Essential Questions from APUSH Framework

PERIOD 1: 1491–1607 (5%)

On a North American continent controlled by American Indians, contact among the peoples of Europe, the Americas, and West Africa created a new world.

Key Concept 1.1 Before the arrival of Europeans, native populations in North America developed a wide variety of social, political, and economic structures based in part on interactions with the environment and each other.

I. [Native populations] developed quite different and increasingly complex societies by adapting to and transforming their diverse environments.

Key Concept 1.2: European overseas expansion resulted in the Columbian Exchange, a series of interactions and adaptations among societies across the Atlantic.

I. The arrival of Europeans in the Western Hemisphere in the 15th and 16th centuries triggered extensive demographic and social changes on both sides of the Atlantic.

A. Spanish and Portuguese exploration and conquest of the Americas led to widespread deadly epidemics, the emergence of racially mixed populations, and a caste system defined by an intermixture among Spanish settlers, Africans, and Native Americans.

B. Spanish and Portuguese traders reached West Africa and partnered with some African groups to exploit local resources and recruit slave labor for the Americas.

C. The introduction of new crops and livestock by the Spanish had far-reaching effects on native settlement patterns, as well as on economic, social, and political development in the Western Hemisphere.

D. In the economies of the Spanish colonies, Indian labor, used in the encomienda system to support plantation-based agriculture and extract precious metals and other resources, was gradually replaced by African slavery.

Key Concept 1.3: Contacts among American Indians, Africans, and Europeans challenged the worldviews of each group.

A. With little experience dealing with people who were different from themselves, Spanish and Portuguese explorers poorly understood the native peoples they encountered in the Americas, leading to debates over how American Indians should be treated and how “civilized” these groups were compared to European standards.

B. Many Europeans developed a belief in white superiority to justify their subjugation of Africans and American Indians, using several different rationales.

II. Native peoples and Africans in the Americas strove to maintain their political and cultural autonomy in the face of European challenges to their independence and core beliefs.

PERIOD 2: 1607–1754 (10%)

Europeans and American Indians maneuvered and fought for dominance, control, and security in North America, and distinctive colonial and native societies emerged.

Key Concept 2.1: Differences in imperial goals, cultures, and the North American environments that different empires confronted led Europeans to develop diverse patterns of colonization [varied models of colonization].

I. Seventeenth-century Spanish, French, Dutch, and British colonizers embraced different social and economic goals, cultural assumptions, and folkways, resulting in varied models of colonization.

C. Unlike their European competitors, the English eventually sought to establish colonies based on agriculture, sending relatively large numbers of men and women to acquire land and populate their settlements, while having relatively hostile relationships with American Indians.
II. The British–American system of slavery developed out of the economic, demographic, and geographic characteristics of the British-controlled regions of the New World.

A. Unlike Spanish, French, and Dutch colonies, which accepted intermarriage and cross-racial sexual unions with native peoples (and, in Spain’s case, with enslaved Africans), English colonies attracted both males and females who rarely intermarried with either native peoples or Africans, leading to the development of a rigid racial hierarchy.

B. The abundance of land, a shortage of indentured servants, the lack of an effective means to enslave native peoples, and the growing European demand for colonial goods led to the emergence of the Atlantic slave trade.

C. Reinforced by a strong belief in British racial and cultural superiority, the British system enslaved black people in perpetuity, altered African gender and kinship relationships in the colonies, and was one factor that led the British colonists into violent confrontations with native peoples.

D. Africans developed both overt and covert means to resist the dehumanizing aspects of slavery.

III. Along with other factors, environmental and geographical variations, including climate and natural resources, contributed to regional differences in what would become the British colonies.

A. The New England colonies, founded primarily by Puritans seeking to establish a community of like-minded religious believers, developed a close-knit, homogeneous society and — aided by favorable environmental conditions — a thriving mixed economy of agriculture and commerce.

B. The demographically, religiously, and ethnically diverse middle colonies supported a flourishing export economy based on cereal crops, while the Chesapeake colonies and North Carolina relied on the cultivation of tobacco, a labor-intensive product based on white indentured servants and African chattel.

C. The colonies along the southernmost Atlantic coast and the British islands in the West Indies took advantage of long growing seasons by using slave labor to develop economies based on staple crops; in some cases, enslaved Africans constituted the majority of the population.

WXT-4 Explain the development of labor systems such as slavery, indentured servitude, free labor, and sharecropping from the colonial period through the end of the 18th century.

Key Concept 2.2: European colonization efforts in North America stimulated intercultural contact and intensified conflict between the various groups of colonizers and native peoples.

B. Spanish colonizing efforts in North America, particularly after the Pueblo Revolt, saw an accommodation with some aspects of American Indian culture; by contrast, conflict with American Indians tended to reinforce English colonists’ worldviews on land and gender roles.

Key Concept 2.3: The increasing political, economic, and cultural exchanges within the “Atlantic World” had a profound impact on the development of colonial societies in North America.

C. The presence of slavery and the impact of colonial wars stimulated the growth of ideas on race in this Atlantic system, leading to the emergence of racial stereotyping and the development of strict racial categories among British colonists, which contrasted with Spanish and French acceptance of racial gradations.

II. Britain’s desire to maintain a viable North American empire in the face of growing internal challenges and external competition inspired efforts to strengthen its imperial control, stimulating increasing resistance from colonists who had grown accustomed to a large measure of autonomy.

A. As regional distinctiveness among the British colonies diminished over time, they developed largely similar patterns of culture, laws, institutions, and governance within the context of the British imperial system.

PERIOD 3: 1754–1800 (12%)

British imperial attempts to reassert control over its colonies and the colonial reaction to these attempts produced a new American republic, along with struggles over the new nation’s social, political, and economic identity.

Key Concept 3.1: Britain’s victory over France in the imperial struggle for North America led to new conflicts among the British government, the North American colonists, and American Indians, culminating in the creation of a new nation, the United States.

I. Throughout the second half of the 18th century, various American Indian groups repeatedly evaluated and adjusted their alliances with Europeans, other tribes, and the new United States government.
II. During and after the imperial struggles of the mid-18th century, new pressures began to unite the British colonies against perceived and real constraints on their economic activities and political rights, sparking a colonial independence movement and war with Britain.

A. Great Britain’s massive debt from the Seven Years’ War resulted in renewed efforts to consolidate imperial control over North American markets, taxes, and political institutions — actions that were supported by some colonists but resisted by others.

B. The resulting independence movement was fueled by established colonial elites, as well as by grassroots movements that included newly mobilized laborers, artisans, and women, and rested on arguments over the rights of British subjects, the rights of the individual, and the ideas of the Enlightenment.

III. In response to domestic and international tensions, the new United States debated and formulated foreign policy initiatives and asserted an international presence.

A. The French Revolution’s spread throughout Europe and beyond helped fuel Americans’ debate not only about the nature of the United States’s domestic order, but also about its proper role in the world.

B. Although George Washington’s Farewell Address warned about the dangers of divisive political parties and permanent foreign alliances, European conflict and tensions with Britain and France fueled increasingly bitter partisan debates throughout the 1790s.

Key Concept 3.2: In the late 18th century, new experiments with democratic ideas and republican forms of government, as well as other new religious, economic, and cultural ideas, challenged traditional imperial systems across the Atlantic World.

I. During the 18th century, new ideas about politics and society led to debates about religion and government, and ultimately inspired experiments with new governmental structures.

A. Protestant evangelical religious fervor strengthened many British colonists’ understandings of themselves as a chosen people blessed with liberty, while Enlightenment philosophers and ideas inspired many American political thinkers to emphasize individual talent over hereditary privilege.

B. The colonists’ belief in the superiority of republican self-government based on the natural rights of the people found its clearest American expression in Thomas Paine’s Common Sense and in the Declaration of Independence.

C. Many new state constitutions and the national Articles of Confederation, reflecting republican fears of both centralized power and excessive popular influence, placed power in the hands of the legislative branch and maintained property qualifications for voting and citizenship.

II. After experiencing the limitations of the Articles of Confederation, American political leaders wrote a new Constitution based on the principles of federalism and separation of powers, crafted a Bill of Rights, and continued their debates about the proper balance between liberty and order.

D. Continued debates about such issues as the relationship between the national government and the states, economic policy, and the conduct of foreign affairs led to the creation of political parties.

III. While the new governments continued to limit rights to some groups, ideas promoting self-government and personal liberty reverberated around the world.

A. Increased awareness of the inequalities in society motivated some individuals and groups to call for the abolition of slavery and greater political democracy in the new state and national governments.

B. He constitutional framers postponed a solution to the problems of slavery and the slave trade, setting the stage for recurring conflicts over these issues in later years.

II. Policies...that encouraged western migration and the orderly incorporation of new territories into the nation both extended republican institutions and intensified conflicts among American Indians and Europeans.

A. As settlers moved westward during the 1780s, Congress enacted the Northwest Ordinance for admitting new states and sought to promote public education, the protection of private property, and the restriction of slavery in the Northwest Territory.
B. The Constitution’s failure to precisely define the relationship between American Indian tribes and the national government led to problems regarding treaties and Indian legal claims relating to the seizure of Indian lands.

III. New voices for national identity challenged tendencies to cling to regional identities, contributing to the emergence of distinctly American cultural expressions.

A. [V]arying regionally based positions on economic, political, social, and foreign policy issues promoted the development of political parties.

B. The expansion of slavery in the lower South and adjacent western lands, and its gradual disappearance elsewhere, began to create distinctive regional attitudes toward the institution.

C. Enlightenment ideas and women’s experiences in the movement for independence promoted an ideal of “republican motherhood,” which called on white women to maintain and teach republican values within the family and granted women a new importance in American political culture.

PERIOD 4: 1800–1848 (10%)

The new republic struggled to define and extend democratic ideals in the face of rapid economic, territorial, and demographic changes.

Key Concept 4.1: The United States developed the world’s first modern mass democracy and celebrated a new national culture, while Americans sought to define the nation’s democratic ideals and to reform its institutions to match them.

I. The nation’s transformation to a more participatory democracy was accompanied by continued debates over federal power, the relationship between the federal government and the states, the authority of different branches of the federal government, and the rights and responsibilities of individual citizens.

A. As various constituencies and interest groups coalesced and defined their agendas, various political parties, most significantly the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans in the 1790s and the Democrats and Whigs in the 1830s, were created or transformed to reflect and/or promote those agendas.

B. Supreme Court decisions sought to assert federal power over state laws and the primacy of the judiciary in determining the meaning of the Constitution.

C. With the acceleration of a national and international market economy, Americans debated the scope of government’s role in the economy, while diverging economic systems meant that regional political and economic loyalties often continued to overshadow national concerns.

D. Many white Americans in the South asserted their regional identity through pride in the institution of slavery, insisting that the federal government should defend that institution.

II. ...[L]arger numbers of Americans began struggling with how to match democratic political ideals to political institutions and social realities.

A. The Second Great Awakening, liberal social ideas from abroad, and Romantic beliefs in human perfectibility fostered the rise of voluntary organizations to promote religious and secular reforms, including abolition and women’s rights.

B. Despite the outlawing of the international slave trade, the rise in the number of free African Americans in both the North and the South, and widespread discussion of various emancipation plans, the U.S. and many state governments continued to restrict African Americans’ citizenship possibilities.

III. While Americans celebrated their nation’s progress toward a unified new national culture..., various groups of the nation’s inhabitants developed distinctive cultures of their own.

C. Enslaved and free African Americans, isolated at the bottom of the social hierarchy, created communities and strategies to protect their dignity and their family structures, even as some launched abolitionist and reform movements aimed at changing their status.

II. Regional economic specialization, especially the demands of cultivating southern cotton, shaped settlement patterns and the national and international economy.
A. Southern cotton furnished the raw material for manufacturing in the Northeast, while the growth in the cotton trade promoted the development of national economic ties and fueled the internal slave trade.

B. Despite some governmental and private efforts to create a unified national economy, most notably the American System, the shift to market production linked the North and the Midwest more closely than either was linked to the South.

III. The economic changes caused by the market revolution had significant effects on migration patterns, gender and family relations, and the distribution of political power.

C. The South remained politically, culturally, and ideologically distinct from the other sections, while continuing to rely on its exports to Europe for economic growth.

D. The market revolution helped to widen a gap between rich and poor... and caused an increasing separation between home and workplace, which led to dramatic transformations in gender and in family roles and expectations.

E. Regional interests continued to trump national concerns as the basis for many political leaders’ positions on economic issues including slavery, the national bank, tariffs, and internal improvements.

I. Struggling to create an independent global presence, U.S. policymakers sought to dominate the North American continent and to promote its foreign trade.

A. Following the Louisiana Purchase, the drive to acquire, survey, and open up new lands and markets led Americans into numerous economic, diplomatic, and military initiatives in the Western Hemisphere and Asia.

B. The U.S. sought dominance over the North American continent through a variety of means, including military actions, judicial decisions, and diplomatic efforts.

III. The American acquisition of lands in the West gave rise to a contest over the extension of slavery into the western territories as well as a series of attempts at national compromise.

A. The 1820 Missouri Compromise created a truce over the issue of slavery that gradually broke down as confrontations over slavery became increasingly bitter.

B. As overcultivation depleted arable land in the Southeast, slaveholders relocated their agricultural enterprises to the new Southwest, increasing sectional tensions over the institution of slavery and sparking a broadscale debate about how to set national goals, priorities, and strategies.

PERIOD 5: 1844–1877 (13%)

As the nation expanded and its population grew, regional tensions, especially over slavery, led to a Civil War — the course and aftermath of which transformed American society.

ID-2 Assess the impact of Manifest Destiny, territorial expansion, the Civil War, and industrialization on popular beliefs about progress and the national destiny of the U.S. in the 19th century.

Key Concept 5.1: The United States became more connected with the world as it pursued an expansionist foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere and emerged as the destination for many migrants from other countries.

I. Enthusiasm for U.S. territorial expansion, fueled by economic and national security interests and supported by claims of U.S. racial and cultural superiority, resulted in war, the opening of new markets, acquisition of new territory, and increased ideological conflicts.

A. The idea of Manifest Destiny, which asserted U.S. power in the Western Hemisphere and supported U.S. expansion westward, was built on a belief in white racial superiority and a sense of American cultural superiority, and helped to shape the era’s political debates.

B. The acquisition of new territory in the West and the U.S. victory in the Mexican-American War were accompanied by a heated controversy over allowing or forbidding slavery in newly acquired territories.
II. Westward expansion, migration to and within the United States, and the end of slavery reshaped North American boundaries and caused conflicts over American cultural identities, citizenship, and the question of extending and protecting rights for various groups of U.S. inhabitants.

    A. Substantial numbers of new international migrants — who often lived in ethnic communities and retained their religion, language, and customs — entered the country prior to the Civil War, giving rise to a major, often violent nativist movement that was strongly anti-Catholic and aimed at limiting immigrants’ cultural influence and political and economic power.

    B. Asian, African American, and white peoples sought new economic opportunities or religious refuge in the West, efforts that were boosted during and after the Civil War with the passage of new legislation promoting national economic development.

Key Concept 5.2: Intensified by expansion and deepening regional divisions, debates over slavery and other economic, cultural, and political issues led the nation into Civil War.

I. The institution of slavery and its attendant ideological debates, along with regional economic and demographic changes, territorial expansion in the 1840s and 1850s, and cultural differences between the North and the South, all intensified sectionalism.

    B. Abolitionists, although a minority in the North, mounted a highly visible campaign against slavery, adopting strategies of resistance ranging from fierce arguments against the institution and assistance in helping slaves escape to willingness to use violence to achieve their goals.

    C. States’ rights, nullification, and racist stereotyping provided the foundation for the Southern defense of slavery as a positive good.

II. Repeated attempts at political compromise failed to calm tensions over slavery and often made sectional tensions worse, breaking down the trust between sectional leaders and culminating in the bitter election of 1860, followed by the secession of southern states.

    A. National leaders made a variety of proposals to resolve the issue of slavery in the territories, including the Compromise of 1850, the Kansas–Nebraska Act, and the Dred Scott decision, but these ultimately failed to reduce sectional conflict.

    B. The second party system ended when the issues of slavery and anti-immigrant nativism weakened loyalties to the two major parties and fostered the emergence of sectional parties, most notably the Republican Party in the North and the Midwest.

    C. Lincoln’s election on a free soil platform in the election of 1860 led various Southern leaders to conclude that their states must secede from the Union, precipitating Civil War.

Key Concept 5.3: The Union victory in the Civil War and the contested Reconstruction of the South settled the issues of slavery and secession, but left unresolved many questions about the power of the federal government and citizenship rights.

    B. Lincoln’s decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation changed the purpose of the war, enabling many African Americans to fight in the Union Army, and helping prevent the Confederacy from gaining full diplomatic support from European powers.

II. The Civil War and Reconstruction altered power relationships between the states and the federal government and among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, ending slavery and the notion of a divisible union, but leaving unresolved questions of relative power and largely unchanged social and economic patterns.

    A. The 13th Amendment abolished slavery, bringing about the war’s most dramatic social and economic change, but the exploitative and soil-intensive sharecropping system endured for several generations.

    B. Efforts by radical and moderate Republicans to reconstruct the defeated South changed the balance of power between Congress and the presidency and yielded some short-term successes, reuniting the union, opening up political opportunities and other leadership roles to former slaves, and temporarily rearranging the relationships between white and black people in the South.
III. The constitutional changes of the Reconstruction period embodied a Northern idea of American identity and national purpose and led to conflicts over new definitions of citizenship, particularly regarding the rights of African Americans, women, and other minorities.

   A. Although citizenship, equal protection of the laws, and voting rights were granted to African Americans in the 14th and 15th Amendments, these rights were progressively stripped away through segregation, violence, Supreme Court decisions, and local political tactics.

   B. The women’s rights movement was both emboldened and divided over the 14th and 15th Amendments to the Constitution.

   C. The Civil War Amendments established judicial principles that were stalled for many decades but eventually became the basis for court decisions upholding civil rights.

PERIOD 6: 1865–1898 (13%)

The transformation of the United States from an agricultural to an increasingly industrialized and urbanized society brought about significant economic, political, diplomatic, social, environmental, and cultural changes.

Key Concept 6.1: The rise of big business in the United States encouraged massive migrations and urbanization, sparked government and popular efforts to reshape the U.S. economy and environment, and renewed debates over U.S. national identity.

I. Large-scale production — accompanied by massive technological change, expanding international communication networks, and pro-growth government policies — fueled the development of a “Gilded Age” marked by an emphasis on consumption, marketing, and business consolidation.

   C. Business leaders consolidated corporations into trusts and holding companies and defended their resulting status and privilege through theories such as Social Darwinism.

II. …[L]eaders of big business and their allies in government [faced significant challenges as they] aimed to create a unified industrialized nation.…

   C. Despite the industrialization of segments of the southern economy, a change promoted by southern leaders who called for a “New South,” agrarian sharecropping, and tenant farming systems continued to dominate.

III. Westward migration, new systems of farming and transportation, and economic instability led to political and popular conflicts.

   C. The growth of corporate power in agriculture and economic instability in the farming sector inspired activists to create the People’s (Populist) Party, which called for political reform and a stronger governmental role in the American economic system.

Key Concept 6.2: The emergence of an industrial culture in the United States led to both greater opportunities for, and restrictions on, immigrants, minorities, and women.

I. International and internal migrations increased both urban and rural populations, but gender, racial, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic inequalities abounded, inspiring some reformers to attempt to address these inequities.

   B. Cities dramatically reflected divided social conditions among classes, races, ethnicities, and cultures, but presented economic opportunities as factories and new businesses proliferated.

   D. In a urban atmosphere where access to power was unequally distributed, political machines provided social services in exchange for political support, settlement houses helped immigrants adapt to the new language and customs, and women’s clubs and self-help groups targeted intellectual development and social and political reform.

II. As transcontinental railroads were completed, bringing more settlers west, U.S. military actions, the destruction of the buffalo, the confinement of American Indians to reservations, and assimilationist policies reduced the number of American Indians and threatened native culture and identity.

   A. Post–Civil War migration to the American West, encouraged by economic opportunities and government policies, caused the federal government to violate treaties with American Indian nations in order to expand the amount of land available to settlers.

Key Concept 6.3: The “Gilded Age” witnessed new cultural and intellectual movements in tandem with political debates over economic and social policies.

I. Gilded Age politics were intimately tied to big business and focused nationally on economic issues — tariffs, currency, corporate expansion, and laissez-faire economic policy — that engendered numerous calls for reform.
A. Corruption in government — especially as it related to big business — energized the public to demand increased popular control and reform of local, state, and national governments, ranging from minor changes to major overhauls of the capitalist system.

B. Increasingly prominent racist and nativist theories, along with Supreme Court decisions such as Plessy v. Ferguson, were used to justify violence, as well as local and national policies of discrimination and segregation.

II. New cultural and intellectual movements both buttressed and challenged the social order of the Gilded Age.

B. A number of critics challenged the dominant corporate ethic in the United States and sometimes capitalism itself, offering alternate visions of the good society through utopianism and the Social Gospel.

C. Challenging their prescribed “place,” women and African American activists articulated alternative visions of political, social, and economic equality.

PERIOD 7: 1890–1945 (17%)

An increasingly pluralistic United States faced profound domestic and global challenges, debated the proper degree of government activism, and sought to define its international role.

Key Concept 7.1: Governmental, political, and social organizations struggled to address the effects of large-scale industrialization, economic uncertainty, and related social changes such as urbanization and mass migration.

I. The continued growth and consolidation of large corporations transformed American society and the nation’s economy, promoting urbanization and economic growth, even as business cycle fluctuations became increasingly severe.

A. Large corporations came to dominate the U.S. economy as it increasingly focused on the production of consumer goods, driven by new technologies and manufacturing techniques.

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.

II. Progressive reformers responded to economic instability, social inequality, and political corruption by calling for government intervention in the economy, expanded democracy, greater social justice, and conservation of natural resources.

A. In the late 1890s and the early years of the 20th century, journalists and Progressive reformers — largely urban and middle class, and often female — worked to reform existing social and political institutions at the local, state, and federal levels by creating new organizations aimed at addressing social problems associated with an industrial society.

B. Progressives promoted federal legislation to regulate abuses of the economy and the environment, and many sought to expand democracy.

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.

III. National, state, and local reformers responded to economic upheavals, laissez-faire capitalism, and the Great Depression by transforming the U.S. into a limited welfare state.

A. The liberalism of President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal drew on earlier progressive ideas and represented a multifaceted approach to both the causes and effects of the Great Depression, using government power to provide relief to the poor, stimulate recovery, and reform the American economy.

C. Although the New Deal did not completely overcome the Depression, it left a legacy of reforms and agencies that endeavored to make society and individuals more secure, and it helped foster a long-term political realignment in which many ethnic groups, African Americans, and working-class communities identified with the Democratic Party.

Key Concept 7.2: A revolution in communications and transportation technology helped to create a new mass culture and spread “modern” values and ideas, even as cultural conflicts between groups increased under the pressure of migration, world wars, and economic distress.

B. Technological change, modernization, and changing demographics led to increased political and cultural conflict on several fronts: tradition versus innovation, urban versus rural, fundamentalist Christianity versus scientific modernism, management versus labor, native-born versus new immigrants, white versus black, and idealism versus disillusionment.
C. The rise of an urban, industrial society encouraged the development of a variety of cultural expressions for migrant, regional, and African American artists (expressed most notably in the Harlem Renaissance movement); it also contributed to national culture by making shared experiences more possible through art, cinema, and the mass media.

II. The global ramifications of World War I and wartime patriotism and xenophobia, combined with social tensions created by increased international migration, resulted in legislation restricting immigration from Asia and from southern and eastern Europe.

B. As labor strikes and racial strife disrupted society, the immediate postwar period witnessed the first “Red Scare,” which legitimized attacks on radicals and immigrants.

C. Several acts of Congress established highly restrictive immigration quotas, while national policies continued to permit unrestricted immigration from nations in the Western Hemisphere, especially Mexico, in order to guarantee an inexpensive supply of labor.

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.

III. Economic dislocations, social pressures, and the economic growth spurred by World Wars I and II led to a greater degree of migration within the United States, as well as migration to the United States from elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere.

A. Although most African Americans remained in the South despite legalized segregation and racial violence, some began a “Great Migration” out of the South to pursue new economic opportunities offered by World War I.

C. Many Mexicans, drawn to the U.S. by economic opportunities, faced ambivalent government policies in the 1930s and 1940s.

Key Concept 7.3: Global conflicts over resources, territories, and ideologies renewed debates over the nation’s values and its role in the world, while simultaneously propelling the United States into a dominant international military, political, cultural, and economic position.

I. Many Americans began to advocate overseas expansionism in the late 19th century, leading to new territorial ambitions and acquisitions in the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific.

A. The perception in the 1890s that the western frontier was “closed,” economic motives, competition with other European imperialist ventures of the time, and racial theories all furthered arguments that Americans were destined to expand their culture and norms to others, especially the nonwhite nations of the globe.

B. The American victory in the Spanish-American War led to the U.S. acquisition of island territories, an expanded economic and military presence in the Caribbean and Latin America, engagement in a protracted insurrection in the Philippines, and increased involvement in Asia.

C. Questions about America’s role in the world generated considerable debate, prompting the development of a wide variety of views and arguments between imperialists and anti-imperialists and, later, interventionists and isolationists.

ID-3 Analyze how U.S. involvement in international crises such as the Spanish American War, World Wars I and II, the Great Depression, and the Cold War influenced public debates about American national identity in the 20th 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.

II. World War I and its aftermath intensified debates about the nation’s role in the world and how best to achieve national security and pursue American interests.

A. After initial neutrality in World War I the nation entered the conflict, departing from the U.S. foreign policy tradition of noninvolvement in European affairs in response to Woodrow Wilson’s call for the defense of humanitarian and democratic principles.

B. Although the American Expeditionary Force played a relatively limited role in the war, Wilson was heavily involved in postwar negotiations, resulting in the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations, both of which generated substantial debate within the United States.

C. In the years following World War I, the United States pursued a unilateral foreign policy that used international investment, peace treaties, and select military intervention to promote a vision of international order, even while maintaining U.S. isolationism, which continued to the late 1930s.
III. The involvement of the United States in World War II, while opposed by most Americans prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, vaulted the United States into global political and military prominence, and transformed both American society and the relationship between the United States and the rest of the world.

A. The mass mobilization of American society to supply troops for the war effort and a workforce on the home front ended the Great Depression and provided opportunities for women and minorities to improve their socio-economic positions.

B. Wartime experiences, such as the internment of Japanese Americans, challenges to civil liberties, debates over race and segregation, and the decision to drop the atomic bomb raised questions about American values.

D. The dominant American role in the Allied victory and postwar peace settlements, combined with the war-ravaged condition of Asia and Europe, allowed the United States to emerge from the war as the most powerful nation on earth.

PERIOD 8: 1945–1980 (15%)

After World War II, the United States grappled with prosperity and unfamiliar international responsibilities, while struggling to live up to its ideals.

Key Concept 8.1: The United States responded to an uncertain and unstable postwar world by asserting and attempting to defend a position of global leadership, with far-reaching domestic and international consequences.

I. After World War II, the United States sought to stem the growth of Communist military power and ideological influence, create a stable global economy, and build an international security system.

B. The United States sought to “contain” Soviet-dominated communism through a variety of measures, including military engagements in Korea and Vietnam.

III. Cold War policies led to continued public debates over the power of the federal government, acceptable means for pursuing international and domestic goals, and the proper balance between liberty and order.

A. Americans debated policies and methods designed to root out Communists within the United States even as both parties tended to support the broader Cold War strategy of containing communism.

B. Although the Korean conflict produced some minor domestic opposition, the Vietnam War saw the rise of sizable, passionate, and sometimes violent antiwar protests that became more numerous as the war escalated.

C. Americans debated the merits of a large nuclear arsenal, the “military-industrial complex,” and the appropriate power of the executive branch in conducting foreign and military policy.

Key Concept 8.2: Liberalism, based on anticommunism abroad and a firm belief in the efficacy of governmental and especially federal power to achieve social goals at home, reached its apex in the mid-1960s and generated a variety of political and cultural responses.

I. Seeking to fulfill Reconstruction-era promises, civil rights activists and political leaders achieved some legal and political successes in ending segregation, although progress toward equality was slow and halting.

A. Following World War II, civil rights activists utilized a variety of strategies — legal challenges, direct action, and nonviolent protest tactics — to combat racial discrimination.

B. Decision-makers in each of the three branches of the federal government used measures including desegregation of the armed services, Brown v. Board of Education, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to promote greater racial justice.

C. Continuing white resistance slowed efforts at desegregation, sparking a series of social and political crises across the nation, while tensions among civil rights activists over tactical and philosophical issues increased after 1965.
II. Stirred by a growing awareness of inequalities in American society and by the African American civil rights movement, activists also addressed issues of identity and social justice, such as gender/sexuality and ethnicity [Latinos, American Indians, and Asian Americans].

ID-8 Explain how civil rights activism in the 20th century affected the growth of African American and other identity-based political and social movements

III. As many liberal principles came to dominate postwar politics and court decisions, liberalism came under attack from the left as well as from resurgent conservative movements.

A. Liberalism reached its zenith with Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society efforts to use federal power to end racial discrimination, eliminate poverty, and address other social issues while attacking communism abroad.

B. Liberal ideals were realized in Supreme Court decisions that expanded democracy and individual freedoms, Great Society social programs and policies, and the power of the federal government, yet these unintentionally helped energize a new conservative movement that mobilized to defend traditional visions of morality and the proper role of state authority.

I. Rapid economic and social changes in American society fostered a sense of optimism in the postwar years as well as underlying concerns about how these changes were affecting American values.

A. A burgeoning private sector, continued federal spending, the baby boom, and technological developments helped spur economic growth, middle-class suburbanization, social mobility, a rapid expansion of higher education, and the rise of the “Sun Belt” as a political and economic force.

B. These economic and social changes, in addition to the anxiety engendered by the Cold War, led to an increasingly homogeneous mass culture, as well as challenges to conformity by artists, intellectuals, and rebellious youth.

II. As federal programs expanded and economic growth reshaped American society, many sought greater access to prosperity even as critics began to question the burgeoning use of natural resources.

A. Internal migrants as well as migrants from around the world sought access to the economic boom and other benefits of the United States, especially after the passage of new immigration laws in 1965.

B. Responding to the abuse of natural resources and the alarming environmental problems, activists and legislators began to call for conservation measures and a fight against pollution.

III. New demographic and social issues led to significant political and moral debates that sharply divided the nation.

A. Although the image of the traditional nuclear family dominated popular perceptions in the postwar era, the family structure of Americans was undergoing profound changes as the number of working women increased and many social attitudes changed.

B. Young people who participated in the counterculture of the 1960s rejected many of the social, economic, and political values of their parents’ generation, initiated a sexual revolution, and introduced greater informality into U.S. culture.

PERIOD 9: 1980–Present (5%)

As the United States transitioned to a new century..., 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.