

A.P.U.S.H. SURVIVAL GUIDE



**2025-26 School Year
Mr. Hunter's Class
Room A-6**

Dear APUSH Students,

I would like to congratulate you on your decision to take on the incredibly challenging and rewarding journey that is Advanced Placement United States History (APUSH). The process of exploring the history of America and preparing for the national exam can be both exciting and formidable. Students will learn to assess historical materials—their relevance to a given interpretive problem, reliability, and importance—and to weigh the evidence and interpretations presented in historical scholarship. This course will develop the skills necessary to arrive at conclusions on the basis of an informed judgment and to present reasons and evidence clearly and persuasively in essay format. Students will conclude the year with a National Exam from the College Board in **May of 2026**. I believe that you will find this experience a rewarding one. The basis of your grade will reflect the choices you have made and the challenges you have accepted.

Reading the Textbook

- Do not skip any part of reading – be sure to focus on broad patterns (the big picture) rather than specific details.
- However, certain details (names, dates, events) are important. When reading, keep the big picture in mind and try to retain details which SUPPORT this big picture. Supporting details are crucial for both multiple choice and essay tests. In other words, it's not enough just to read the chapter summary.
- Take advantage of the book's appendix (it has the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, charts...)

Taking Notes from the Book and Class

- Most of the time, Mr. Hunter's notes just reinforce what you have read or are about to read.
- Don't try to copy every word (develop a form of your own shorthand). Learn how to take Cornell notes.
- Keep notes organized (chronologically).
- When taking notes from book
 - Pay attention to the big picture
 - Pay attention to details which support the big picture.
 - Use a computer, or keep an I-pad available to immediately research people, places, things etc...
 - Don't get overwhelmed (reading and taking notes can take a long time – take breaks, do other homework...)-Don't be surprised if you end up spending two hours some nights just taking notes from the book.
 - Always stick to assigned pages (you can skip ahead but that may cause future confusion).

Class Discussions

- One of the most successful time-tested forms of learning is discussion. Participate in them (don't be shy).
- Ask Mr. Hunter/classmates questions.
- Pay attention...Stay awake!
- Try to find something that interests you in the discussion.

- First listen, understand, then talk. When discussing, try to bring in as much information from the previous night's reading as possible. This will help you to reinforce what you already know or clarify what you misunderstood.
- Don't be afraid to argue (REMEMBER: there are different ways of interpreting history---if you think your point/view is valid, don't hesitate to share your interpretation).

Primary Source Analysis

- Try to get the big picture/point.
- If you have to, rephrase language to understand better (especially for older documents).
- Pay attention to author, audience, date, time period, and, especially, the CONTEXT of the documents (what's going on which could influence the author of the document).
- Learn how to interpret political cartoons and charts of data by looking for symbolism (*Lady Liberty, Uncle Sam, the Bald eagle etc.*) and pay attention to the artist (*Thomas Nash, Young and Minor, David Levine etc.*) as well as the time period. This is a crucial skill for the AP Exam (DBQ).
- With charts, look for trends and patterns...don't get bogged down in every single number.

Essay Writing

DBQ

- Read the question -- that is, the prompt -- three times. Remember that in this instance "AP" stands for "address prompt."
- Identify the task. State in your own words what you are being asked to write.
- Circle or underline the main words, especially words of direction, such as "analyze," "explain," "compare and contrast," "evaluate," and "to what extent."
- Briefly list the main events of the historical time period addressed. Use the acronym **HIPPO** to help you categorize the *Historical Context, Intended Audience, Point of View, Purpose, and Outside Information*.
- Read each document, noting the source or the title. Briefly write the main point of each document. If the prompt requires you to take one position or another, group the documents on the basis of those positions.
- Use the source or the title when referring to the information in the document. Do NOT use the word "document" in the narrative of your essay. (Writing "Document A says," "Document B says," and so on results in a laundry list of documents instead of an essay.) You may use the word "document" in parentheses as a reference to a specific document at the end of the information you have included from that document. These notes help you organize your use of the documents throughout your essay. Essential note to remember: Students write the essay; documents don't write the essay.
- DO NOT QUOTE DOCUMENTS
 - Use 4 out of 7 documents (more for your HIPPO)
 - Organize your essay according to the thesis.
 - 50% of information should come from your brain (outside info); 50% of information should come from the documents.
 - Broad statements followed by specific examples (half of which should come from the documents).

FRQ

- Same as DBQ except without documents.
- For both essays, don't "sit on the fence," take a stand (whichever stand you have the most support for). This is why it's so important to do a "brain dump/storm." By spending time jotting down what you know, you are able to pick the side which you know you have the most support for.
- Talk about all aspects equally – don't spend too much time on one part and neglect another part.
- Don't hesitate to form new paragraphs. Whenever discussing a new topic, form a new paragraph. Monster paragraphs are generally frowned upon.
- Don't spend too much time on the intro/conclusion.
- Pace yourself.

Short Answers (SAQs)

- Do not write a short essay, a paragraph OR a thesis statement.
- To receive full credit for responses, students must fully answer the question using their own words.
- Provide Specific Examples: HOW and WHY?
- No introductions are needed, as space and time are limited and these are not essays. Nor is a thesis required or terribly helpful. Students should dive right in and start directly answering the question.
- Complete sentences are required. Sentence fragments or bullet points will not be scored.
- With limited time and space, it is better to go into depth and explain ONE example rather than superficially list multiple.
- Students need to be careful to leave themselves enough room to address all three parts on the 23-line page. Students are NOT permitted to write onto a second page or even outside the boxed area. Anything written outside the box will not be scored.
- Students should watch for categories of analysis (political, economic, cultural, social, intellectual). Often students give examples that do not match the category they are being asked to identify.
- Students should assume the reader has no background knowledge and fully explain their examples and evidence.

Multiple Choice

- Pace yourself.
- Eliminate answers – guess if you can eliminate all but 2.
- Answer all you know – come back to harder ones (don't get bogged down).
- Use answer choices to your advantage. Oftentimes, the questions answer themselves.
- Consider the time period when eliminating answers.

APUSH Test Review Tactics

- There are two categories of review---both of which are EQUALLY IMPORTANT: review of actual material, and review of test-taking tactics/strategies. Be sure to devote time to both aspects of review.
- Don't re-read the book.
- Look over notes and chapter charts. Usually reading notes are the most helpful (not in-class notes).
- Take many practice exams.

- Take advantage of online resources. APUSH is, fortunately, one of the oldest APs, so there are A LOT of resources out there.
- Review all time periods, especially ones you can't remember. Usually the early and late 19th century give students the most trouble. And, while it's important to review colonial America, don't spend too much time on it...most of the AP test covers 1750-1900.
- Use a REA book. Although be forewarned: the REA book is not always thorough enough; so refer back to your notes (and even book) to glance over important/supporting details.
- Start early and pace yourself (make a review plan/schedule). A good time to start is usually after spring break and no later than two weeks before the exam.
- Keep the big picture in mind during review, but also try to retain important details (support for essays).

The AP Exam

- Don't study the night before.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Keep things in perspective (it's OK to get something less than your goal, it's not the end of the world).
- Hydrate, but not too much.
- Bring a snack.
- DON'T FREAK OUT – stay calm and focused. Again, it's not the end of the world if the test goes worse than you expected. Good, hard-working students like you often lose sight of that fact.

Mr. Hunter's TOP TEN LIST

- Supreme Court Cases
- Changes in foreign policy (isolationism to intervention to global power)
- The social, political, and economic impact of major wars in US history – Revolutionary, Civil, WWI, WWII, Vietnam
- Cultural changes (how culture reflects US society)
- Reform movements (1830s, late 19th century, Progressive Era, 1960s)
- Political parties and evolution of American politics.
- Constitution vs. Articles of Confederation
- Watershed dates (1763, 1776, 1812, 1828, 1835, 1860, 1877, 1898, 1917, 1929, 1944, 1968...)
- Major presidents (Lincoln, TR, FDR, LBJ, Washington, Jefferson, Jackson) and their impact on American politics and society (for example- Jacksonian Democracy, Jeffersonian Democracy, Great Society, New Deal, Progressive reform)
- Changes in economy (panics, depressions, booms, industrialization, commercialism, laissez-faire, government regulation)