

## **Themes in AP U.S. History**

The U.S. History Development Committee's notes about the themes:

- The themes listed in this section are designed to encourage students to think conceptually about the American past and to focus on historical change over time.
- These themes should be used in conjunction with the topic outline on pages 7–12.
- The themes are not presented in any order of importance; rather, they are in alphabetical order. These ideas may serve as unifying concepts to help students synthesize material and place the history of the United States into larger analytical contexts.
- These themes may also be used to provide ideas for class projects.
- AP U.S. 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.

### **American Diversity**

The diversity of the American people and the relationships among different groups. The roles of race, class, ethnicity, and gender in the history of the United States.

### **American Identity**

Views of the American national character and ideas about American exceptionalism. Recognizing regional differences within the context of what it means to be an American.

### **Culture**

Diverse individual and collective expressions through literature, art, philosophy, music, theater, and film throughout U.S. history. Popular culture and the dimensions of cultural conflict within American society.

**Demographic Changes**

Changes in birth, marriage, and death rates; life expectancy and family patterns; population size and density. The economic, social, and political effects of immigration, internal migration, and migration networks.

**Economic Transformations**

Changes in trade, commerce, and technology across time. The effects of capitalist development, labor and unions, and consumerism.

**Environment**

Ideas about the consumption and conservation of natural resources. The impact of population growth, industrialization, pollution, and urban and suburban expansion.

**Globalization**

Engagement with the rest of the world from the fifteenth century to the present: colonialism, mercantilism, global hegemony, development of markets, imperialism, cultural exchange.

**Politics and Citizenship**

Colonial and revolutionary legacies, American political traditions, growth of democracy, and the development of the modern state. Defining citizenship; struggles for civil rights.

**Reform**

Diverse movements focusing on a broad range of issues, including anti-slavery, education, labor, temperance, women's rights, civil rights, gay rights, war, public health, and government.

## **Religion**

The variety of religious beliefs and practices in America from prehistory to the twenty-first century; influence of religion on politics, economics, and society.

## **Slavery and Its Legacies in North America**

Systems of slave labor and other forms of unfree labor (e.g., indentured servitude, contract labor) in Native American societies, the Atlantic World, and the American South and West. The economics of slavery and its racial dimensions. Patterns of resistance and the long-term economic, political, and social effects of slavery.

## **War and Diplomacy**

Armed conflict from the precolonial period to the twenty-first century; impact of war on American foreign policy and on politics, economy, and society.

## **Topic Outline**

The U.S. History Development Committee’s notes about the topic outline:

- This topic outline is intended as a general guide for AP teachers in structuring their courses and for students in preparing for the AP U.S. History Exam.
- The outline is not intended to be prescriptive of what AP teachers must teach, nor of what AP students must study.
- The topics listed here provide some broad parameters for the course and may be expanded or modified for instruction.

### **1. Pre-Columbian Societies**

Early inhabitants of the Americas

American Indian empires in Mesoamerica, the Southwest, and the Mississippi Valley

American Indian cultures of North America at the time of European contact

## **2. Transatlantic Encounters and Colonial Beginnings, 1492–1690**

First European contacts with Native Americans

Spain's empire in North America

French colonization of Canada

English settlement of New England, the Mid-Atlantic region, and the South

From servitude to slavery in the Chesapeake region

Religious diversity in the American colonies

Resistance to colonial authority: Bacon's Rebellion, the Glorious Revolution, and the Pueblo Revolt

## **3. Colonial North America, 1690–1754**

Population growth and immigration

Transatlantic trade and the growth of seaports

The eighteenth-century back country

Growth of plantation economies and slave societies

The Enlightenment and the Great Awakening

Colonial governments and imperial policy in British North America

## **4. The American Revolutionary Era, 1754–1789**

The French and Indian War

The Imperial Crisis and resistance to Britain

The War for Independence

State constitutions and the Articles of Confederation

The federal Constitution

## **5. The Early Republic, 1789–1815**

Washington, Hamilton, and shaping of the national government

Emergence of political parties: Federalists and Republicans

Republican Motherhood and education for women

Beginnings of the Second Great Awakening

Significance of Jefferson's presidency

Expansion into the trans-Appalachian West; American Indian resistance

Growth of slavery and free Black communities

The War of 1812 and its consequences

## **6. Transformation of the Economy and Society in Antebellum America**

The transportation revolution and creation of a national market economy  
Beginnings of industrialization and changes in social and class structures  
Immigration and nativist reaction  
Planters, yeoman farmers, and slaves in the cotton South

## **7. The Transformation of Politics in Antebellum America**

Emergence of the second party system  
Federal authority and its opponents: judicial federalism, the Bank War, tariff controversy, and states' rights debates  
Jacksonian democracy and its successes and limitations

## **8. Religion, Reform, and Renaissance in Antebellum America**

Evangelical Protestant revivalism  
Social reforms  
Ideals of domesticity  
Transcendentalism and utopian communities  
American Renaissance: literary and artistic expressions

## **9. Territorial Expansion and Manifest Destiny**

Forced removal of American Indians to the trans-Mississippi West  
Western migration and cultural interactions  
Territorial acquisitions  
Early U.S. imperialism: the Mexican War

## **10. The Crisis of the Union**

Pro- and antislavery arguments and conflicts  
Compromise of 1850 and popular sovereignty  
The Kansas–Nebraska Act and the emergence of the Republican Party  
Abraham Lincoln, the election of 1860, and secession

## **11. Civil War**

Two societies at war: mobilization, resources, and internal dissent  
Military strategies and foreign diplomacy  
Emancipation and the role of African Americans in the war  
Social, political, and economic effects of war in the North, South, and West

## **12. Reconstruction**

Presidential and Radical Reconstruction

Southern state governments: aspirations, achievements, failures

Role of African Americans in politics, education, and the economy

Compromise of 1877

Impact of Reconstruction

## **13. The Origins of the New South**

Reconfiguration of southern agriculture: sharecropping and crop lien system

Expansion of manufacturing and industrialization

The politics of segregation: Jim Crow and disfranchisement

## **14. Development of the West in the Late Nineteenth Century**

Expansion and development of western railroads

Competitors for the West: miners, ranchers, homesteaders, and American Indians

Government policy toward American Indians

Gender, race, and ethnicity in the far West

Environmental impacts of western settlement

## **15. Industrial America in the Late Nineteenth Century**

Corporate consolidation of industry

Effects of technological development on the worker and workplace

Labor and unions

National politics and influence of corporate power

Migration and immigration: the changing face of the nation

Proponents and opponents of the new order, e.g., Social Darwinism and Social Gospel

## **16. Urban Society in the Late Nineteenth Century**

Urbanization and the lure of the city

City problems and machine politics

Intellectual and cultural movements and popular entertainment

## **17. Populism and Progressivism**

Agrarian discontent and political issues of the late nineteenth century

Origins of Progressive reform: municipal, state, and national

Roosevelt, Taft, and Wilson as Progressive presidents

Women's roles: family, workplace, education, politics, and reform

Black America: urban migration and civil rights initiatives

## **18. The Emergence of America as a World Power**

American imperialism: political and economic expansion

War in Europe and American neutrality

The First World War at home and abroad

Treaty of Versailles

Society and economy in the postwar years

## **19. The New Era: 1920s**

The business of America and the consumer economy

Republican politics: Harding, Coolidge, Hoover

The culture of Modernism: science, the arts, and entertainment

Responses to Modernism: religious fundamentalism, nativism, and Prohibition

The ongoing struggle for equality: African Americans and women

## **20. The Great Depression and the New Deal**

Causes of the Great Depression

The Hoover administration's response

Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal

Labor and union recognition

The New Deal coalition and its critics from the Right and the Left

Surviving hard times: American society during the Great Depression

## **21. The Second World War**

The rise of fascism and militarism in Japan, Italy, and Germany

Prelude to war: policy of neutrality

The attack on Pearl Harbor and United States declaration of war

Fighting a multifront war

Diplomacy, war aims, and wartime conferences

The United States as a global power in the Atomic Age

## **22. The Home Front During the War**

Wartime mobilization of the economy

Urban migration and demographic changes

Women, work, and family during the war

Civil liberties and civil rights during wartime

War and regional development

Expansion of government power

### **23. The United States and the Early Cold War**

Origins of the Cold War

Truman and containment

The Cold War in Asia: China, Korea, Vietnam, Japan

Diplomatic strategies and policies of the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations

The Red Scare and McCarthyism

Impact of the Cold War on American society

### **24. The 1950s**

Emergence of the modern civil rights movement

The affluent society and “the other America”

Consensus and conformity: suburbia and middle-class America

Social critics, nonconformists, and cultural rebels

Impact of changes in science, technology, and medicine

### **25. The Turbulent 1960s**

From the New Frontier to the Great Society

Expanding movements for civil rights

Cold War confrontations: Asia, Latin America, and Europe

Beginning of Détente

The antiwar movement and the counterculture

### **26. Politics and Economics at the End of the Twentieth Century**

The election of 1968 and the “Silent Majority”

Nixon’s challenges: Vietnam, China, Watergate

Changes in the American economy: the energy crisis, deindustrialization, and the service economy

The New Right and the Reagan revolution

End of the Cold War

### **27. Society and Culture at the End of the Twentieth Century**

Demographic changes: surge of immigration after 1965, Sunbelt migration, and the graying of America

Revolutions in biotechnology, mass communication, and computers

Politics in a multicultural society

### **28. The United States in the Post–Cold War World**

Globalization and the American economy

Unilateralism vs. multilateralism in foreign policy

Domestic and foreign terrorism

Environmental issues in a global context