

# The College Board History Framework

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# The College Board Framework for History

## *EQUITY for ALL STUDENTS*

The College Board believes that all students should be prepared for and have an opportunity to participate successfully in post-secondary education, and that equitable access to higher education must be a guiding principle for teachers, counselors, administrators, and policymakers. In order to achieve these goals, all students should be given appropriate guidance about college admissions, and provided the full support necessary to ensure college admissions and success. All students should be encouraged to accept the challenge of a rigorous academic curriculum through enrollment in college preparatory programs and Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Schools should make every effort to ensure that AP and other college-level classes reflect the diversity of the student population. The College Board encourages the elimination of barriers that limit access to demanding courses for all students, particularly those from traditionally underrepresented ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups.

## *Why Study History?*

The study of history helps accomplish the three primary purposes of education in free societies: to allow individuals to pursue intellectual fulfillment, to prepare them for informed citizenship, and to equip them for career and work opportunities. History's offerings are unique and indispensable for the understanding of society and the creations of humankind. The study of history offers a knowledge base and analytical skills that are particularly attractive to employers in increasingly competitive, globalized, and multicultural settings.

Knowledge of history is one of the prerequisites of informed and responsible political participation. Without history, a society shares no common memory of where it has been, what its core values are, or what decisions of the past account for present circumstances. Without history, we cannot undertake any effective inquiry into the political, social, and moral issues of our day. And without historical knowledge and inquiry, we are not equipped for the informed, discerning citizenship essential to effective participation in the democratic processes of governance and the fulfillment of the informed exchange of ideas vital to a flourishing society.

History opens to students the great record of human experience and provides them with the opportunity to acquire a comprehensive understanding of cultures and ways of life that may differ from their own. From a balanced and inclusive history curriculum students may gain an appreciation of not only the diversity among and within the world's cultures but also the shared humanity and common problems that we all face. Students should also acquire and develop the skills of seeing matters critically and through different lenses in order to better understand their own perspectives as well as those of others. By studying history, students can gain an understanding of the vast range of ways in which individuals and societies have confronted problems. By studying the various choices and decisions of the past, students can approach problems and issues with a

deeper awareness of their alternatives and the likely consequences of each.

History's role in the development of individuals should not be underestimated. Historical memory is one of the keys to self-identity, to seeing one's place in the stream of time and one's connectedness with humankind. We are part of an ancient chain, and the long hand of the past is upon us--for good and for ill--just as our actions will rest on our descendants for years to come. By denying knowledge of one's roots and of one's place in the great stream of human history, the individual is deprived of the fullest sense of self.

### *Historical Thinking Skills*

Historical analysis requires familiarity with a great deal of information about the past—names, dates, facts, events, and the like. Without reliable and detailed information about the past, historical thinking is not possible.

Yet historical analysis involves more than the compilation of data about the past. It also calls for several distinctive reasoning skills. The study of history is not a simple effort to collect information but rather a sophisticated and creative quest for meaning about the past. This quest involves a rigorous and fair-minded analysis of documents and other sources of information. It calls for individuals who respect all relevant historical evidence and reasoning—not just those elements that support a preferred or preconceived position. The quest for historical meaning entails the cultivation of six distinct but related intellectual skills:

**Analysis:** Historical thinking depends on the ability to understand and evaluate evidence about the past (including written documents as well as archaeological artifacts, oral traditions, works of art, and other primary sources). It involves the capacity to extract useful information and draw appropriate conclusions from historical evidence while also understanding that evidence in its context, recognizing its limitations, and assessing the point of view that it reflects.

**Argumentation:** Historical thinking depends on the ability to construct plausible arguments on the basis of all the relevant historical evidence as well as the capacity to understand and evaluate the arguments of others fairly in light of all available evidence.

**Chronological reasoning:** Historical thinking depends on the ability to recognize patterns of continuity and change through time, to address questions of causation, and to compare and evaluate alternative models of periodization.

**Interpretation:** Historical thinking depends on the ability to analyze the roles played by multiple causes of historical developments, to recognize that different witnesses from different communities have articulated multiple perspectives on historical experiences, to interpret evidence imaginatively, and to understand and evaluate diverse interpretations of the past through analysis of their evidence, reasoning, contexts, points of view, and frames of reference.

**Contextualization:** Historical thinking depends on the ability to connect local developments with broader processes, to understand the various ways that global processes have influenced the development of individual societies, and to assess the similarities and differences between historical processes in different chronological and geographical contexts.

**Comparison:** Historical thinking depends on the ability to compare historical developments among and between societies in order to understand the experiences of individual peoples and societies in relevant context.

**Synthesis:** Historical thinking depends on the ability to construct plausible historical narratives and create persuasive understandings of the past by drawing resourcefully on relevant primary sources and secondary works while acknowledging them in appropriate fashion.

### ***Content Framework***

In addition to providing students with the opportunity to develop skills for historical thinking, college level history courses foster the understanding of specific content areas in order to exercise these historical skills. These courses provide students with overall competence in the geography of world, European, or U.S. history, so they are able to ascertain and enhance their knowledge in a regional context. The courses cover basic concepts of periodization pertinent to the general subject areas and develop student understanding of the overall contours of specific historical periods.

College level courses in history follow the general division of historical knowledge into thematic areas:

- ◆ the economic and technological structures produced by human societies that sustain and organize those societies
- ◆ demographic and population shifts over time, with consideration to human relationships to the environment
- ◆ the organization of societies, including class, ethnic, racial, and gender arrangements and interactions
- ◆ the development of religious systems, artistic accomplishment, and philosophical and cultural thought
- ◆ the transmission of cultural ideas within and among groups and societies
- ◆ the origins and evolution of states, political organization, and political identities
- ◆ the interactions among states and other political entities

College Board college level history courses offer balanced coverage of political, social, economic and technological, and cultural realms of human activity. The courses put these themes in the context of chronology, building student skills in analyzing the change in political, social, economic, and cultural structures over time. Students will also learn to see continuity alongside change and to question patterns of stasis as well as instances of

transformation in society, politics, economies, and cultural expression. Content skills will also aim to produce informed comparisons over time and among territories and political entities (local, national, or more extensive regions).

### *Course Design*

History Survey courses should:

- ◆ Integrate skills and themes within broad periods of time to create a conceptual framework.
- ◆ Balance depth of historical thinking and breadth of coverage. A survey of the body of knowledge about the content of the field should be provided as well as ample opportunities to explore more deeply by practicing historical thinking skills.
- ◆ Emphasize historical thinking skills. One way to do this is to structure the course to provide opportunities for students to discover change over time and explore comparisons. Resources and assignments should be chosen with content, as well as historical thinking skills, in mind.
- ◆ Aim for a balanced approach among historical topics such as social, economic, cultural, and political history. Courses should give full attention to various groups within societies and throughout the world.
- ◆ Reflect the recent developments in each field, especially as supported by the relevant scholarly publications and professional organizations.
- ◆ Include interdisciplinary connections (for example, visual analysis of art and architecture, analysis of literature, incorporation of science) that support the various themes. Teachers should be encouraged to seek out teachers of other disciplines for resources, support, or teaming.
- ◆ Provide for a variety of instructional strategies and learning styles by using different kinds of resources, lesson structures, and methods of evaluation.
- ◆ Place high value on student participation as active learners who can solve problems and generate their own conclusions. Students should be given the chance to complete a wide range of activities and assignments: research, role-play, debate, discussion, oral presentation, and varied forms of written work.

### *Assessment*

Assessments (including all forms of evaluated work) in history are opportunities to engage students in historical thinking and content at the same time. Creative and careful design of assessments in a history course can serve both as a compelling invitation into

the study of history and an accurate accounting of student learning. While writing and research should provide the backbone of the assessment structure, opportunities should be provided for students to demonstrate in a variety of ways what they know and what they have learned.

- ◆ Students should be able to use visual, oral, and written examples throughout the course to show what they have learned.
- ◆ Standards and expectations should be made clear when assignments are given, and opportunities should be provided for students to measure their own growth against grade- and college-level expectations, as in the use of a portfolio.
- ◆ Written assessments should be varied and creative, including such approaches as essay writing, mock trial statements or meeting position papers, diaries, news articles, historical fiction, research papers, book reviews, visual analysis, and so on.
- ◆ Assignments and tests should directly assess the desired historical thinking skills as well as content understanding. They should be seen as opportunities for further learning.
- ◆ Analytical questions should demonstrate links to the main themes of the course.

### ***Professional Development for History Educators***

High-quality and well-selected professional development fosters the improvement of successful teaching and learning programs. While a one-size-fits-all approach is no more appropriate for teachers than it is for students, effective programs share the essential goals of enhancing subject matter expertise and encouraging the use of best practices and current pedagogy. Professional development provides a variety of resources for teachers, including the encouragement of advanced academic study and research, engagement with current scholarship, access to library collections that support self-guided investigations in both content and professional practices, and partnerships with colleges and universities that afford secondary teachers opportunities to become aware of expectations for student preparedness as well as best practices for teaching and learning at the college and university level.

Successful professional development programs for teachers take into account the primary importance of content mastery as the foundation for good practice in history education. Other considerations include student performance data, needs of diverse learners, vertical alignment of curriculum, and the development of historical thinking skills. Finally, new models for staff development, such as those using communications technology, broaden the availability of quality staff development. Such programs promise to fulfill the need of tailoring training to individual and school circumstances as well as supporting standards for history education.

Listed below are more specific methods and resources that are available to educators as part of an effective professional development program.

Access to current scholarship and content area studies

- ◆ secondary / post-secondary partnerships for ongoing teacher training
- ◆ College Board workshops and seminars
- ◆ continuing education and post-certification courses in history fields pertinent to teaching assignments
- ◆ participation in National Endowment for the Humanities and other high-quality teacher institutes and study programs
- ◆ school library collections supporting specific history courses
- ◆ historical journal subscriptions
- ◆ participation in activities of organizations for professional historians
- ◆ independent research in collaboration with university faculty mentors

Training in established and emerging pedagogy, including

- ◆ collaborative teams
- ◆ curriculum mapping methods to identify teaching and learning goals and sequences
- ◆ concept-based learning
- ◆ vertical teaming in essential historical thinking skills, including essay writing, critical reading, and primary source analysis
- ◆ approaches for expanding access to advanced academic programs
- ◆ effective use of technologies

Development of new and/or underused models for professional development

- ◆ use of student performance data to determine specific areas for professional development
- ◆ refresher or short update conferences for experienced and successful Advanced Placement teachers
- ◆ collaborative, small scale, teacher-designed content conferences
- ◆ content enhancement for teachers using Internet, pod-cast, or DVD instruction
- ◆ accessible College Board outreach to all history teachers