

Period 9: 1980–PRESENT

As the United States transitioned to a new century filled with challenges and possibilities, it experienced renewed ideological and cultural debates, sought to redefine its foreign policy, and adapted to economic globalization and revolutionary changes in science and technology.

TEACHER-SELECTED
 examples of individuals,
 groups, and movements to
 investigate the Key Concept

TEACHER-SELECTED
 primary and secondary sources
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 Key Concept in depth

Focus of AP
 Exam questions:

Key Concept 9.1: A new conservatism grew to prominence in U.S. culture and politics, defending traditional social values and rejecting liberal views about the role of government.

Thematic Learning Objectives

POL-3: Explain how activist groups and reform movements, such as antebellum reformers, civil rights activists, and social conservatives, have caused changes to state institutions and U.S. society

- I. Reduced public faith in the government's ability to solve social and economic problems, the growth of religious fundamentalism, and the dissemination of neoconservative thought all combined to invigorate conservatism.
 - A) Public confidence and trust in government declined in the 1970s in the wake of economic challenges, political scandals, foreign policy "failures," and a sense of social and moral decay.
 - B) The rapid and substantial growth of evangelical and fundamentalist Christian churches and organizations, as well as increased political participation by some of those groups, encouraged significant opposition to liberal social and political trends.

Key Concept
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II. Conservatives achieved some of their political and policy goals, but their success was limited by the enduring popularity and institutional strength of some government programs and public support for cultural trends of recent decades.

A) Conservatives enjoyed significant victories related to taxation and deregulation of many industries, but many conservative efforts to advance moral ideals through politics met inertia and opposition.

B) Although Republicans continued to denounce “big government,” the size and scope of the federal government continued to grow after 1980, as many programs remained popular with voters and difficult to reform or eliminate.

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Focus of AP Exam questions:

Thematic Learning Objectives

WXT-8: Explain how and why the role of the federal government in regulating economic life and the environment has changed since the end of the 19th century

POL-4: Analyze how and why the New Deal, the Great Society, and the modern conservative movement all sought to change the federal government’s role in U.S. political, social, and economic life

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Focus of AP
Exam questions:

Key Concept 9.2: The end of the Cold War and new challenges to U.S. leadership in the world forced the nation to redefine its foreign policy and global role.

Thematic Learning Objectives

WOR-7: Analyze the goals of U.S. policymakers in major international conflicts, such as the Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II, and the Cold War, and explain how U.S. involvement in these conflicts has altered the U.S. role in world affairs

WOR-8: Explain how U.S. military and economic involvement in the developing world and issues such as terrorism and economic globalization have changed U.S. foreign policy goals since the middle of the 20th century

- I. The Reagan administration pursued a reinvigorated anti-Communist and interventionist foreign policy that set the tone for later administrations.
 - A) President Ronald Reagan, who initially rejected détente with increased defense spending, military action, and bellicose rhetoric, later developed a friendly relationship with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, leading to significant arms reductions by both countries.

- B) The end of the Cold War led to new diplomatic relationships but also new U.S. military and peacekeeping interventions, as well as debates over the nature and extent of American power in the world.

Key Concept

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II. Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, U.S. foreign policy and military involvement focused on a war on terrorism, which also generated debates about domestic security and civil rights.

A) In the wake of attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, U.S. decision-makers launched foreign policy and military efforts against terrorism and lengthy, controversial conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

B) The war on terrorism sought to improve security within the United States but also raised questions about the protection of civil liberties and human rights.

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Focus of AP Exam questions:

Thematic Learning Objectives

POL-7: Analyze how debates over civil rights and civil liberties have influenced political life from the early 20th century through the early 21st century

WOR-7: Analyze the goals of U.S. policymakers in major international conflicts, such as the Spanish-American War, World Wars I and II, and the Cold War, and explain how U.S. involvement in these conflicts has altered the U.S. role in world affairs

WOR-8: Explain how U.S. military and economic involvement in the developing world and issues such as terrorism and economic globalization have changed U.S. foreign policy goals since the middle of the 20th century

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Exam questions:

Key Concept 9.3: Moving into the 21st century, the nation continued to experience challenges stemming from social, economic, and demographic changes.

I. The increasing integration of the U.S. into the world economy was accompanied by economic instability and major policy, social, and environmental challenges.

A) Economic inequality increased after 1980 as U.S. manufacturing jobs were eliminated, union membership declined, and real wages stagnated for the middle class.

B) Policy debates intensified over free trade agreements, the size and scope of the government social safety net, and calls to reform the U.S. financial system.

C) Conflict in the Middle East and concerns about climate change led to debates over U.S. dependence on fossil fuels and the impact of economic consumption on the environment.

D) The spread of computer technology and the Internet into daily life increased access to information and led to new social behaviors and networks.

Thematic Learning Objectives

WXT-3: Explain how changes in transportation, technology, and the integration of the U.S. economy into world markets have influenced U.S. society since the Gilded Age

WXT-7: Compare the beliefs and strategies of movements advocating changes to the U.S. economic system since industrialization, particularly the organized labor, Populist, and Progressive movements

WOR-3: Explain how the growing interconnection of the U.S. with worldwide economic, labor, and migration systems affected U.S. society since the late 19th century

ENV-5: Explain how and why debates about and policies concerning the use of natural resources and the environment more generally have changed since the late 19th century

CUL-7: Explain how and why “modern” cultural values and popular culture have grown since the early 20th century and how they have affected American politics and society

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- II. The U.S. population continued to undergo significant demographic shifts that had profound cultural and political consequences.
- A) After 1980, the political, economic, and cultural influences of the American South and West continued to increase as population shifted to those areas, fueled in part by a surge in migration from regions that had not been heavily represented in earlier migrations, especially Latin America and Asia.

- B) The new migrants affected U.S. culture in many ways and supplied the economy with an important labor force, but they also became the focus of intense political, economic, and cultural debates.

- C) Demographic changes intensified debates about gender roles, family structures, and racial and national identity.

Focus of AP
Exam questions:

Thematic Learning Objectives

ID-6: Analyze how migration patterns to, and migration within, the United States have influenced the growth of racial and ethnic identities and conflicts over ethnic assimilation and distinctiveness

ID-7: Analyze how changes in class identity and gender roles have related to economic, social, and cultural transformations since the late 19th century

PEO-2: Explain how changes in the numbers and sources of international migrants in the 19th and 20th centuries altered the ethnic and social makeup of the U.S. population

PEO-3: Analyze the causes and effects of major internal migration patterns such as urbanization, suburbanization, westward movement, and the Great Migration in the 19th and 20th centuries

PEO-7: Explain how and why debates over immigration to the United States have changed since the turn of the 20th century

Appendix

Historical Thinking Skills

This section presents the historical thinking skills that are meant to be explored by students throughout the AP U.S. History course. Every AP Exam question will require a student to apply one of the historical thinking skills to one of the thematic learning objectives (see Section II). See Section IV for more details about how the mastery of both skills and content will be assessed on the AP Exam.

The AP U.S. History course, along with the AP World History and AP European History courses, seeks to apprentice students to the practice of history by explicitly stressing the development of historical thinking skills while learning about the past. In the section that follows, four types of historical thinking skills are defined for teachers, accompanied by definitions of the specific historical thinking skills that are part of that type.

- ▶ The sections on **chronological reasoning** and **comparison and contextualization** focus on “thinking historically,” or the habits of mind that historians use when they approach the past in a critical way.
- ▶ The sections on **crafting historical arguments from historical evidence** and **historical interpretation and synthesis** focus on describing the skills used by historians when they construct and test historical arguments about the past.

Each of the skills below is defined and then followed by a statement of the proficiency that students are expected to show in this skill on the AP Exam. This is accompanied by discussion of how this skill can be developed in tandem with an exploration of the content of the AP U.S. History course.