

Key Concepts for AP US History

European Colonization 1492-1700

- The rise of nation states in Europe was a factor in stimulating explorations to the New World
- Spain and Portugal initially colonized the Western hemisphere
- The Dutch colonized the Hudson River Valley, the French settled in parts of Canada and the Ohio River Valley, and the English ultimately established a strong foothold on the eastern seaboard
- The Origins of the English colonists varied, as did their social and political systems

Causes of the American Revolution 1650-1774

- Prior to 1763, the British subordinated American capital to British capital
- The British success in the French and Indian War transformed the relationship between Britain and the American colonies
- British policies after 1763 were designed to raise revenue to pay for the cost of the empire
- The American colonists were divided over what course of action to take in response to British policies
- The Americans created a government, the Continental Congress, to address the deteriorating relationship between Britain and the colonies

The American Revolution 1774-1783

- Both the British and the Americans had military, political, and economic advantages and disadvantages in the war
- The Battle of Saratoga was the turning point in the war, for it persuaded the French to give what proved to be significant help to the Americans in the war for independence
- Black Americans played an important role in the war
- The American victory did not fundamentally change the condition or status of blacks or women

Creation of the US Constitution 1781-1791

- The Articles of Confederation were unable to address the economic and political problems facing the new nation
- The Constitution was completed only because delegates to the Constitutional Convention were able to reach a number of major compromises
- Opposition to ratification of the Constitution came from anti-federalists, who feared a strong central government
- Promise of a bill of rights was important to ratification of the Constitution

The New Nation 1789-1800

- Hamilton's economic plan promoted manufacturing and enlarged the role of government
- The Bank of the United States and the tariff were opposed in rural areas and southern states

- There were both differences and similarities between the Hamiltonian and Jeffersonian movements
- The election of Jefferson is referred to as the “Revolution of 1800”
- The Marshall Court defined the role and powers of the judicial branch
- Relations with France and Britain were strained under Adams and Jefferson

US Foreign Affairs from 1812 to the 1850s

- Territorial expansion was an objective of the US government from its inception, as witnessed by the removal of Native Americans and by the Mexican American War
- Various groups and ideologies supported territorial expansion for economic, political and cultural reasons
- Controversial British actions and American policies aggravated relations between the two nations, leading to the War of 1812
- New England and the Federalists strongly opposed the war and floated the idea of secession
- Under the Monroe Doctrine, the US established a policy of hegemony – dominance – in the Western Hemisphere

Jacksonian Democracy and the Age of Reform 1820s-1850s

- Social, economic, and political conditions and attitudes led to the reform spirit in the mid-nineteenth century
- As the Federalist party faded, an “Era of Good Feelings” set in
- The second party system took shape as the National Republicans challenged the Democrats
- Grassroots movements and government reforms attempted to address the social and economic problems confronting the nation
- The intellectual roots of reform shaped perceptions of the individual’s role in society
- This period witnessed important economic and political reforms, but women, blacks, and Native Americans remained subordinated

The American Civil War 1860-1865

- Various tensions within and between regions came together to cause the Civil War
- A fundamental disagreement between Northerners and Southerners about the Constitution contributed to the Civil War
- Slavery became a crisis in the context of western expansion
- Compromise on slavery, dating from the writing of the Constitution, became harder and eventually impossible by 1860

Reconstruction 1863-1877

- Attitudes and economic and political forces influenced the dimensions of Reconstruction
- Lincoln’s and Johnson’s lenient Reconstruction plans clashed with the radical Republicans’ Reconstruction methods and objectives
- The Republican party sought to contain blacks in the South in order to establish the nucleus of their party in that section of the country

- Southern “redeemers” temporarily reinstated the South’s prewar political and social system, leading to the more punitive radical Republican Reconstruction
- Congress ratified three important civil rights amendments – the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments
- Reactionaries regained control of the South, and blacks were relegated to sharecropping and social and political subordination
- A political deal between Southern Democrats and the Republican party ended Reconstruction

The Industrial Era 1876-1900

- The state and federal governments played significant roles in promoting business interests
- This period witnessed the rise of the corporation
- Proponents and opponents of the government in assisting laissez-faire capitalism offered numerous justifications for their positions
- The US economy expanded enormously during the late nineteenth century, easily surpassing European industrial nations
- Representing different objectives and memberships, labor unions formed, and major strikes occurred during the period
- The Supreme Court handed down decisions that for the most part favored business by controlling unions and undoing legislation that would interfere with capital accumulation

Postwar Politics and the Populists 1870s-1896

- Republican presidents dominated the postwar era and tended to support big business
- The Grange, Farmers’ Alliances, and Populists emerged to contest big business’s control over the marketplace
- The Populists were a diverse coalition that sought to confront a wide variety of urban and rural problems
- The Populists and Democratic party fused in the late nineteenth century

US Foreign Affairs from 1860 to 1914

- The clash between US government and Native Americans resulted in atrocities and attempts by the government to create policies to deal with the remaining tribes
- The US created an international empire as a result of its one-sided victory in the Spanish-American War
- Those who supported or opposed US imperialism provided theories and justifications for their views
- The US penetrated Asia, establishing the Open Door policy in China
- Throughout this period, the US intervened in Central and South American internal affairs

The Progressive Era 1900-1920

- The progressive movement was one major phase of liberalism in the twentieth century
- Grassroots and government reformers attempted to address the abuses and deficiencies in American life at the local, state, and federal levels

- Important reforms were enacted by Congress to address abuses in business, the economy, and the environment
- Women and African-Americans organized to improve their condition and status, but despite major economic and political reforms, they continued to experience hard times

World War I 1914-1918

- German violations of American neutrality, strong economic and political ties to Britain, and effective British propaganda helped shape American public opinion about the combatants
- Despite a strong desire on the part of the American public to remain neutral, the US entered the conflict in 1917
- World War I affected American civil liberties as the government suppressed dissent
- The punitive nature of the Treaty of Versailles laid the foundation for resentment in Germany
- Woodrow Wilson's idealism, as articulated in the Fourteen Points, including the establishment of a League of Nations, was challenged at home

Conservatism and Cultural Diversity in the 1920s

- The 1920s were dominated by conservative Republican presidents
- Americans experienced an unprecedented burst of consumer activity as new mass-produced commodities were made available
- Tensions prevailed between rural and urban America
- The decade witnessed a rise in Nativism and racism
- The period was culturally vibrant as new forms of music and art became popular
- The US government persecuted radicals in the red scare

The Great Depression and the New Deal 1929-1941

- A number of major factors caused the Great Depression, among them underconsumption and high protective tariffs
- The extent of the economic collapse for the US and the world was unprecedented
- President Hoover failed to stem the decline of the economy
- Upon becoming president, FDR instituted a vast array of relief, recovery, and reform policies and agencies to address the collapse of the economy
- Several New Deal programs were ruled unconstitutional by the conservative Supreme Court

World War II 1939-1945

- The rise of fascism, militarism, and imperialism were significant developments that ultimately led to WWII when Germany, Italy and Japan embarked on policies of territorial expansion and conquest
- The 1930s Neutrality Acts limited but did not entirely prevent FDR from providing assistance to Great Britain
- Deteriorating relations between Japan and the US ended in war
- The US adopted a discriminatory policy towards Japanese-Americans

- The Holocaust brought unprecedented suffering to millions of European Jews and others the Nazis found objectionable
- The dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan ended the war, but some later questioned whether the attacks were necessary
- The roots of the Cold War lay in the tensions that developed between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies

US Domestic Affairs from 1945 to the 1980s

- In the postwar period, the US economy reconverted from one geared toward the production of military supplies to one that was consumer-oriented
- The postwar years witnesses an enormous expansion of the economy, highlighted by the baby boom, suburbanization, and massive consumer spending
- The civil rights movements helped black Americans, but they were still relegated to a second-class status economically, politically, and socially
- The presidential administrations in the postwar decades expanded the size and scope of government
- Some administrations addressed the demands of labor, whereas others had an adversarial relationship
- Liberalism reshaped social, economic, gender, racial, and political relations
- A conservative backlash evolved in response to the liberal policies of the 1960s
- The Watergate scandal undermined the American people's trust in their political system

US Foreign Affairs from 1945 to the 1980s

- Conflicting US and Soviet postwar objectives played a significant role in creating the tensions between the two superpowers that led to the Cold War
- The US sought to contain the spread of communism in Europe, Asia, South America, and Africa
- The second red scare (McCarthyism) affected the US domestically as the public was led to believe that there were communists seeking to undermine American institutions
- The US succeeded in containing communism in Europe
- The US was unable to contain the spread of communism to China but did so in South Korea
- The Vietnam War seriously divided the American people and showed the limitations of the containment policy
- The collapse of the Soviet Union transformed international affairs