

# ADVANCED PLACEMENT AMERICAN HISTORY-THESIS BANK

## Topic

Title

Thesis

## UNIT 1

1.

### Historiography

*Ramifications of historiography*

"Every history is contemporary history."

2.

### Political/economic

*Global Context of Exploration*

The differing natures of English and Spanish colonization in the "New World" accounted for the contrast in colonial development. In particular, mother country control, the presence of the military, sex ratios, the presence of surface wealth and the funding of exploration had future implications for the degree of control the colonists had in the developing regions.

3.

### Economic

*Colonial Motivations: Mercantilism*

"Although the English government underwent changes in the middle of the 17th century, its official policy remained the control of colonial trade." (Henretta & Nobles)

4.

### Social

*Amerindians and the Settlers: Impact on the Environment*

Due to differing concepts of property, accumulation of wealth and the man-nature relationship the Europeans created a radical environmental load in contrast to the Native Americans.

5.

### Economic

*Colonial Economic Structure*

As the colonial economic structure developed, distinct regional characteristics were prominent. North: crude beginnings of a commercial system; middle: grain producers; South: cash crop orientation. Geography and settlement patterns accounted for the difference.

6.

### Social

*The Colonial Structure*

As the colonies continued to develop, a social class structure evolved which was based less on heredity and feudalism, and more on the possibility of social mobility. Prosperity and autonomy directed colonial relations with England, while at the same time affecting localist rebellions. An emerging new order brought on the end of the old order.

7.

### Political

*Colonial Political Practices*

The English political traditions, along with the autonomous development of colonial political institutions, shaped the future of the United States government structure.

8.

### Social

*Colonial Religious Practices*

Religious movements mirrored societal anxieties.

## Unit 2

1.

### Political

*Prelude to the War for Independence: The Crumbling of the Old Order*

"This period (1740-1763) of religious, military, ethnic, economic conflict changed both the tone and the substance of colonial life." (Henretta and Nobles)

2.

### Politics/economics

*Prelude to the War for Independence: Britain's New Policy*

Although the colonists complained about English brutality and a lack of adherence to constitutionality, the colonists showed little restraint in their use of violence, terrorism and destruction of property.

3.

### Politics

*The Declaration of Independence: Ideology and Revolution*

The Declaration of Independence initiates a period in American history in which arrangements of government are being reviewed. In essence, the underlying foundations on which a government should be based are examined.

4.

### Politics

*The American Revolution: Mobilization and Fighting*

The goals of The Revolution were not generally agreed upon. "Eight long years of war made the flaws in American unity increasingly obvious. Many people pursued regional, social and personal goals, sometimes at the expense of their commitment to the Revolutionary ideology." (Henretta & Nobles)

5.

### Social/political/economic

*The Anglo-American Conflict: Was it a revolution?*

Although rapid changes took place in colonial America from 1763-1783, were the changes sweeping enough to justify labeling the process a "revolution?" "Was American society rapidly reshaped and restructured as a result of independence?" (Billias)

6.

### Political

*The Constitutional Convention*

A concern for the protection of private property and the conduct of commercial enterprises provided the impetus for the Constitutional Convention.

## Unit 3

1.

### Politics/economics

*The Young Nation*

Although the War for Independence was over, the USA needed to complete its revolution by establishing a form of government which would allow the nation to become a self-sustaining political, economic and social entity.

2.

### Politics

*The Administration of John Adams*

John Adams's administration continued to provide formative influences for the young nation. The Federalists ruled, but serious difficulties challenged both the party and the nation.

3.

### **Politics**

*The Administration of Thomas Jefferson*

Although Thomas Jefferson envisioned an agrarian paradise, he presided during a period which witnessed increased industrialization, increased urbanization and increased national power.

4.

### **Politics**

*The War of 1812*

The advent of the War of 1812 highlighted weaknesses in the United States' military preparedness, foreign policy and domestic political party cooperation.

5.

### **Political/economic**

*Post-war Nationalism leads to Sectionalism*

Post-war nationalism was replaced by sectionalism due to: the issue of internal improvements; national economic policy; and a perception by the states that they were steadily losing power to the national government.

6.

### **Socio-economic**

*The Dynamics of Economic and Social Change, 1790-1820*

The period of 1790-1820 was one of far-reaching social and economic evolution. By 1820, the United States had become a highly developed preindustrial society with a diverse economy and a complex social structure." (Hornet and Nobles)

## **Unit 4**

1.

### **Social/political/economic**

*The Jacksonian Era*

The Jacksonian Age marked an increase in the power of the presidency, the political prestige of the common man, and the emergence of mass-political organizations.

2.

### **Politics**

*Manifest Destiny*

The rapidly expanding population, the reform movement 1830's, the increased nationalistic spirit of imparting American liberty and ideals, and the desire for new markets and resources fostered Manifest Destiny.

3.

### **Social**

*A Changing Society, 1790-1860*

As the nation expanded physically, society was affected. The sections had to be linked together; the changing nature of the economy redefined the roles of the sexes; as roles changed, new causes, concerns and movements developed; a new American character emerged.

4.

### **Politics/economics**

Sectional tensions intensified as the slavery issue and states rights issues led the nation towards open conflict.

5.

### **Social**

*Slavery: Origin and Impact*

The American institution of slavery was a debasing power relationship which was: reinforced by notions of inferiority and visibility; harsh; and very costly to African-Americans, slave holders and America in general.

6.

### **Politics**

*The Nation at Odds*

The South's fear of geopolitical strangulation led it to "strike" first by removing itself from the union. In spite of this strategy, the South was unable to effect a victory, and was, in fact, doomed to defeat, due to: insufficient war materiel, ineffective central leadership and a lack of commitment to a common cause.

7.

### **Historiography**

*Historiography of the Civil War*

Was the conflict a "civil" war or "the war of Northern aggression" or a revolution?

8.

### **Social/political**

*Reconstruction: The Balancing of Power*

Reconstruction represented: a struggle between Congress and the Executive; the North's wish to establish "ordered liberty" by breaking the power of the Southern aristocracy; the South's wish to redeem its old lifestyle; and a process that was significant for what it did not do, rather than for what it did do.

## **Unit 5**

1.

### **Economics**

*19th Century America: Economic Growth, Economic Development and Westward Expansion*

The social and economic structure of the United States was drastically altered following the Civil War. The main components of this restructuring: mass movement to the trans-Mississippi West; development of new class relationships in the South; the influence of industry, urbanization and immigration on the North; and the rise of big business (corporations) geared to efficiency and economies of scale.

2.

### **Economics**

*19th century America: Industrial Development*

The Industrial Revolution of the United States (1870-1900) was characterized by: access to abundant natural resources; favorable government policies; rapid urbanization; new business organizations with both economic and political power; and a social philosophy which attempted to explain the developing social arrangements.

3.

### **Economics**

*19th Century America: Rise of Labor*

The rise of big business necessitated the development of a new identity for American labor. American labor had to adjust to a more regimented work style while losing ownership and management roles. At the same time, labor experienced difficulty organizing due to: the existence of the possibility of social mobility; presence of the immigrants in the work force; and public perception.

4.

### **Social**

*19th Century America: Urbanization*

The 1880s (1877-1920) witnessed a fundamental shift in American values, from those of the small town in the 1880s to those of a new, bureaucratic-minded middle class by 1920. (Robert Wiebe)

5.

### **Politics**

*19th Century America: Rise of Gilded Age Politics*

The political life of this period was marked by "shallow, glittering materialism." There was corruption, yet there were many demands placed upon a system with limited resources.

## Unit 6

1.

### Politics

#### *Populism v. Progressivism*

As the United States struggled with its emerging (new) identity, various groups vied for attention and control at the national level. Though national in scope, differing means were pursued to achieve a national order.

2.

### Social/political/economic

#### *Progressivism: 1897-1921*

Progressivism was "the development, legitimization and use of new managerial and bureaucratic institutions dedicated to solving the nation's peacetime problems and advancing the common good." (Hawley)

3.

### Politics

#### *Progressivism and the Presidency*

During the period 1901-1921, a noticeable change took place at the national level of government. The presidency assumed greater power and more independence from the legislative branch when compared to the late-19th century. The federal government became more actively involved in the economy of the United States.

4.

### Politics

#### *American Foreign Policy: Developing Imperialism*

The Progressive Era marked the "real" beginnings of American imperialism. Not only did the United States expand its base of power in Latin America, but its confidence and aggressive spirit would soon spread to Europe as the Progressive presidents searched for, and attempted to implement, order on the international scene.

5.

### Politics

#### *Atmosphere of Pre-World War I (The Great War)*

The European Alliance system, along with diplomatic bungling, and the belief that war would be brief and glorious lead to WWI.

6.

### Politics

#### *World War I: The United States Becomes Involved*

The United States becomes involved in WWI for various reasons: neutrality legislation became less restrictive; the United States was not able to stay neutral in "thought and deed;" freedom of the seas was being threatened and thus commercial opportunities; Wilson's idealism concerning a new world vision.

7.

### Politics

#### *World War I: Nature*

A war thought to be short in duration became a devastating battle of attrition which was fought on two fronts and which suffered from technological advancements, poor organization and limited supplies.

8.

### Politics

#### *World War I: The Peace Settlement*

The post-World War I peace process was marred by bitterness and revenge. The result was not a lasting peace but, rather, a 20-year truce, which would eventually erupt into WWII.

## Unit 7

1.

### Politics/social

*The Interlude of Peace: The Roaring 1920's*

The 1920s was a time of contrast in the USA. Economic boom was experienced, while disillusionment was rampant. The USA was a world economic power while it strained to maintain political isolation. And there was a move for "normalcy" while the traditional value structure was challenged.

2.

### Economics

*The Great Depression and the New Deal: 1929-1941*

Each economic depression, from the early-19th century through the 1930s was worse than the previous. As the economy evolved into an interdependent industrial system, economic fluctuations had negative consequences for greater numbers of people. No longer a nation of "island communities" (Wiebel) economic contractions had fateful consequences for the USA. What evolved was the most activist government to date in American history.

3.

### Politics

*The Interlude of Peace: Rise of Totalitarian States*

The failure of the Versailles Peace Treaty, along with the socio-political atmosphere of Europe, left the world scrambling for a new order on which to build balance of power relationships.

4.

### Political

*WWII: Causes and mobilization*

The inter-war foreign policy of the USA attempted to expand American influence and maintain international order, while at the same time isolating itself from entangling alliances. This, combined with the disaster of Versailles, led to the USA's entrance into WWII.

5.

### Politics

*WWII: Nature*

"The legacy of the Second World War . . . was to convince victor and vanquished alike . . . that the costs of war exceed its rewards." (John Keegan)

6.

### Politics

*The Emergence of the Cold War and the Containment Policy*

The Cold War developed due to misunderstandings on both sides of the globe. The result was a USA foreign policy, which stressed constant military preparedness and the development of a national security state to contain and roll back communism.

7.

### Social/politics/economics

*Truman: The Fair Deal*

Trying to carve his own niche as an initiator of liberal programs, Harry S. Truman was frustrated by a conservative coalition in Congress.

## Unit 8

1.

### Politics

#### *Eisenhower's Dynamic Conservatism*

Eisenhower's domestic programs had to address not only a changing world, but also massive demographic and cultural changes within the nation's borders. Ike sought a course of conservative fiscal policy with a more dynamic human needs policy. While he did not initiate radical reform, he did not roll back earlier reforms.

2.

### Politics

#### *Eisenhower: Foreign Policy*

With the development of nuclear power by the USA and the USSR, a direct confrontation between the superpowers was considered to have devastating consequences. The USA found itself more and more involved in the "escalating instability" [Current] of the Third World--the arena in which the Cold War would now play.

3.

### Social

#### *1950s and 1960s: Activism*

The turbulent 1950's and 1960's saw conflict at several levels: blacks challenged whites, women challenged men, wives challenged husbands, kids challenged parents, youth challenged the establishment and the federal government challenged the states. It was a time of violence, heightened awareness and change.

4.

### Social/politics

#### *JFK & LBJ: The Liberal Way*

During the 1960's the federal government became more active in assuming the responsibilities of social welfare for the nation. To achieve this end, the president took the role of reform initiator. The era was characterized by optimistic liberalism." (Current)

5.

### Politics

#### *Vietnam*

The United States President faced great odds during the Vietnam War: a different type of warfare; a nationalistic foe; after 1967, an increasingly unsupportive media and public opinion; and an uncooperative Congress. The result was a high cost venture without achieving initial objectives.

6.

### Social/politics/economics

#### *The Nixon Years*

The 1968 election and the subsequent years of Republican control of the White House, was a reaction--a backlash--to the perceived excesses of liberalism and what appeared to be impending social upheaval.

7.

### Social/politics/economics

#### *The Carter Years*

The election of 1976 saw the campaigns of Washington outsiders capture public attention. Ronald Reagan almost took the Republican nomination from the incumbent Gerald Ford. Jimmy Carter won the presidency. The voters registered their distrust of government and politicians.

8.

**Social/politics/economics**

*The Reagan Years*

Reagan's election marked a resurgence of: a me generation; conservative Christianity; the push for limiting the role of big government; and a Riga-motivated foreign policy.

9.

*Combined thesis for Nixon thru Reagan*

The years of 1969-1989 marked the resurgence of Republican control of the White House. At first, 1969-1977, this was a conservative backlash to the perceived excess of the liberalism and social upheaval of the 1960's. The 1976 election was but a brief interruption to this resurgence as voters registered their distrust of big government. The Reagan Revolution of 1980 continued the resurgence with the emergence of the vocal religious right, and rhetoric that stressed the rollback of communism, reductions in taxes, and budget deficits.