**Themes in AP U.S. History**

The U.S. History Development Committee’s notes about the themes:

• The themes listed in this section are designed to encourage students to think

conceptually about the American past and to focus on historical change over

time.

**American Diversity**

The diversity of the American people and the relationships among different groups.

The roles of race, class, ethnicity, and gender in the history of the United States.

**American Identity**

Views of the American national character and ideas about American exceptionalism.

Recognizing regional differences within the context of what it means to be an

American.

**Culture**

Diverse individual and collective expressions through literature, art, philosophy,

music, theater, and film throughout U.S. history. Popular culture and the dimensions

of cultural conflict within American society.

**Demographic Changes**

Changes in birth, marriage, and death rates; life expectancy and family patterns;

population size and density. The economic, social, and political effects of immigration,

internal migration, and migration networks.

**Economic Transformations**

Changes in trade, commerce, and technology across time. The effects of capitalist

development, labor and unions, and consumerism.

**Environment**

Ideas about the consumption and conservation of natural resources. The impact of

population growth, industrialization, pollution, and urban and suburban expansion.

**Globalization**

Engagement with the rest of the world from the fifteenth century to the present:

colonialism, mercantilism, global hegemony, development of markets, imperialism,

and cultural exchange.

**Politics and Citizenship**

Colonial and revolutionary legacies, American political traditions, growth of democracy,

and the development of the modern state. Defining citizenship; struggles for

civil rights.

**Reform**

Diverse movements focusing on a broad range of issues, including anti-slavery,

education, labor, temperance, women’s rights, civil rights, gay rights, war, public

health, and government.

**Religion**

The variety of religious beliefs and practices in America from prehistory to the twentyfirst

century; influence of religion on politics, economics, and society.

**Slavery and Its Legacies in North America**

Systems of slave labor and other forms of unfree labor (e.g., indentured servitude,

contract labor) in American Indian societies, the Atlantic World, and the American

South and West. The economics of slavery and its racial dimensions. Patterns of

resistance and the long-term economic, political, and social effects of slavery.

**War and Diplomacy**

Armed conflict from the precolonial period to the twenty-first century; impact of war

on American foreign policy and on politics, economy, and society.