

This course surveys approximately 10,000 years of world history, focusing primarily on the last 1000 years and the evolution of global processes and interactions between and within different human societies. The course is truly a global history rather than one focused primarily on Western civilizations with bits and pieces of others receiving only passing mention at best. While the acquisition of relevant factual knowledge is part of the course, the main focus is to develop critical and evaluative thinking skills and the ability to analyze and interpret historical documents in support of a plausible argument.

PERIODS 1/2: 8000 BCE - 600 CE

Of all the time periods covered in the AP World History curriculum, Periods 1 & 2 span the largest number of years. It begins with an important Marker Event - the Neolithic / Agricultural Revolution / Transition - and ends after the fall of three major classical civilizations - Rome in the Mediterranean region, Han China, and the Gupta Empire of India. Broad topics addressed in Periods 1 & 2 are:

- Environmental and periodization issues
- Early development in agriculture and technology
- Basic cultural, political, and social features of early civilizations: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus Valley, Shang China, and Meso/South America
- The rise and fall of classical civilizations: Zhou and Han China, India (Gupta Empire), and Mediterranean civilizations (Greece and Rome)
- Major belief systems, including polytheism, Hinduism, Judaism, Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Christianity

PERIOD 3: 600 - 1450

With the fall of the three major classical civilizations (Rome, Chinese Han, Indian Gupta), the stage was set for new trends that defined these years as another period with different migrations and conquests, and more developed trade patterns than before. Some major events and developments that characterized this era were:

- Older belief systems, such as Christianity, Hinduism, Confucianism, and Buddhism, came to become more important than political organizations in defining many areas of the world. Large religions covered huge areas of land, even though localized smaller religions remained in place.
- Two nomadic groups - the Bedouins and the Mongols - had a huge impact on the course of history during this era.
- A new religion - Islam - began in the 7th century and spread rapidly throughout the Middle East, Northern Africa, Europe, and Southeast Asia.
- Whereas Europe was not a major civilization area before 600 CE, by 1450 it was connected to major trade routes, and some of its kingdoms were beginning to assert world power.
- Major empires developed in both South America (the Inca) and Mesoamerica (the Maya and Aztec.)
- China grew to have hegemony over many other areas of Asia and became one of the largest and most prosperous empires of the time.
- Long distance trade continued to develop along previous routes, but the amount and complexity of trade and contact increased significantly.

PERIOD 4: 1450 - 1750

This era includes only 300 years, but some profound and long-lasting changes occurred. During this period the two hemispheres were linked for the first time in world history and long-distance trade became truly worldwide. Characteristics of the time period include:

- The globe was encompassed - For the first time the western hemisphere came into continued contact with the eastern hemisphere. Technological innovations, strengthened political organization, and economic prosperity all contributed to this change that completely altered world trade patterns.
- Sea-based trade rose in proportion to land-based trade - Technological advancements and willingness of political leaders to invest in it meant that sea-based trade became much more important. As a result, old land-based empires lost relative power to the new sea-based powers.
- European kingdoms emerged that gained world power - The relative power and prosperity of Europe increased dramatically during this time in comparison to empires in the longer-established civilization areas. However, Europe did not entirely eclipse powerful empires in Southwest Asia, Africa, and East Asia.
- The relative power of nomadic groups declined - Nomads continued to play an important role in trade and cultural diffusion, and they continued to threaten the borders of the large land-based empires. However, their power dwindled as travel and trade by water became more important.
- Labor systems were transformed - The acquisition of colonies in North and South America led to major changes in labor systems. After many Amerindians died from disease transmitted by contact with Europeans, a vigorous slave trade from Africa began and continued throughout most of the era. Slave labor became very important all over the Americas. Other labor systems, such as the mita and encomienda in South America, were adapted from previous native traditions by the Spanish and Portuguese.
- "Gunpowder Empires" emerged in the Middle East and Asia - Empires in older civilization areas gained new strength from new technologies in weaponry. Basing their new power on "gunpowder," they still suffered from the old issues that had plagued land-based empires for centuries: defense of borders, communication within the empire, and maintenance of an army adequate to defend the large territory. By the end of the era, many were less powerful than the new sea-based kingdoms of Europe.

PERIOD 5: 1750 - 1900

New ways of thinking continued to develop and unfold in this era as profound social and political change spurred revolution and the development of industrialized economic might. Very important characteristics that distinguish 1750-1900 from previous eras in world history include:

- Patterns of world trade and technology changed as the Industrial Revolution revolutionized communications and commerce.
- Huge numbers of people migrated to the Americas from Europe and Asia, so that population in the western hemisphere grew dramatically, leading eventually to the end of the slave trade and forced migrations from Africa to the New World.
- Industrialization had a huge impact on the environment, as demands for new fuels came about and cities dominated the landscape in industrialized countries. Less industrialized countries often supplied the demand for raw materials, altering natural landscapes further.

- Serf and slave systems became less common, but the gap between the rich and poor grew in industrialized countries. Did women's status improve, or did gender inequality grow?
- Revolutions and independence movements transformed the political and social landscape of many parts of the world as direct result of 17th and 18th century Enlightenment philosophies taking hold, all leading to a developing sense of nationalism.
- The definition of "west" expanded to include the United States and Australia, and western dominance reached not only economic and political areas, but extended to social, cultural, and artistic realms as well.

PERIOD 6: 1900 - Present

War and conflict defined this period as fragile alliances unraveled, giving way to independence movements across the world in the colonial holdings of former industrial powerhouses, moving the world toward a new global culture. Major characteristics that distinguish the time period 1900 - present include:

- The 20th century was marked by conflict and diplomacy, witnessing two world wars, and eventually a change in the nature of warfare with the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, leading to the proliferation of international organizations to address the changing balance of power in the world.
- Nationalism continued to shape interactions among nations as large empires broke into smaller ethnic based countries, with widespread decolonization after World War II both reflected and promoted via nationalism in former colonies.
- The Great Depression affected some countries more than others, but it had a profound economic impact on both industrialized and non-industrialized areas as well as on world trade. New technologies promoted economic development in Pacific Rim countries and contributed to the emerging importance of multinational corporations.
- Revolutions shook Russia, China, and many Latin American countries, leading to experimentation with different versions of communism, socialism, and capitalism, with some turning to authoritarian methods and others to democracy.
- Social reform and revolution led to changes in gender roles, family structures, the rise of feminism, peasant protest, and international Marxism.
- Massive movements of people to industrialized countries continued to shape the world while the environment was altered by continued urbanization and deforestation as significant green/environmental movements emerged to resist the changes.