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# Setting a Policy for AP<sup>®</sup> Human Geography

The purpose of this guide is to provide college faculty and administrators with research data, participation and performance data of AP<sup>®</sup> Human Geography students, curricular content, and sample exam questions to facilitate the establishment of appropriate credit and placement policies for AP Human Geography.

The Advanced Placement Program<sup>®</sup> (AP) provides motivated students with the opportunity to take college-level courses while still in high school. Students demonstrate their mastery of the curriculum by taking AP Exams—35 exams are available in 20 subject areas. In 2005, more than 1.2 million students took AP Exams worldwide. Of the 2.1 million AP Exams taken in 2005, more than 14,000 were in Human Geography. More than 3,000 colleges and universities, including many international institutions, accept qualifying AP Exam scores for credit, placement, or both.

Throughout its 50-year history, the AP Program has maintained high standards of rigor in its courses and exams. Since its inception, AP has been a respected force in American education due to the critical involvement of college and university faculty members.

## Human Geography Faculty Involvement in AP

College and university faculty members play a vital role in every stage of development and scoring of an AP course and exam, helping to ensure their high quality. Each AP discipline has its own Development Committee—composed of college and university professors and experienced AP teachers—that is responsible for creating the course guidelines and exam questions. College and university faculty members also serve as the Chief Readers, responsible for establishing the exam-scoring guidelines and overseeing the annual AP Reading of the free-response section for their academic discipline.

“Given the importance of the AP Human Geography program to the discipline of geography, you will be doing an important service to the profession in recognizing the achievement of the AP Human Geography students and helping them integrate into the discipline of geography at the postsecondary level. AP Human Geography students come to our universities more interested in and better prepared to study geography. If only a small portion of test-takers become new geography majors, our discipline will grow and solidify its position as a core discipline in American higher education.”

—Patricia Gober, AP Human Geography Development Committee Chair  
Arizona State University

The College Board publication *AP and Higher Education* discusses the following topics at greater length: how to set an AP policy, AP research studies, the development of AP courses and exams, and the AP Exam scoring. For more information or to request a copy of this publication, please go to [apcentral.collegeboard.com/highered](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/highered).

## How to Set an AP Policy

The College Board encourages higher education institutions to base their AP policy decisions on data and research, and recognizes that different institutions and departments will set different policies based upon factors unique to their institution, student body, and academic discipline. The best way for colleges and universities to determine their AP credit and placement policies is to conduct their own research on the performance of AP and non-AP students at their own institution and in their own department.

### Research on AP Student Performance

Research studies show that students who do well on an AP Exam are academically prepared to place out of a corresponding college course and move on to the next higher-level course in the discipline.

Taking the AP course and exam stimulates further interest in the subject area and encourages deeper disciplinary knowledge.

Research studies show that students who take the AP Exams are significantly more likely to take further course work in the same subject area than students who do not take the AP Exam. Higher scores on the AP Exam make this trend even more pronounced, with a greater likelihood of majoring or minoring in the discipline.

PDF copies of research studies on AP student performance can be found at [apcentral.collegeboard.com/colleges/research](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/colleges/research).

In addition to research studies on AP student performance, the College Board conducts college comparability studies to measure the degree to which the AP courses and exams are equivalent in content and difficulty to corresponding college courses. The AP Exam scoring rubric is established so that the lowest composite score that earns an AP grade of 5 is equivalent to the average score earned by college students who received grades of A in a comparable course. The lowest score that earns an AP grade of 4 is equivalent to the average B, and the lowest score that earns an AP grade of 3 is equivalent to the average C.

The research that the College Board conducts is intended to help institutions and academic departments as they establish appropriate AP policies. AP Central® ([apcentral.collegeboard.com](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com)), the College Board's online home for AP professionals, contains other resources that may assist in this process, including the Course Description, released exam questions, and sample student responses at different levels of ability.

For more information go to: [apcentral.collegeboard.com/humangeo/exam](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/humangeo/exam)

## AP Human Geography Students, Course, and Exam

### Participation and Performance Data for AP Human Geography Students in 2005

Total Number of Schools Offering AP Human Geography: 702

Table 1: AP Human Geography Exam Score Distribution, 2005

EXAM GRADE	NUMBER OF EXAMINEES	PERCENT AT
Score of 5	2,074	14.7%
Score of 4	2,946	20.8%
Score of 3	3,274	23.2%
Score of 2	2,387	16.9%
Score of 1	3,458	24.5%
	14,139	100.1%

Figure 1: AP Human Geography Examinees by Gender, 2005

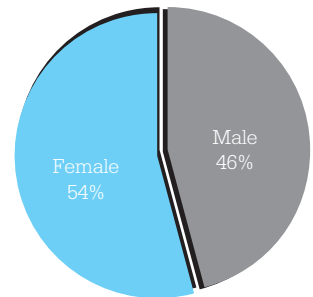
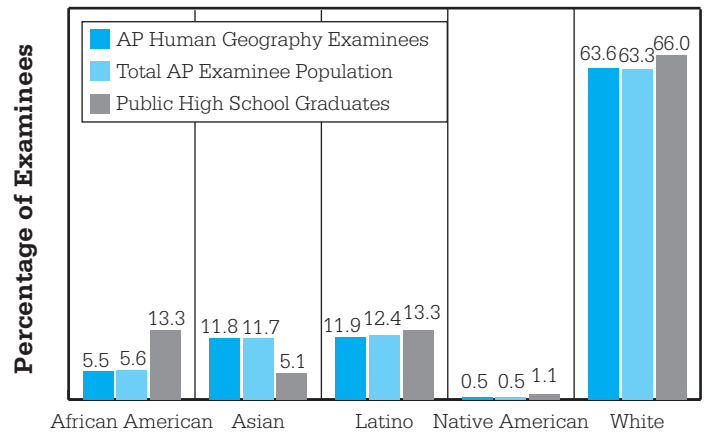


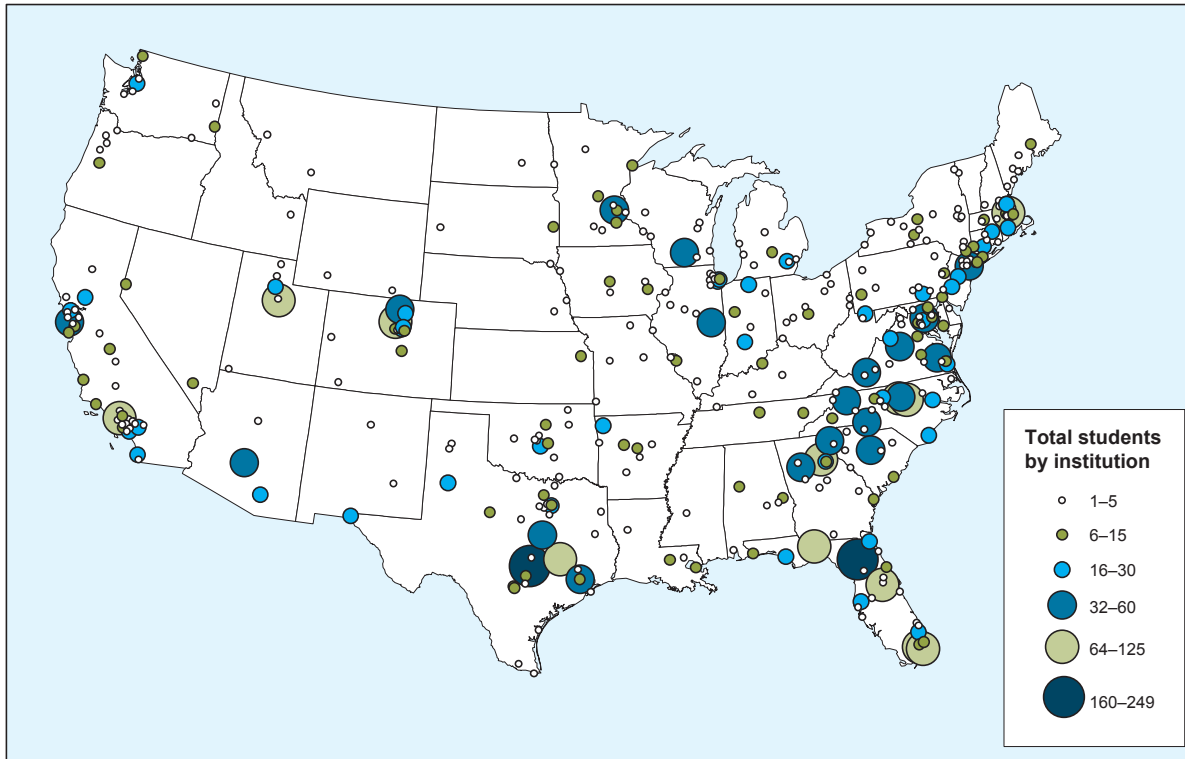
Figure 2: AP Human Geography Examinees by Race and Ethnicity, 2005



## AP Credit Policy Info on the Web

Information about AP credit and placement policies at more than 1,000 colleges and universities is available on the College Board's Web site at [www.collegeboard.com/ap/creditpolicy](http://www.collegeboard.com/ap/creditpolicy).

# Colleges and Universities That Received AP Human Geography Exam Scores in 2005



## AP Human Geography Course

The AP Human Geography course is designed to provide students with a learning experience equivalent to that of an introductory college course in human geography. The course introduces students to the systematic study of geographic patterns and processes that have shaped human understanding, use, and alteration of Earth's surface. Students employ spatial concepts and landscape analysis to examine human organization of space and the changing interconnections among places. They also learn about the methods, tools, and data sources geographers use in their science and practice.

The AP Human Geography course emphasizes the following five college-level goals that build on the National Geography Standards developed in 1994. Upon successful completion of the course, students will have developed skills that enable them to:

- Use and think about maps and spatial data
- Understand and interpret the implications of associations among phenomena in places
- Recognize and interpret at different scales the relationships among patterns and processes
- Define regions and evaluate the regionalization process
- Characterize and analyze changing interconnections among places

“AP Human Geography has experienced considerable growth in its first five years. In the initial AP Human Geography Exam administration in 2001, about 3,000 students from approximately 300 high schools participated. This has grown to more than 14,000 students from about 700 schools in 2005. The program is now firmly established, with plenty of room to grow. This increase has come largely through the impressive efforts of individual teachers, students, administrators, and parents, who have upheld the high college-level standards that this course and exam represent. The students taking these exams have an increased knowledge of, and interest in, human geography when they enter college, which is good for college geography departments and the discipline as a whole.”

—Tim Strauss

AP Human Geography Development Committee Chief Reader  
University of Northern Iowa

The Development Committee has created a topic outline covering the main subject areas that should be taught, along with the relative weight to be assigned to each topic.

- I. Geography: Its Nature and Perspectives..... 5–10%
  - A. Geography as a field of inquiry
  - B. Evolution of key geographical concepts and models associated with notable geographers
  - C. Key concepts underlying the geographical perspective: location, space, place, scale, pattern, regionalization, and globalization
  - D. Key geographical skills
  - E. New geographic technologies such as GIS and GPS
  - F. Sources of geographical ideas and data: the field, census data
- II. Population..... 13–17%
  - A. Geographical analysis of population
  - B. Population growth and decline over time and space
  - C. Population movement
- III. Cultural Patterns and Processes..... 13–17%
  - A. Concepts of culture
  - B. Cultural differences
  - C. Environmental impact of cultural attitudes and practices
  - D. Cultural landscapes and cultural identity
- IV. Political Organization of Space..... 13–17%
  - A. Territorial dimensions of politics
  - B. Evolution of the contemporary political pattern
  - C. Challenges to inherited political–territorial arrangements
- V. Agricultural and Rural Land Use..... 13–17%
  - A. Development and diffusion of agriculture
  - B. Major agricultural production regions
  - C. Rural land use and settlement patterns
  - D. Modern commercial agriculture
- VI. Industrialization and Economic Development..... 13–17%
  - A. Key concepts in industrialization and development
  - B. Growth and diffusion of industrialization
  - C. Contemporary patterns and impacts of industrialization and development
- VII. Cities and Urban Land Use..... 13–17%
  - A. Definition of urbanism
  - B. Origin and evolution of cities
  - C. Functional character of contemporary cities
  - D. Built environment and social space

The Development Committee creates the guidelines for the AP Human Geography course and designs the AP Exam. Periodically the Development Committee conducts curriculum surveys, sent to professors who teach the comparable college-level course, that help ensure that the AP Human Geography course remains current with concepts and themes as taught in college and university classrooms.

“The best part of working on the Development Committee and Reading the AP Exams is learning how to write effective free-response questions. Most teachers write essay questions that are subjective and consequently student work is difficult to compare. The AP free-response questions provide models for college and AP teachers to use as they hone their assessment skills.”

—David Lanegran  
AP Human Geography Development Committee former Chair  
Macalester College

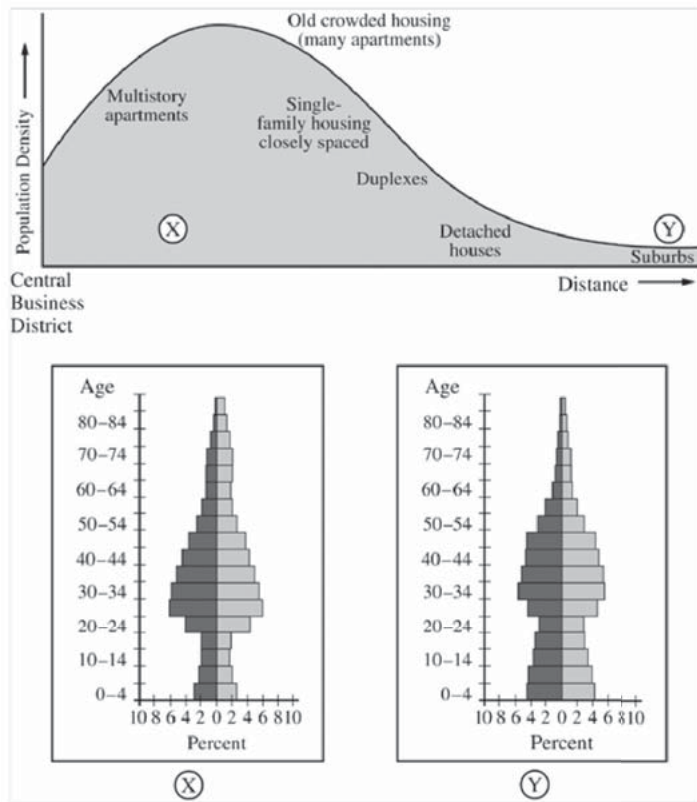
Beginning in fall 2006, AP Human Geography teachers and principals of schools where AP Human Geography is taught must certify that their 2007–08 courses follow all the requirements stipulated by the Development Committee, including using a college-level textbook, in order to ensure that the AP course reflects college-level standards. By completing this AP Course Audit, high schools will receive individual licenses to label their human geography courses “AP.” In fall 2007, colleges and universities will receive a list of all high schools authorized to use the “AP” designation for their human geography courses.

### The AP Human Geography Exam

The AP Human Geography Exam, lasting 2 hours and 15 minutes, consists of a multiple-choice and a free-response section. Each section accounts for half of the student’s exam grade. The free-response section includes three constructed-response questions that may require students to interrelate different topical areas and to analyze and evaluate geographical concepts. Questions may be based on stimulus material such as verbal descriptions, maps, graphs, photographs, and diagrams. Students are expected to use their analytical and organizational skills to formulate answers in writing their responses.

**AP Human Geography free-response questions from recent exam years are listed below.**

**Question 1**



The graph shown above describes the residential density profile of a major North American city. The population pyramids labeled X and Y describe the demographic composition of places located at points X and Y on the graph of population density.

- Use the concept of land rent (sometimes called bid rent) to explain the profile of residential population density shown on the graph.
- Using the population pyramids labeled X and Y, identify and explain TWO differences in the demographic composition between the pyramids.
- Explain the relationship between the demographic differences identified in part B, above, and residential land-use patterns at point X and point Y, respectively, in the graph of population density.

**Question 2**

Over the last 150 years, Europe has changed from a source to a destination region for international migration.

- Use the demographic transition model to explain briefly Europe's development as a source of international migrants between 1800 and 1920.
- Identify and briefly explain ONE factor other than demographic transition that was responsible for Europe's development as a source of migrants to the United States between 1800 and 1920.
- Briefly explain how THREE aspects of the demographic transition model account for Europe's transformation into a destination region for migrants from North Africa between 1960 and 2000.

**Question 3**



- Define the following concepts as they are used in political geography.
  - Nation
  - State
  - Nation-state
- For each of these concepts, name a specific late twentieth-century example from Region A and a specific late twentieth-century example from Region B on the map above.
- Explain how the pursuit of the nation-state ideal during recent decades has led to conflict in each of the two regions, A and B, on the map above.

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#### Question 4

- A. 1. Define the term “Green Revolution” as used during the period 1945 to 1985.
2. Explain the principal agricultural practices/technologies associated with the green revolution.
3. Name TWO regions, in different parts of the world, where the green revolution has had a significant impact on crop yields.
- B. Identify and discuss TWO social, political, or cultural conditions necessary for the success of the agricultural practices/technologies of the green revolution.
- C. Identify and discuss TWO significant economic or ecological factors that may limit the long-term success of the agricultural practices/technologies of the green revolution.
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#### Question 5

The modern state system is engaged in a struggle between the forces of supranationalism and devolution.

- A. Define both terms and give a geographic example for each.
- B. With reference to the political and economic geography of Europe, briefly discuss three changes resulting from supranationalism.
- C. With reference to the political and economic geography of Europe, briefly discuss three changes resulting from devolution.
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#### Question 6

In the 1990s the central business and residential districts of cities in the United States became the focus of a revitalization process. Discuss how each of the following has contributed to this revitalization process.

- A. Economic factors
- B. Demographic composition
- C. Urban policy
- D. Sense of place
- 

#### Question 7

The restructuring of agriculture in the late twentieth century has had important implications for rural land use and the distribution of poultry (chicken and turkey) production in the United States.

- A. List TWO factors that have increased the demand for poultry.
- B. Briefly describe TWO characteristics of the present economic organization of poultry production in the United States.
- C. Describe TWO features of the present geographic distribution of poultry production in the United States.
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#### Question 8

- A. Identify and explain ONE way that tourism has diminished regional landscape distinctiveness.
- B. Identify and explain ONE way that tourism has enhanced regional landscape distinctiveness.

## How to Get Involved

There are many ways college and university faculty members can help maintain the high standards of the AP Program:

- Participate in a college comparability study
- Be an AP Reader
- Contribute multiple-choice test items for the AP Exam
- Become an AP Faculty Consultant

For more information, please go to: [apcentral.collegeboard.com/highered/getinvolved](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/highered/getinvolved)

## Contact Us

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## The College Board: Connecting Students to College Success

The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, the association is composed of more than 5,000 schools, colleges, universities, and other educational organizations. Each year, the College Board serves seven million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,500 colleges through major programs and services in college admissions, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Among its best-known programs are the SAT<sup>®</sup>, the PSAT/NMSQT<sup>®</sup>, and the Advanced Placement Program<sup>®</sup> (AP<sup>®</sup>). The College Board is committed to the principles of excellence and equity, and that commitment is embodied in all of its programs, services, activities, and concerns. For further information, visit [www.collegeboard.com](http://www.collegeboard.com).