

To the future students of APUSH:

Hello! You're about to embark on the journey through the struggles and successes of the great American nation, the people and places and events and movements that form its lifeblood. Political, economical, societal, and a little military history -- you get the whole spiel. Most importantly, however, is that you get to delve into the historical rationale for different events -- the "why" of events that are seemingly inexplicable when taken out of context -- by learning the skill of connecting events and themes of American history together.

That being said, it's a rigorous course. You learn so much, too much for me to fill pages and pages off of my mind, so many associations that make me think APUSH every time someone mentions a historical happening in the last four hundred years. But it's hard. There's a lot of effort necessary to get this reward.

I could say the same as the people before us, who wrote letters to our grade in the same manner that we write to you. Make sure you don't procrastinate, they said. The chapter notes will kill you mentally, they said. And while I do agree with this, there's nothing more important than getting into the history mode. You have to see history, think history, be a zealot for the American causes and have an open mind to see both sides of a controversy. Throw away your misconceptions of the Reds and lose your bias on the racist actions of strict conservative Confederates: see what lessons they have to offer.

On top of that, just make sure you stick with it. Even with my poor time management I was able to get through it. There were moments when I wanted to scream my eyes out because it was already far into the morning and I still had not finished my chapter notes and had to cram it into study hall. There were times when some of my classmates were essentially betting on whether or not the notes were going to be collected and deliberately choosing not to finish them. Whatever you do and whatever you face, know that it's just a class that stresses the development of intensive critical thinking skills based on a large repository of memory. I can speak more freely and intelligently about still-relevant history, such as the Civil Rights Movement and the Cold War. It's tough but it's rewarding. As long as you stick with the class, the benefits will overcome the hardships.

Rewarding. I say this because for the worry that every DBQ or LEQ has caused me, there has been so much less worry on essays in other classes. The writing guidelines provided by the AP test on these essays was perhaps more helpful in my English class than in this class. The difficult multiple choice questions and the strategies that we learned helped in all classes and even standardized test-taking strategies. The short-answer taught us how to read carefully and answer the question and just the question.

So many skills and so much knowledge. I guess I can call APUSH the epitome of my academic days to date.

But how often do you hear that APUSH is fun? In class we watched numerous slowed-down John Green Crash Course history videos (the music at 0.75 speed is hilarious) and we learn about the most insensible historical details (such as the War of Jenkin's Ear). The small-class culture (which will likely continue next year) is lively and personal, and we celebrate with '60s-age Woodstock Festival music to fit the theme. The final comes early (before the AP exam) and there's a fun yet historical project to top off the year. Either from the fear of taking some test or the interest of the class, you can't really lose focus from the class.

In closing, I'd advise you to open your ears to Mrs. Pinsky and your heart to the qualms of history, because everything you do in the class will only help you.

Have a great year of APUSH!

~ Jonathan Lam