

# AP US History



## Unit 1

# Summer Assignment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_

Due September 8, 2026

## APUSH Summer Assignment

Welcome to Advanced Placement US History at Smithtown High School! We are excited that you have accepted this challenge and are looking forward to a productive and successful year. AP US History is the equivalent of a freshman-level college survey course taught in high school. Students may earn college credit with a passing score on the College Board AP US History Examination in May 2027. All efforts in this class will be directed toward one end: developing students into critical thinkers, analytical readers, and effective communicators through the medium of United States history.

For many of you, this will be your first Advanced Placement class, and are not accustomed to the pressures and rigors of a class of this nature. Understand, however, what you learn, and the skills you will develop, will help you to grow intellectually.

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This summer, you'll dive into **Unit 1 (1491-1607)**, exploring Native American societies, European exploration, and the early consequences of contact.

For this assignment, you'll be using the AMSCO text as your main reading resource. In addition, you'll rely on Heimler's History videos on YouTube. These videos are outstanding supplements to the text. They break down complex topics into simple, memorable lessons and focus directly on what you need to know for the APUSH exam. Heimler's style is fast-paced, clear, and exam-focused, which makes it a perfect companion to your textbook reading.

**Due date: This assignment will be due September 8, 2026.** If a letter grade is to be earned on it and you submit it late, each day it is late will result in a reduction of that letter grade. There will be a brief discussion of this assignment the week you return to school. Also, anticipate the material contained in this assignment being tested on a future assessment (multiple-choice and/or free-response). The expectation is that you have done the work over the summer and are walking into class with knowledge of Unit 1.

*You will need to **print** this assignment and **hand write** your answers. **Typed assignments will not be accepted.** This assignment is to be done individually. Collaborative efforts, plagiarism or use of AI will result in an F.*

### Reading link

[AMSCO APUSH Textbook](#)

### Heimler's History Video Links:

[Native American Societies](#)

[Labor, Slavery and Caste](#)

[European Exploration](#)

[Interactions Between Europeans, Natives and Africans](#)

[Columbian Exchange](#)

If you have any questions, please ask your teacher in class the week you return to school.

## Topic 1.2: Native American Societies Before European Contact

**Task 1: Annotate the map of North America to show your understanding of the various regional Native American tribes. Use the AMSCO textbook to complete this assignment.**

**The Mississippi Valley has already been completed as an example.**

A. Identify/draw the following regions on the map

1. Eastern Woodlands
2. The Great Lakes
3. The Great Plains & Rockies
4. The Southwest
5. The Pacific Coast

B. For each of the regions above answer the following questions. Your answers should be written **on the map** and correctly associated with each area. You can also draw a picture or two in order to address the questions.

- Identify two tribes who lived in each region
- Briefly describe/draw the resources and environment
- Explain how the native societies adapted and transformed their respective environments.

**Task 2: Answer the questions after map is complete:**

1. What role did maize (corn) cultivation play in shaping Native American societies?

2. How did geography and environment affect the lifestyles of Native Americans in:

The Southwest?

The Great Plains?

The Northeast?

3. What were some major differences between sedentary and nomadic Native American groups?



The Mississippi Valley

- Cahokians + Hopewell Cultures
- Fertile soil, rivers, agriculture (maize cultivation)
- Sedentary, large, complex societies with urban centers (Cahokia), Mound-builders

## Topic 1.3 European Exploration in the Americas

### **Cause #1: European Interest in Asia**

Though Western Europe was isolated from trade with Asia during most of the Middle Ages, the Crusades and books by travelers like Marco Polo kept Europeans interested in Asia. Stories about the riches of China and India, and the limited availability of goods like silk and spices from those areas, fueled European desire for adventure and profit.

1. Why were Europeans interested in Asia? How could this interest in Asia have led to or caused exploration?

### **Cause #2: Ottoman Dominance of Trade Routes**



In the Middle Ages, Europeans had access to spices and other goods from Asia because they could easily trade with the Byzantine Empire, a Christian empire that controlled the city of Constantinople which was a crossroads for trade. In 1453, the Ottoman Empire conquered Constantinople and expanded in the 1500s under the rule of Suleiman the Magnificent. It became increasingly difficult to trade through the Ottoman Empire because of European Crusades that created distrust between the Muslim Ottomans and the Christian Europeans. Italian city-states like Genoa, Milan, Florence, and Venice had a good trading relationship with the Ottomans and became wealthy from what they imported from the Middle East, but other European countries wanted access to the trade as well.

Even after the Ottoman Empire's dominance of the trade routes, Europeans still wanted more goods from Asia, especially spices like pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, ginger, and turmeric. However, by the time the spices travelled from southeast Asia to Europe they were incredibly expensive. To get spices to Europe, Europeans travelled from southeast Asia in caravans along the Silk Roads or on ships along the Indian Ocean Complex to the Middle East where they were then shipped across the Mediterranean Sea to European markets. It was rare for one trader to buy the spices in southeast Asia and take them all the way to Europe. Instead, the spices were bought and sold many times from their origin to their final destination. To make a profit, every merchant that bought the spices from another raised the price, so buying pepper in Malaysia was cheapest, India was a little more expensive, buying it in the Middle East was more expensive still, then the price went up in Constantinople, it was bumped up higher in Venice, and so on and so forth all the way through Europe. Spices in places as far away as Portugal, Spain, or England were so expensive that only the wealthiest Europeans could afford them.



2. What effect did the expansion of the Ottoman Empire have on trade between Western Europe and Asia?

3. How could the expensive cost of spices have motivated Europeans to explore on the seas?

### **Cause #3: Religious Zeal**

Portugal and Spain were the first European countries to send ships out on trading expeditions. Both countries were located on the Iberian Peninsula, the region of Europe that is closest to North Africa, only separated by the Strait of Gibraltar. In the 700s, Muslim forces invaded from North Africa and settled in parts of both Portugal and Spain. For almost 800 years there were battles between Christian (Roman Catholic) forces and Muslims over the land. The Christian monarchs and Popes declared Crusades to rally forces against Muslims. In the 1200s, the momentum swung in favor of the Christian armies and in 1492 the Muslim government that controlled Granada signed a treaty with Ferdinand and Isabella, the King and Queen of Spain, finally ending what the Christians called the *Reconquista*, the reconquering of the Iberian Peninsula from Muslims.

After 800 years of fighting religious wars, the Portuguese and Spanish turned their devotion for the Catholic Church to those they encountered through exploration. Explorers were sponsored (funded) by the Catholic Kings and Queens of their countries. They viewed voyages to the coast of Africa and eventually to the Indian Ocean and the Americas as opportunities to convert people to their faith. They believed that their religion was the only true religion and that it would benefit them and the soon-to-be converts if they spread the lessons of the Bible. Many ships had priests on board for the sailors and to teach the people they encountered about Christianity.

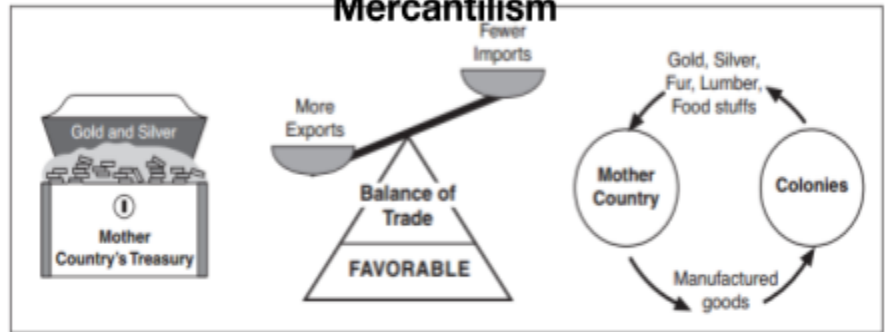
The Crusades pushed Christians to feel it was their duty to spread their religion and convert people to Christianity. This grew into a religious zeal [enthusiasm] to spread Christianity far and wide. One Spanish soldier who helped conquer the Americas wrote that he joined the exploration to “serve God and His Majesty [the King of Spain], to give light to those who were in darkness, and to grow rich, as all men desire to do.” For that soldier and for many Europeans, spreading Christianity was an important reason for going to faraway lands.

4. How could the religious zeal to spread Christianity have led to or caused European exploration?

## Cause #4: Pursuit of National Wealth

At the end of the 15th century, absolute monarchs ruled in almost every country in Europe. The monarchs of Spain, France, Portugal, England, the Holy Roman Empire, and other areas centralized the power in their countries by raising large armies, controlling the people of their countries through harsh laws and military force, and tying their rule to God through the theory of divine right.

## Important Concepts of Mercantilism



Absolute monarchs and the officials working in their governments followed an economic policy that we now call mercantilism. Mercantilists believed that a country was strongest if it had a lot of gold and silver, so monarchs did everything they could to get it. There were two methods for filling their treasuries with gold and silver:

### 1. Maintain a Favorable Balance of Trade

When thinking about mercantilism, imagine a whole country as one business and the absolute monarch is the CEO. If the country sells (exports) more than it buys (imports), it will have more money (gold and silver). For absolute monarchs, a “favorable” balance of trade is one with a lot more exports than imports.

### 2. Establish Colonies, Import their Raw Materials

Absolute monarchs saw establishing colonies as a great way to bring in silver and gold through mining and through trade. When explorers were sent out to Africa, Asia, or the Americas, the kings and/or queens that sent them hoped they would find new sources of gold and silver. Monarchs also hoped to find people they could trade with.

By following the policy of mercantilism, monarchs hoped to get more gold and silver that they could use to pay for larger armies who could be used to conquer more land to continue to secure more silver and gold.

5. Why would a mercantilist government be interested in other areas of the world? How did this belief lead to or cause European exploration?

6. After watching Heimler 1.3, and doing the readings, answer the following:

- Economic Motives for exploration
- Religious Motives for exploration
- Political Motives for exploration
- Technological Innovations that allowed for exploration and conquest

7. What do you think is the most significant cause for European exploration? Explain.

8. How did technological developments aid European exploration?



Woodcut image of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492 on the island of Guanahani (today Cat Island in the Bahamas) by Dutch engraver Theodor de Bry in 1590

Analyze the image to the left.

9. What is Theodor de Bry's purpose in creating the woodcut? What do you think he is trying to show? Provide evidence to support your answer.

## Topic 1.4 : Columbian Exchange, Spanish Exploration and Conquest

1. What is the Columbian Exchange?

2. Complete the chart below:

Direction of Exchange	Identify the foods, diseases, animals, etc..	Impact
Old World (Europe and Africa) to New World (Americas)		Impact on New World:
New World (Americas) to Old World (Europe)		Impact on Europe:

3. Use the following vocabulary to describe how the Spanish conquest changed the Americas?

Conquistadors; Francisco Pizarro; Hernan Cortes; Malintzin; Montezuma; Roanoke; Smallpox; Tenochtitlan

4. Why is the Columbian Exchange considered a turning point in world history?

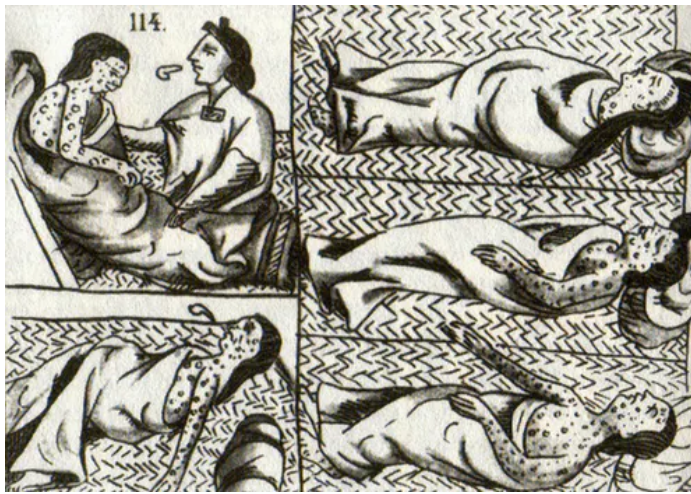
5. List two crops that moved from the Americas to Europe and two that moved from Europe to the Americas.

6. What impact did disease have on Native American societies?

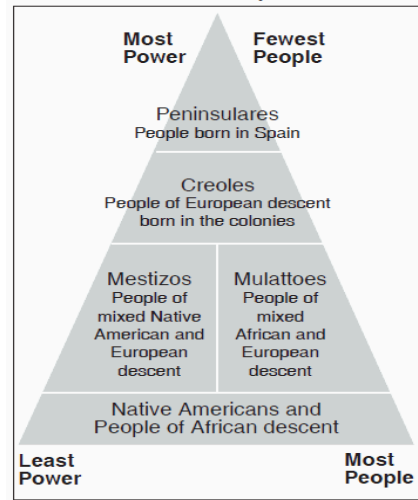
7. How did the Columbian Exchange contribute to the rise of the transatlantic slave trade? Explain the significance of the Columbian Exchange.

## Topic 1.5: Labor, Slavery and Caste in the Spanish Colonial System

*\*The Atlantic World refers to the peoples and empires along the rim of the Atlantic Ocean - Europe, Africa and the Americas*



**Social Structure of the Spanish Colonies**



1. What was the encomienda system, and how did it function?
  
2. What roles did missionaries play in Spanish colonization efforts?
  
3. How did Spanish colonization change the Americas socially and economically?

## 1.6 Cultural Interactions in the Americas

### **The Valladolid Debate (Spain, 1550)**

#### **Bartolome de las Casas, Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies, 1542**

*Dominican priest Bartolome de las Casas (1484-1566) protested the treatment of Indians by the Spanish in this address to Prince Philip of Spain.*

They are by nature the most humble, patient, and peaceable, holding no grudges, free from embroilments, neither excitable nor quarrelsome... They are also poor people, for they not only possess little but have no desire to possess worldly goods. For this reason they are not arrogant, embittered, or greedy... They are very clean in their persons, with alert, intelligent minds, docile and open to doctrine, very apt to receive our holy Catholic faith, to be endowed with virtuous customs, and to behave in a godly fashion. And once they begin to hear the tidings of the Faith, they are so insistent on knowing more and on taking the sacraments of the Church and on observing the divine cult that, truly, the missionaries who are here need to be endowed by God with great patience in order to cope with such eagerness...

Yet into this sheepfold, into this land of meek outcasts there came some Spaniards who immediately behaved like ravaging wild beasts, wolves, tigers, or lions that had been starved for many days...

#### **Juan Gines de Sepulveda, Concerning the Just Causes of the War against the Indians, 1547**

*Juan Gines de Sepulveda (1489-1573), a Spanish theologian and philosopher, responded to Bartolome de las Casas's assertions.*

...[T]he Spanish have a perfect right to rule these barbarians of the New World and the adjacent islands, who in prudence, skill, virtues, and humanity are as inferior to the Spanish as children to adults, or women to men, for there exists between the two as great a difference as between savage and cruel races and the most merciful, between the most intemperate and the moderate and temperate and, I might even say, between apes and men...

1. Explain the Valladolid Debate. What were the two sides arguing?
2. Compare de las Casas and Sepulveda descriptions of the natives. Why do you think they have this particular attitude toward them?

3. Compare Spanish, French and English treatment of Native Americans in the chart below:

	Spanish	French	English
Treatment of Natives			
Reasons for treatment of natives			

## Long Essay Questions (LEQs)

*Anticipate multiple choice assessment and the potential of writing or outlining one of the four long essay questions below.*

- Evaluate the extent to which Native American societies in the Southwest and Northeast were similar in their development before European contact.
- Evaluate the causes of exploration and conquest of the New World by various European nations in the period 1491-1607.
- Evaluate the effects of the Columbian Exchange on Europe and the Americas during the period after 1492.
- Evaluate the extent to which Native American societies changed as a result of contact with Europeans between 1491 and 1607.