

SUMMARY OF

Key Changes

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AP U.S. HISTORY
COURSE FRAMEWORK BRIEFING

Overview of the AP[®] U.S. History Redesign Process

In 2008, the College Board began a six-year process in collaboration with AP[®] U.S. History teachers, college professors, and historians to develop a redesigned AP U.S. History Course and Exam Description (CED). The decision to redesign the course was motivated by AP U.S. History teachers who repeatedly expressed frustration that they did not have sufficient time to immerse students in the major ideas, events, people, and documents of U.S. history and were instead required to race through topics. In February 2014, the College Board published an updated AP U.S. History CED to address these concerns.

The 2014 edition of the AP U.S. History CED sparked a significant public conversation among students, educators, historians, policymakers, and others about the teaching of our nation's history. In response, the College Board opened a public review period in October 2014 that ended on Feb. 28, 2015. During this time, the College Board received feedback from concerned citizens, historians, educators, and public officials about specific words and phrases in the framework.

The College Board used the thoughtful feedback gathered since the release of the 2014 CED to inform the 2015 edition. Every statement in the 2015 edition has been examined with great care based on the historical record and the principled feedback we received over the past year. The result is a clearer and more balanced approach to the teaching of American history that remains faithful to the requirements that colleges and universities set for academic credit.

The College Board is committed to providing AP U.S. History teachers with resources they can use to encourage students to do the daily work of reading and writing about rich historical documents and to develop a deep understanding of the ideas, the events, and the people who make U.S. history unique. We are confident that the 2015 AP U.S. History CED will further support teachers and students in doing this important work.



Major Areas of Clarification

in the 2015 Edition of the AP U.S. History Framework

The 2015 edition clarifies the following areas to reflect their importance on U.S. history:

- + American national identity and unity
- + American ideals of liberty, citizenship, and self-governance, and how those ideals play out in U.S. history
- + American founding political leaders, including Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Madison, Hamilton, and Franklin
- + Founding Documents — including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Federalist Papers — as reflected in a new recommended focus section
- + Productive role of free enterprise, entrepreneurship, and innovation in shaping U.S. history
- + U.S. role in the victories of WWI and WWII, particularly the contributions and sacrifices of American servicemen and women in those wars
- + U.S. leadership in ending the Cold War
- + Role of religious ideas and groups in shaping American society and political life

Excerpted Changes to the 2015 Edition

The most significant changes in the 2015 framework are reflected in the following sections:

- + **Themes**
 - Expanded Focus on National Identity
- + **Period 3: 1754–1800**
 - The Founding and the Founders
- + **Period 5: 1844–1877**
 - Westward Expansion and Its Motives
- + **Period 7: 1890–1945**
 - World War I and World War II
- + **Period 9: 1980–Present**
 - Ending of the Cold War
- + **Throughout the Framework**
 - Free Enterprise, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation

Themes

These seven themes represent broad historical developments that help link together the events, people, and ideas of U.S. history.

2014 Edition

- + Identity
- + Work, Exchange, and Technology
- + Peopling
- + Politics and Power
- + America in the World
- + Environment and Geography
- + Ideas, Beliefs, and Culture

2015 Edition

- + American and National Identity
- + Work, Exchange, and Technology
- + Migration and Settlement
- + Politics and Power
- + America in the World
- + Geography and the Environment
- + Culture and Society

Period 3: 1754–1800

KEY
CONCEPT
3.1

The Founding and the Founders

2014 Edition

II. During and after the imperial struggles of the mid-18th century, new pressures began to unite the British colonies against perceived and real constraints on their economic activities and political rights, sparking a colonial independence movement and war with Britain.

- A) Great Britain's massive debt from the Seven Years' War resulted in renewed efforts to consolidate imperial control over North American markets, taxes, and political institutions — actions that were supported by some colonists but resisted by others.
- B) The resulting independence movement was fueled by established colonial elites, as well as by grassroots movements that included newly mobilized laborers, artisans, and women, and rested on arguments over the rights of British subjects, the rights of the individual, and the ideas of the Enlightenment.
- C) Despite considerable loyalist opposition, as well as Great Britain's apparently overwhelming military and financial advantages, the patriot cause succeeded because of the colonists' greater familiarity with the land, their resilient military and political leadership, their ideological commitment, and their support from European allies.

2015 Edition

II. The desire of many colonists to assert ideals of self-government in the face of renewed British imperial efforts led to a colonial independence movement and war with Britain.

- A) The imperial struggles of the mid-18th century, as well as new British efforts to collect taxes without direct colonial representation or consent and assert imperial authority in the colonies, began to unite the colonists against perceived and real constraints on their economic activities and political rights.
- B) Colonial leaders based their calls for resistance to Britain on arguments about the rights of British subjects, the rights of the individual, local traditions of self-rule, and the ideas of the Enlightenment.
- C) The effort for American independence was energized by colonial leaders such as Benjamin Franklin, as well as by popular movements that included the political activism of laborers, artisans, and women.
- D) In the face of economic shortages and the British military occupation of some regions, men and women mobilized in large numbers to provide financial and material support to the Patriot movement.

Period 3: 1754–1800 (*continued*)

KEY
CONCEPT
3.1

The Founding and the Founders

2015 Edition

- E) Despite considerable loyalist opposition, as well as Great Britain's apparently overwhelming military and financial advantages, the Patriot cause succeeded because of the actions of colonial militias and the Continental Army, George Washington's military leadership, the colonists' ideological commitment and resilience, and assistance sent by European allies.

Period 5: 1844–1877

KEY
CONCEPT
5.1

Westward Expansion and Its Motives

2014 Edition

I. Enthusiasm for U.S. territorial expansion, fueled by economic and national security interests and supported by claims of U.S. racial and cultural superiority, resulted in war, the opening of new markets, acquisition of new territory, and increased ideological conflicts.

- A) The idea of Manifest Destiny, which asserted U.S. power in the Western Hemisphere and supported U.S. expansion westward, was built on a belief in white racial superiority and a sense of American cultural superiority, and helped shape the era's political debates.

2015 Edition

I. Popular enthusiasm for U.S. expansion, bolstered by economic and security interests, resulted in the acquisition of new territories, substantial migration westward, and new overseas initiatives.

- A) The desire for access to natural and mineral resources and the hope of many settlers for economic opportunities or religious refuge led to an increased migration to and settlement in the West.
- B) Advocates of annexing western lands argued that Manifest Destiny and the superiority of American institutions compelled the United States to expand its borders westward to the Pacific Ocean.

Period 7: 1890–1945

KEY
CONCEPT
7.3

World War I and World War II

2014 Edition

II. World War I and its aftermath intensified debates about the nation's role in the world and how best to achieve national security and pursue American interests.

- B) Although the American Expeditionary Forces played a relatively limited role in the war, Wilson was heavily involved in postwar negotiations, resulting in the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, both of which generated substantial debate within the United States.

2015 Edition

II. World War I and its aftermath intensified ongoing debates about the nation's role in the world and how best to achieve national security and pursue American interests.

- B) Although the American Expeditionary Forces played a relatively limited role in combat, the U.S.'s entry helped to tip the balance of the conflict in favor of the Allies.
- C) Despite Wilson's deep involvement in postwar negotiations, the U.S. Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles or join the League of Nations.

Period 7: 1890–1945 *(continued)*

KEY
CONCEPT
7.3

World War I and World War II

2014 Edition

III. The involvement of the United States in World War II, while opposed by most Americans prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, vaulted the United States into global political and military prominence and transformed both American society and the relationship between the United States and the rest of the world.

- A) The mass mobilization of American society to supply troops for the war effort and a workforce on the home front ended the Great Depression and provided opportunities for women and minorities to improve their socioeconomic positions.
- B) Wartime experiences, such as the internment of Japanese Americans, challenges to civil liberties, debates over race and segregation, and the decision to drop the atomic bomb, raised questions about American values.
- C) The United States and its allies achieved victory over the Axis powers through a combination of factors, including Allied political and military cooperation, industrial production, technological and scientific advances, and popular commitment to advancing democratic ideals.

2015 Edition

III. U.S. participation in World War II transformed American society, while the victory of the United States and its allies over the Axis powers vaulted the U.S. into a position of global, political, and military leadership.

- A) Americans viewed the war as a fight for the survival of freedom and democracy against fascist and militarist ideologies. This perspective was later reinforced by revelations about Japanese wartime atrocities, Nazi concentration camps, and the Holocaust.
- B) The mass mobilization of American society helped end the Great Depression, and the country's strong industrial base played a pivotal role in winning the war by equipping and provisioning allies and millions of U.S. troops.
- C) Mobilization and military service provided opportunities for women and minorities to improve their socioeconomic positions for the war's duration, while also leading to debates over racial segregation. Wartime experiences also generated challenges to civil liberties, such as the internment of Japanese Americans.

Period 7: 1890–1945 *(continued)*

KEY
CONCEPT
7.3

World War I and World War II

2014 Edition

- D) The dominant American role in the Allied victory and postwar peace settlements, combined with the war-ravaged condition of Asia and Europe, allowed the United States to emerge from the war as the most powerful nation on earth.

2015 Edition

- D) The United States and its allies achieved military victory through Allied cooperation, technological and scientific advances, the contributions of servicemen and women, and campaigns such as Pacific “island hopping” and the D-Day invasion. The use of atomic bombs hastened the end of the war and sparked debates about the morality of using atomic weapons.
- E) The war-ravaged condition of Asia and Europe, and the dominant U.S. role in the Allied victory and postwar peace settlements, allowed the United States to emerge from the war as the most powerful nation on earth.

Period 9: 1980–Present

KEY
CONCEPT
9.3

Ending of the Cold War

2014 Edition

9.2.I. The Reagan administration pursued a reinvigorated anti-Communist and interventionist foreign policy that set the tone for later administrations.

- A) President Ronald Reagan, who initially rejected détente with increased defense spending, military action, and bellicose rhetoric, later developed a friendly relationship with the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, leading to significant arms reductions by both countries.
- B) The end of the Cold War led not only to new diplomatic relationships but also to new U.S. military and peacemaking interventions as well as debates over the nature and extent of American power in the world.

2015 Edition

9.3.I. The Reagan administration promoted an interventionist foreign policy that continued in later administrations, even after the end of the Cold War.

- A) Reagan asserted U.S. opposition to communism through speeches, diplomatic efforts, limited military interventions, and a buildup of nuclear and conventional weapons.
- B) Increased U.S. military spending, Reagan's diplomatic initiatives, and political changes and economic problems in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were all important in ending the Cold War.
- C) The end of the Cold War led to new diplomatic relationships but also new U.S. military and peacekeeping interventions, as well as continued debates over the appropriate use of American power in the world.

Throughout the Framework: Free Enterprise, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation

The productive role of business and innovation in U.S. history is woven throughout the 2015 edition, including an expanded focus on the following areas:

- + Entrepreneurship as an accelerating factor in the growth of the U.S. economy
- + Economic opportunity as a driving force for immigration to the U.S. and within the country to new frontiers
- + Technology and manufacturing as engines for increasing living standards and expanding the middle class
- + Economic and industrial strength as key factors in the U.S. winning World War II and emerging as the most powerful nation on earth