

Hello Future APUSHers,

We wanted to reach out to you in the Spirit of History and do our best to use ours to light the path for yours. As we are wrapping up our first year here at Stoney with a new APUSH teacher we wanted to help you prepare and adjust to the class. We spent a significant amount of time thinking and talking about what we would have liked to know when we were in your shoes last year. So we put together a series of questions, answers and advice that we think will best prepare you for the coming year.

We wish you all the best of luck!!

Greetings to All,

First, let me say how excited I am that so many of you are up for the challenge of APUSH next year. I'm excited to meet all of you and while this class will be challenging, I'm confident that you all have what it takes to succeed. As I complete my first year here as an SC Cougar, my amazing APUSH students this year have done a truly wonderful and inspired job in attempting to help you out in transitioning to this class. I am so proud of their efforts to guide you and direct you. After looking at what they have put together, I have to stress that you take these to heart. There will be no better guide of the expectations than that of your peers.

Looking forward to a Great Year,

How would you describe the work-load / homework expectation for APUSH?

1. The general consensus of the summaries is that the workload is essentially what you make of it. There are options in note taking, both at home and within the scope of his lectures, although given his very hands-off approach, not a great deal is considered 'required'. While it is beneficial to do work outside of the minimal prescribed course, the workload is highly dependent on student motivation to do what one may deem important. Basically you don't have to worry about an extremely large workload, although one should attempt to fully comprehend all information provided, regardless, be that what it may. Given his structured course, it should not be an issue to simply spread the workload around the entire week and therefore lessen daily workload. The course itself presents a respectable preparation for the AP test, although outside material is certainly available and quite helpful.

Describe the best approach to note taking that you felt was most beneficial.

2. Our best advice for incoming APUSH students is to take good notes. We advise that you read and take notes before the lectures so that you have background information and a basic understanding about what is lectured on. When taking notes, center them around the key concepts that are outlined in the beginning of the book. These concepts were written by the college-board, and provide a good thematic idea of what you will be tested on in May. Along with the key concepts there are targeted reading pages. When taking notes, focus on these pages to gain the best understanding of the period as a whole. Furthermore, don't just copy down events and dates, but rather link them back to the key concepts. Although specific historical events are important for SAQ testing, they should not be the key focus of your notes. Purchasing an AP review book and utilizing it through the entire course rather than just using it to study for the AP test could be beneficial for discovering themes. Lastly, connecting your period notes to a key historical thinking skill would be very beneficial when writing DBQs and LEQs. When your thematic outline is complete read over the information and decide which of the seven historical thinking skills is most relevant to the period.

What did you find most challenging about APUSH?

3. There are several different ways to approach note taking in this class. One way is the Cornell method. Cornell notes allow you to connect thesis and events together. You don't have to take an outrageous amount of notes while staying specific enough to have good information and SAQ points. If you don't have the patience for those, though, graphic organizers and charts. These help you connect themes together to specifics in a more creative way than just paragraphs. Also, writing down specific events from the book can work too. Half of the class centers around specific events, so picking ones that correlate with the themes will be very beneficial. Another way to take notes is by reading the themes in the beginning of the book. The themes help you get a bigger picture at the time periods and helps with synthesis. If you take theme notes, use specifics to support them and explain them. Overall, there's no set way to take notes, it really depends on how you digest information.

How much time would you say you spent per week studying / doing homework for this class?

4. Although APUSH is clearly an AP class, stress should not be a factor in your academic success. For example, at the end of first semester over half the class had an A or an A-. Studying for 5-6 hours a week does not guarantee you an A as the majority of the class only spent 3-4 hours per week studying. This proves that overworking yourself does not lead to success, it only leads to stress. To eliminate useless studying, like writing down every single detail in the book and studying until you start repeating previous information, think **quality over quantity**. You can achieve working smart and not hard by using guided pages that the College Board lays out for the students in your reading. For example, you can put your key concept themes on the top of your notes, and then write your more specific ideas under it. Videos online and other resources are key to time management. Therefore, you should center your focus in not every single, specific detail, but only those related to the theme.

If you could provide one piece of advice (academic) for this class what would it be?

5. One of the aspects that students found as most challenging about AP US History would be understanding the exam format. Many students struggled with DBQs and LEQs, while others struggled with SAQs and Multiple Choice. This shows incoming students that the assessments in the course, as well as on the exam, are very challenging. A student should have strong writing time management to prepare for the writing assessments of the class throughout the year. Students should also have a strong thematic understanding of the material. Many students struggled with this thematic understanding as well as familiarity with periodization skills. Difficulty with themes and periodization results in poor preparation for all aspects of the exam and course. DBQs and LEQs are also very different from traditional essay writing taught in language arts classes. DBQs and LEQs should not include any summarization or narration. Both are looking for direct information and argumentation that will build on the student's thesis. Understanding the formats of the writing portions of the exam prove to be difficult for incoming APUSH students. Multiple choice also proves to be a difficulty to students. The writing portion of the exam and course require knowing specific pieces of information with a bit of theme and periodization. However, the multiple choice is solely theme based.

Another important aspect of APUSH is time management. The key to success in this class is taking time to go over the important events and themes. This can be very easily done in the way you take notes on the reading. Finding a good system of note taking that works for you before you enter the class will save you a lot of time and better your scores on assignments. Also, you should invest in a Barron APUSH Exam Practice Book, this will help you study for period exams and for the SAQs and multiple choice tests throughout the year. Your notes and the way you handle your workload throughout the year will be crucial to how confident you feel on the final exam in May.

Good Luck!!!!

Could you provide one recommendation for purchasing an extra study support that you found helpful for the AP Test?

6. The best study tools for APUSH are the Adam Norris videos, Crash Course videos by John Green, Barron's flashcards, and the Princeton review book. Adam Norris' videos can be found on Youtube and on his website, APUSHreview.com. He has videos for each key concept, period, and important event that had a large impact on US history. On his website, he has printable fill-in-the-blank notes and extra study material to help prepare for the AP exam, such as DBQ prompts. All of his materials are free and are extremely helpful when reviewing for tests, quizzes, and the AP exam. John Green's Crash Course videos are helpful for more in-depth explanations for events or periods of time. However, his videos do not follow the APUSH curriculum and can be long. These videos would be helpful for reviewing certain topics and events that may be confusing. Barron's flashcard set contains 500 flashcards that cover important events, topics, documents, and people, and are organized by period and theme. At the bottom of each description, it covers the flashcard's significance and connection to US history. These are helpful for reviewing for the AP exam, and understanding connections and themes between periods. The Princeton review book includes summaries of each period, practice tests, and tips for each test section on the AP exam. The summaries are fairly detailed, and provide descriptions of the connections and importance of certain events. The book contains mini practice tests for each period and full length tests, with the writing portions, to study. This is helpful for reviewing for each periods for period tests and for the AP exam. Due to its length, it would be smart to start reviewing the book a few months before the AP exam.

How would you describe the teacher's teaching style?

7. Mr. Mize is a very passionate teacher who wants all his students to succeed. His teaching style is very interactive. If someone has a tough time understanding his teaching/teaching style he will always spend extra with the student to fix the confusion. He is always open to new ideas from his students on how he can improve his teaching or make it easier to understand. The teachings are mainly through lectures or thematic breakdowns which help students connect specific events to the overall theme of the chapter. Also, the class is very structured, students always know what is coming up many weeks in advance. At the beginning of every week the agenda for the upcoming week is up on the whiteboard so it is very easy to plan your workload.