpretive writing occurs in the class. Analytical essay writing must take place more than once per course.	The syllabus should reference DBQ and/or other primary source essay assignments throughout the course.	For more information see pages 12-14 and 26-31 of the AP U.S. History Course Description.
	Samples of Evidence			
	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample 3	
The syllabus uses previous AP DBQ questions in multiple writing assignments.	Essays based on primary sources are assigned regularly throughout the syllabus' schedule as in-class writing, independent work, and/or assessment (on tests and exams).	The syllabus describes class activities in which students use primary sources to write essays to analyze past events. The essay topics are provided.		