



## Overview of the AP World History Course

What exactly *is* AP World History? (APWH) Let's start with how the course is created.

Like all AP courses, APWH is created by the College Board, a non-profit organization that also creates the SAT. Each AP course is designed by a Development Committee of 6-8 high school teachers and college professors who have years of experience teaching this course. This Development Committee also designs the National Exam given each May across the United States and other countries around the world.

### Philosophy of AP World History

If you were going to design a world history course, how would you decide what is important enough to include in the course? Would you pick a set of important factual knowledge, or concentrate more on trends that affect the greatest number of people? As the Development Committee says,

“The purpose of the AP World History course is to develop greater understanding of the evolution of global processes and contacts, in interaction with different types of human societies. This understanding is achieved through a combination of selective factual knowledge and appropriate analytical skills.”<sup>1</sup>

Note that APWH stresses *both* “selective factual knowledge” *and* “appropriate analytical skills.” Why not just one or the other? Factual knowledge alone would create a course that is little more than rote memorization of facts, without necessarily any real understanding or interpretation of those facts. Given that an AP course should be the same difficulty as a college-level course, AP students are required to demonstrate college-level thinking skills, which is how the “appropriate analytical skills” fits in. Only when you combine the “selective factual knowledge” *and* the “appropriate analytical skills” do you have the necessary ingredients for an AP course. So, history is part fact and part interpretation. Memorizing facts is relatively easy. Learning to interpret facts is much more difficult. The Development Committee calls these thinking skills “Habits of Mind.”

### Habits of Mind, or “How should I study world history?”

What skills should a student gain from AP World History? The answer is the “Habits of Mind.” Every reading, assignment, essay, etc. should develop one or more of these skills. Students in *any* rigorous history course should be able to:

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<sup>1</sup> AP World History 2006-07 Course Description, p. 3.  
[http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/repository/05821apcoursdescworld\\_4332.pdf](http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/public/repository/05821apcoursdescworld_4332.pdf)



| Habits of Mind   |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Official Description   | Simplified Paraphrase                                     | Hypothetical Real World Example  |
| Construct and evaluate arguments using evidence to make plausible arguments.   | Ability to <u>Make an Argument using Evidence</u>         | Imagine yourself ten years from now. You work as a sales representative. You feel you're underpaid, and ask your boss for a raise. Your boss responds, "Tell me why I should raise your salary." What would you say? You must <i>make an argument using evidence</i> to support your conclusion. No, you probably won't use any factual information from AP World History, but you <i>would</i> use the <i>skills</i> AP World History will teach you to persuade your boss that you've worth the extra pay.   |
| Use documents and other primary data: develop the skills necessary to analyze point of view, context, and bias, and to understand and interpret information. | Ability to <u>Analyze Sources</u>                         | What information would you select to make your point? Choose the <i>most persuasive</i> pieces of information from among several possible sources. <i>Which</i> information is "most" persuasive would depend on your individual circumstances. If your boss valued financial data you might choose to emphasize your overall sales figures. If your boss valued customer loyalty you might highlight the compliment a customer gave you earlier. If your boss knew you were hoping for a management position some day you might mention how you had a better offer from a competitor. Knowing how to tailor your argument to be the most effective to a specific person is a Habit of Mind skill. |
| Assess continuity and change over time and over different world regions.   | Ability to <u>Measure Change</u> (over time)              | There are really two parts to this Habit of Mind. The first is to recognize that history is really about two things: change and continuity. There's an old adage that says, "the more things change, the more they stay the same." The second part is the ability to describe <i>the degree</i> of change or continuity. If you moved to a new city, that would be a 'big' change, (new friends, new school, etc.) but wouldn't much of your life remain the same? (family, your favorite music, etc.) You'll need to develop the skill of precisely describing and evaluating change or lack of change.   |
| Understand diversity of interpretations through analysis of context, point of view, and frame of reference.  | Ability to <u>See Complexity</u> (different perspectives) | Have you ever tried to approach a problem from the point of view of another person? Put yourself in someone else's shoes for just a minute and try to see the issue through their eyes. You don't have to agree with their view, but you should be able to use your logical and emotional imagination to see an issue from a different perspective.  |



OK, these Habits of Mind are for *any* history course. How do these Habits of Mind apply specifically to a *world* history course?

| World History Habits of Mind  |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Official Description  | Simplified Paraphrase   | Plain English Description  |
| See global patterns over time and space while connecting local developments to global ones.       | Ability to <u>Generalize</u> (Recognize Patterns)   | Can you tell the difference between a specific example and a larger trend? Do you understand how information is “nested” from individual facts to global patterns?   |
| Compare within and among societies, including comparing societies’ reactions to global processes. | Ability to <u>Make Comparisons</u>  | Can you compare two examples of a given category, including comparing cause-effect relationships? The real skill here is <i>analysis</i> . APWH will require you to analyze specific similarities and differences.   |
| Consider human commonalities and differences.   |   |  |
| Explore claims of universal standards in relation to culturally diverse ideas.                    | Ability to <u>Evaluate with Open-Mindedness</u><br>or<br>Determine <u>how true</u> something is | How will you evaluate various cultures, states, and ideas throughout history? Example: you will encounter several systems of social inequality in this course (slavery, feudalism, caste structures, capitalism, etc.). How will you judge these cultures & states? Will you use <i>your</i> values, laws, and experiences, or <i>theirs</i> ? Note: you <i>can</i> render a judgment that something is “right” or “wrong,” but before you give your opinion, you must first examine the evidence. |
| Explore the persistent relevance of world history to contemporary developments.                   | Ability to <u>Learn from experience</u> . (even if it’s not your own experience)                | Look at today’s newspaper, television news show, or international website. You should be able to use what you learn in this course to help you understand current problems and issues confronting the world.   |



## Themes, or “What does world history study?”

The Habits of Mind answer the question of “How should world history be studied?” The next question is, “*What* should world history study?” AP World History categorizes historical knowledge by Themes. Rather than try to create a list of all historical facts, APWH defines Themes that help you see the patterns referred to by the Habits of Mind. Each of these themes are equally important, that is, they will be tested equally on the exam.

| Themes |  |  |
|--------|--|--|
| #      | Official Description   | Simplified Paraphrase<br><i>and typical questions this theme asks</i>  |
| 1      | Interaction between humans and the environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demography and disease</li> <li>• Migration</li> <li>• Patterns of settlement</li> <li>• Technology</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Human-Environment Interaction</b></p> <p><i>How do humans deal with disease?</i></p> <p><i>Where do humans live, and why do they live there instead of somewhere else?</i></p> <p><i>How do humans use technology to help them live?</i></p>                                       |
| 2      | Development and interaction of cultures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religions</li> <li>• Belief systems, philosophies, and ideologies</li> <li>• Science and technology</li> <li>• The arts and architecture</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Development of Cultures</b></p> <p><i>How do humans develop religion,</i></p> <p><i>How do different societies use technology in relation to other societies?</i></p> <p><i>How do humans express themselves artistically?</i></p>   |
| 3      | State-building, expansion, and conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political structures and forms of governance</li> <li>• Empires</li> <li>• Nations and nationalism</li> <li>• Revolts and revolution</li> <li>• Regional, transregional, and global structures and organizations</li> </ul> | <p><b>Politics</b></p> <p><i>How do humans establish order, govern themselves, and create political “units?”</i></p> <p><i>How do political units expand, and what happens when conflict arises?</i></p> <p><i>What are the different types of political units around the world?</i></p> |
| 4      | Creation, expansion, and interaction of economic systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural and pastoral production</li> <li>• Trade and commerce</li> <li>• Labor Systems</li> <li>• Industrialization</li> <li>• Capitalism and socialism</li> </ul>                                    | <p><b>Economic Systems</b></p> <p><i>How do humans create and manage resources to improve their quality of life?</i></p> <p><i>How do humans organize their work to maximize their efforts?</i></p>  |



|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| 5 | Development and transformation of social structures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender roles and relations</li> <li>• Family and kinship</li> <li>• Racial and ethnic constructions</li> <li>• Social and economic classes</li> </ul> | <b>Social Structures</b><br><i>How do men and women share the work?</i><br><i>How is the family structured, and what role does family play in everyday life?</i><br><i>How does this society think of race and/or ethnicity?</i><br><i>What are the differences between high- and low-ranking members of society?</i> |
|---|--|---|

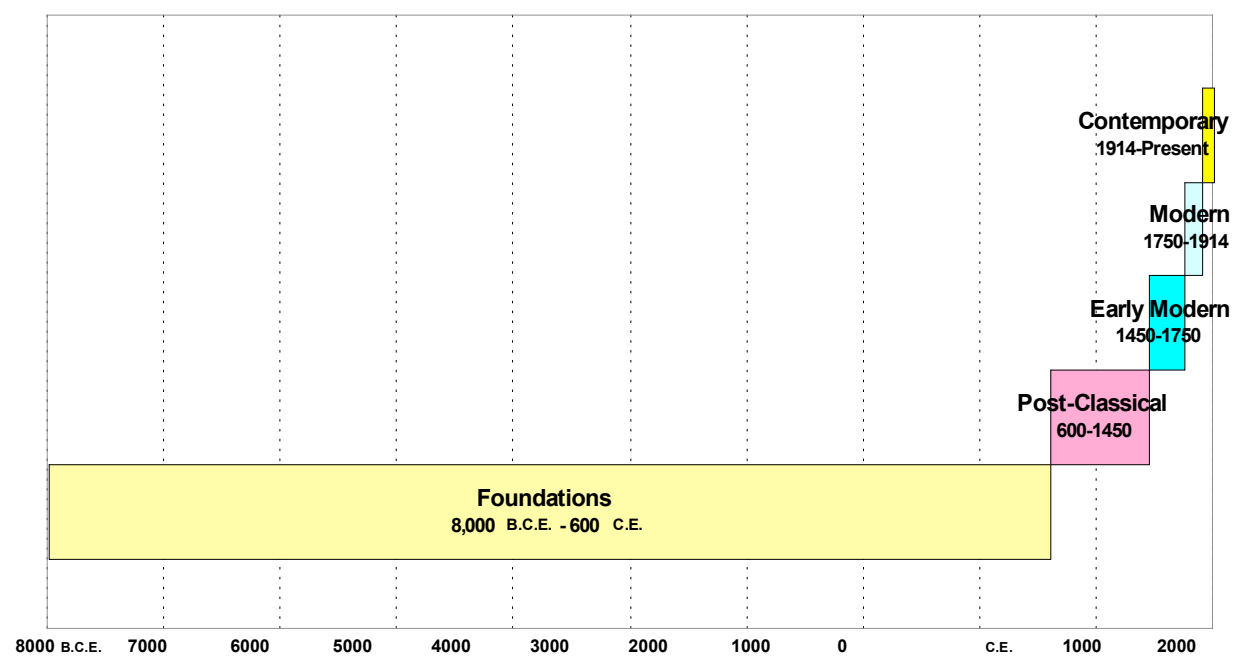
### Periodization, the “When”

Learning and remembering the hundreds of names, places, and events in world history can seem a daunting task. One way to help make the task easier is to organize all historical content into different chronological eras, called “periods,” which The process of organizing is thus called “periodization.” AP World History divides history into five different periods, with each period being equally emphasized in the APWH course.

Many students feel that they must memorize the dates of all historical events. While you do NOT have to memorize the exact date of every event in world history, you should have an approximate idea of most historical events. The definition of “approximate” varies by era, but you should definitely be able to place each event into the correct period. For ancient events aim to place events in the correct century. The closer one gets to the present, the more precise you should aim for. For the 20<sup>th</sup> century, you should strive to place events in the correct year.

### AP World History Periodization

Each Period is ~20% of the Multiple Choice Questions





## Geography, The “Where”

Students must know some basic geography in order to answer APWH questions. Both multiple choice and free response (essay) questions will require knowledge of major geographic world regions. There is no such thing as a comprehensive list of every world region, but experience has shown that too many students misidentify the following world regions:





| Commonly Misidentified World Geographical Regions |  |  |   |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| Region  | Areas Included   |  |   |   |
| Asia  |  |  |   |   |
| East Asia:  | China<br>Mongolia  | Japan<br>Republic of China (Taiwan)      | North Korea<br>South Korea                              |   |
| Southeast Asia:                                   | Cambodia<br>Malaysia<br>Singapore  | Indonesia<br>Myanmar (Burma)<br>Thailand | Laos<br>Philippines<br>Vietnam                          |   |
| South Asia:                                       | Afghanistan<br>India   | Bangladesh<br>Nepal                      | Bhutan<br>Pakistan                                      |   |
| Southwest Asia<br>(Middle East):                  | Bahrain<br>Jordan<br>Saudi Arabia<br>Yemen                               | Iran<br>Kuwait<br>Syria                  | Iraq<br>Lebanon<br>Turkey                               | Israel<br>Oman<br>United Arab Emirates          |
| Africa:   |  |  |   |   |
| North Africa:                                     | Algeria<br>Morocco   | Egypt<br>Tunisia                         | Libya<br>Western Sahara                                 |   |
| East Africa:                                      | Eritrea<br>Somalia   | Ethiopia<br>Sudan                        | Kenya<br>Tanzania                                       | Madagascar                                      |
| West Africa:                                      | Benin<br>Gambia<br>Liberia<br>Nigeria                                    | Burkina Faso<br>Ghana<br>Mali<br>Senegal | Chad<br>Guinea<br>Mauritania<br>Sierra Leone            | Côte D'Ivoire<br>Guinea-Bissau<br>Niger<br>Togo |
| Equatorial Africa:                                | Burundi<br>Equatorial Guinea<br>Rwanda<br>Dem. Republic of Congo (Zaire) | Cameroon<br>Gabon<br>Sudan               | Central African Republic<br>Republic of Congo<br>Uganda |   |
| Southern Africa:                                  | Angola<br>Lesotho<br>South Africa<br>Zimbabwe                            | Botswana<br>Malawi<br>Swaziland          | Dem. Republic of Congo (Zaire)<br>Namibia<br>Zambia     |   |
| Americas:   |  |  |   |   |
| Latin America                                     | All of the Americas excluding Canada and the United States.              |  |   |   |
| Areas without a single, formal definition         | Europe   | North America                            | Central Asia  |   |



## The Exam

The APWH exam is divided into two major sections: the Multiple Choice section, and the Free Response (Essay) section.

| Section        | Multiple Choice              | Free Response (Essay) Section  |   |  |
|----------------|------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Weight         | 50% of Exam                  | 50% of Exam  |   |  |
|                |                              | 16.67% of Exam   | 16.67% of Exam                              | 16.67% of Exam                           |
| # of Questions | 70                           | DBQ<br>Document Based<br>Question  | CCOT<br>Continuity &<br>Change Over<br>Time | Comparative<br>(Compare and<br>Contrast) |
| Time Allowed   | 55 minutes                   | 10 minute mandatory reading period, then<br>120 self-budgeted minutes to write all 3 essays. |   |  |
| Suggested Pace | ~ 45 seconds<br>per question | 40 minutes   | 40 minutes                                  | 40 minutes                               |

In the end, the multiple choice and essay section scores are added up to a Final Score of 5, 4, 3, 2, or 1. (5 is the highest) Some colleges and universities award credit, advanced placement, and/or preference in admissions for AP scores, although each college/university sets their own policy re: the specifics.<sup>2</sup> In general, each of the numerical Final Scores translate to:

- 5 = Extremely Well Qualified
- 4 = Well Qualified
- 3 = Qualified
- 2 = Possibly Qualified
- 1 = No Recommendation

So what are the specifics of how the Multiple Choice and Free Response (Essay) Section scores add up to the Final Score?

<sup>2</sup> Go to <http://collegesearch.collegeboard.com/apcreditpolicy/index.jsp> to see the AP policy of a particular college or university.

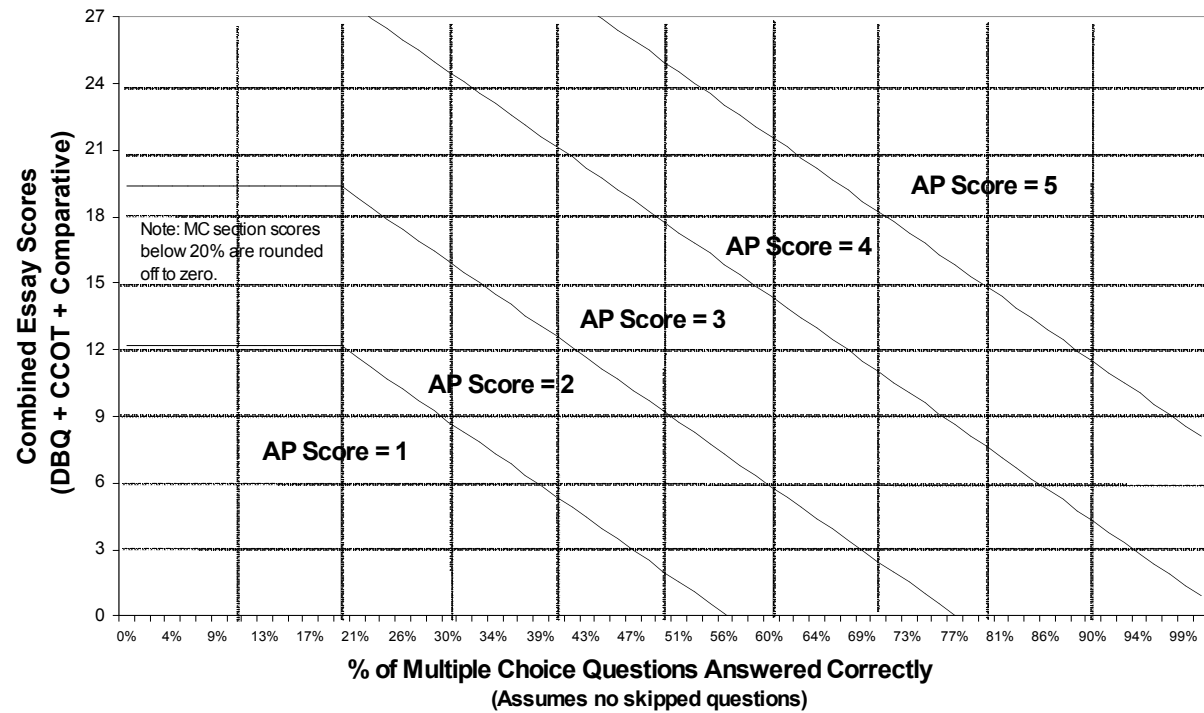




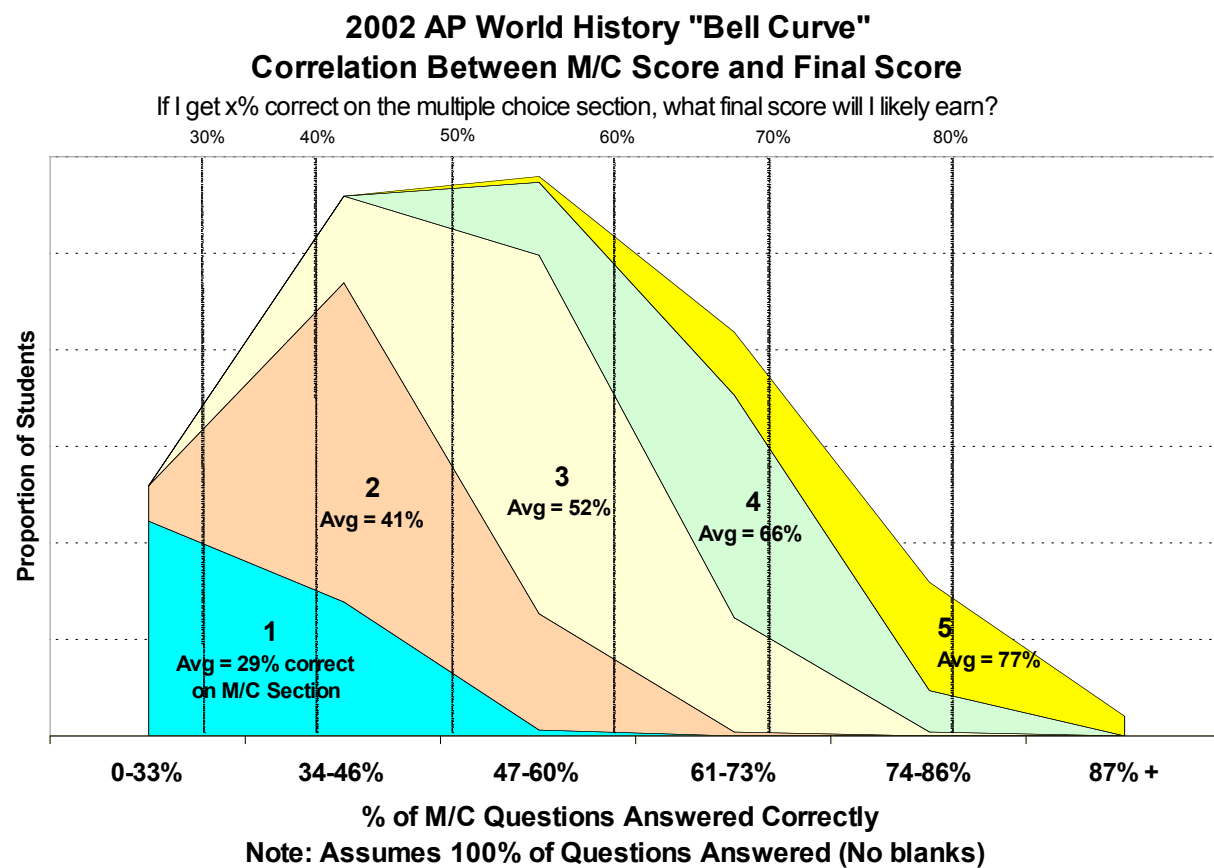
### Combination of Multiple Choice & Essay Scores

"If I get x% right on the multiple choice section, what essay scores would I need to get a 5? a 4?"

Note: The precise boundaries between each score change slightly each year.  
This graph is intended only as an approximate guide.



Students frequently ask, "If I get x% of the Multiple Choice questions correct on the exam. What AP score would that get me?" This graph (together with the "Bell Curve" graph on the next page) is designed to answer that question as nearly as possible. A student who gets 100% of the Multiple Choice questions correct (and then walked out of the exam) would score a '3'. Same with a student who didn't answer any Multiple Choice questions correctly, but wrote three perfect 9-point essays. Students often make the mistake of thinking that doing well on one half of the exam guarantees them a high score, or that doing poorly on one half ruins their chances. This graph should dispel both of these misconceptions.



My students always ask me, "I got x% of the Multiple Choice questions correct on the semester exam. What AP score would that get me?" This graph (together with the "Combination of MC and Essay Scores" graph on the previous page) is designed to answer that question as nearly as possible. Note: there is no absolute answer, only a probability.

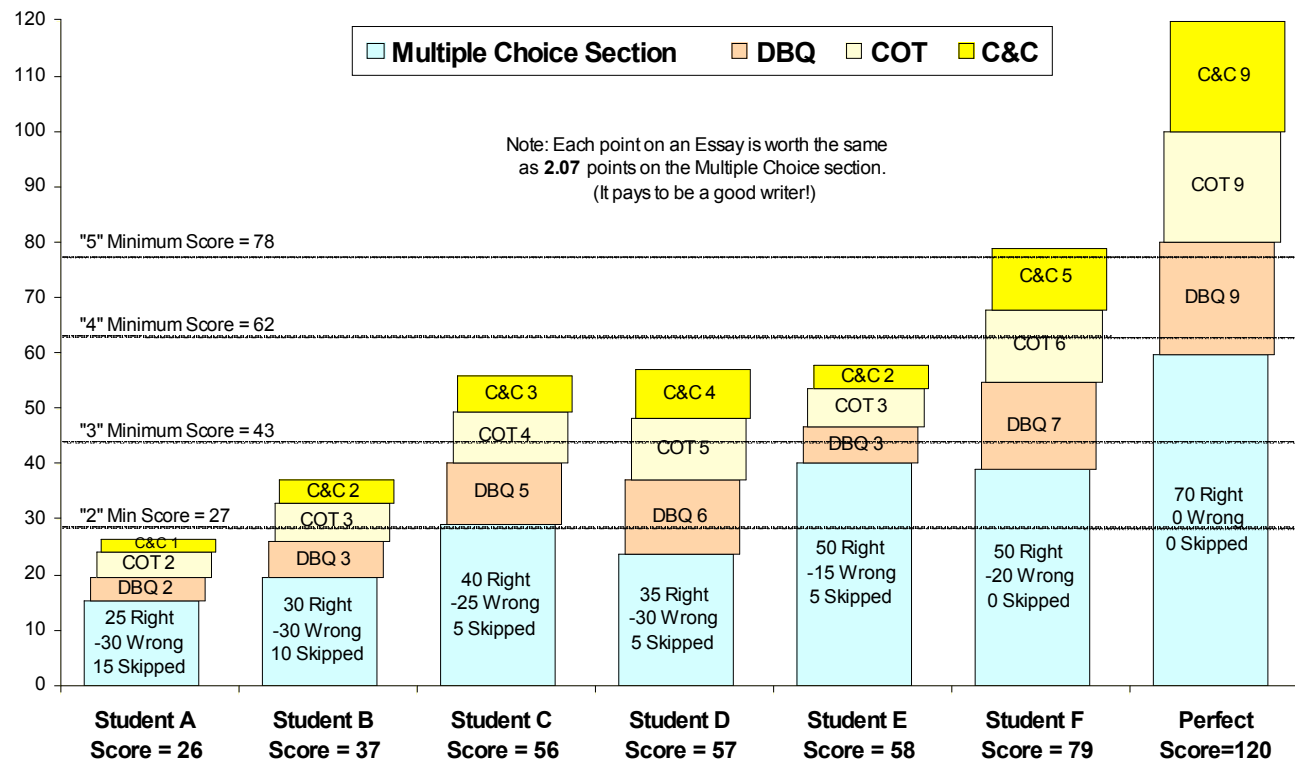
The national average score on the multiple choice section of the exam is approximately 50%. A little left of center in this graph you'll see a vertical line labeled "50%". Students who answered 50% of the multiple choice section questions correctly were most likely to earn a '3', but some who wrote better essays earned a '4', while those with weaker essays earned a '2.' Note: a small percentage of students earned a '5' or '1'.

Obviously the higher one's multiple choice section score, the farther right on the graph and the higher the likely Final Score. It is important to note though, that it is possible for a student to score 70% on the multiple choice section and earn a final score of '3', while another student might score only 50% on the multiple choice section and earn a final score of '5'. The lesson is that there are no guarantees! It is *possible* (though not likely) to answer 30% of the multiple choice questions correctly and still earn a '3', but only by writing outstanding essays. It is also *possible* to answer 70% of the multiple choice questions correctly and still earn a '3', but only by writing poor essays. Students should realize that it is important to be "well-rounded" on the exam. Being good on only one part of the exam isn't sufficient for the highest score.



## Hypothetical Student Scores

Note: The cutoffs between each score apply to the 2002 APWH only.  
These levels change slightly each year according to the specific characteristics of that year's test results.



Most students do not have a clear understanding of how the Multiple Choice and Essay section scores are weighted and combined into a "Composite Score", and how that Composite Score becomes a Final Score of 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5.

**Student A:** This student correctly answered only 25 out of 70 multiple choice questions, incorrectly answered 30 questions, and skipped 15 questions. In addition, this student earned only 5 points on their three essays. Student A's Composite Score was 26, just shy of the 27 needed for a Final Score of '2'.

**Student B:** This student did a little better on the multiple choice section (30 correct, 30 incorrect, and 10 skipped) and also wrote slightly better essays. Their Composite Score was 37, squarely in the middle of the '2' range.

**Students C, D, & E:** All three of these students score the same Final Score ('3') and virtually identical Composite Scores (56, 57, 58). The point is that Student C is a well-rounded student, evenly able in both the multiple choice and essay sections. Student D is the student who does poorly on the multiple choice section, but is a better writer than his/her multiple choice section score would predict. Student E is a gifted multiple choice question answerer, but is weak on the writing portion of the exam. *All three students score the same Final Score.*

**Student F:** This student illustrates what is necessary to earn a '5'.

**Perfect:** Just in case this all seems too difficult, note that a student who answered all multiple choice questions and essays perfectly would earn a Composite Score of 120.



## The Multiple Choice Section

APWH multiple choice questions are usually more difficult than the typical multiple choice questions you are used to. Before APWH, most history questions are something like:

1. When was World War I?

- (A) 1903-1912
- (B) 1912-1919
- (C) 1914-1918
- (D) 1914-1922

Correct answer: (C)

Here is a hypothetical AP-style multiple choice question:

2. Which of the following accurately compares the motives for fighting World War I and World War II?

- (A) Imperialism was a major motive in World War I but not in World War II, as most colonial empires had already emancipated their colonial possessions.
- (B) In World War II the armies were more focused on killing the enemy's uniformed army than civilian population, resulting in fewer non-combatant casualties than in World War I.
- (C) In World War I the desire to gain new technologies played a major role, while in World War II new technologies played no significant role.
- (D) In World War II racist attitudes played a major role, while in World War I nationalism was a bigger motivation.
- (E) World War II was fought for and by women much more than World War I.

Correct Answer: (D)

Note several differences between these two examples:

- AP questions have 5 answers, not just 4.
- AP questions are much more abstract, and often involve comparisons requiring detailed factual knowledge. This is an example of exactly what the “Habits of Mind” are meant to do! You can’t “memorize” the answer to most AP-style questions, because the answer is often a complex set of trends and facts, not just a simple fact or date. Try to make an index card that you could use to study for this question! Does this make you think of how you might need to study differently for APWH than for a non-AP course?
- The answers are much longer and more complex. By the time you finish reading the last answer you may find it difficult to remember the question!
- AP questions are based on the 5 AP Themes. Note the bolded themes reflected in the question and answers:



| Part of Question  | AP Theme  |
|---|---|
| Which of the following accurately compares the motives for fighting World War I and World War II?   | <b>#3 Politics (Conflict)</b>   |
| (A) Imperialism was a major motive in World War I but not in World War II, as most colonial empires had already emancipated their colonial possessions.                           | <b>#4: Economic Structures</b>  |
| (B) In World War II the armies were more focused on killing the enemy's uniformed army than civilian population, resulting in fewer non-combatant casualties than in World War I. | <b>#1: Human-Environment Interaction</b>  |
| (C) In World War I the desire to gain new technologies played a major role, while in World War II new technologies played no significant role.                                    | <b>#2: Development &amp; Interaction of Cultures (Technology)</b>                   |
| (D) In World War II racist attitudes played a major role, while in World War I nationalism was a bigger motivation.   | <b>#5: Social Structures (Racial constructions) &amp; #3 Politics (nationalism)</b> |
| (E) World War II was fought for and by women far more than World War I.   | <b>#5: Social Structures (Gender Roles)</b>   |

### How the Multiple Choice Questions are Scored

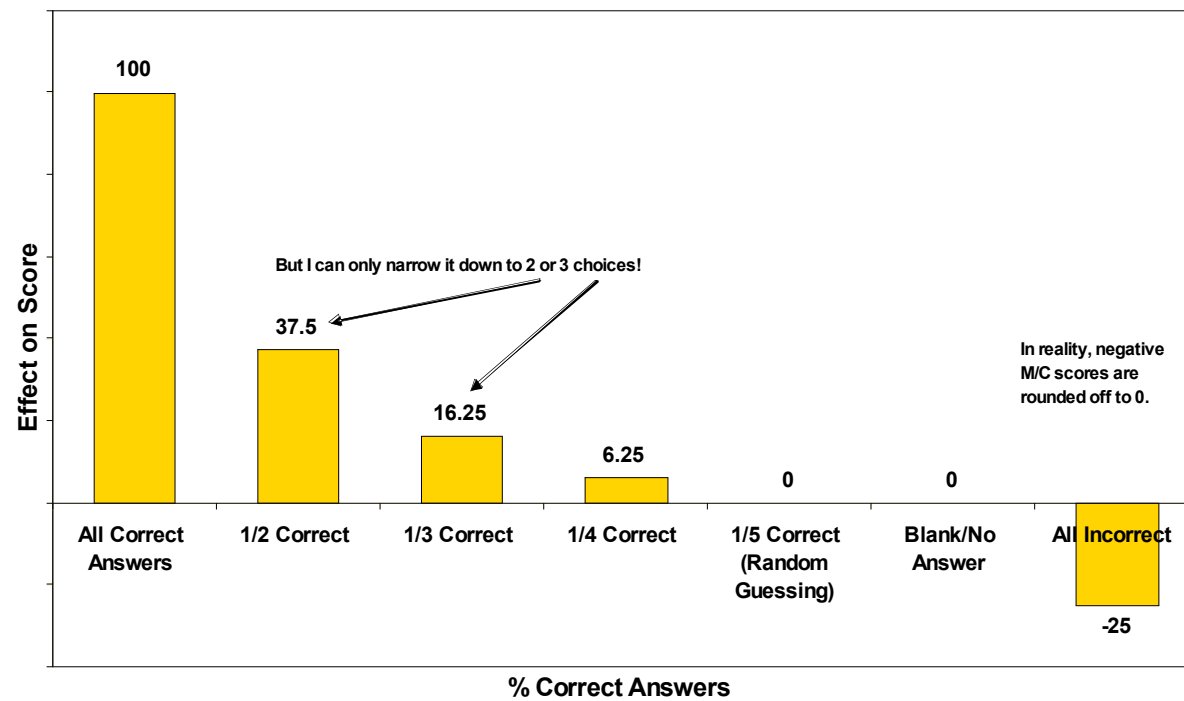
When answering AP multiple choice questions, you should know how your answers affect your score.

| How are AP Multiple Choice Questions Scored? |             |
|--|-------------|
| Correct Answer                               | + 1 point   |
| No Answer or Skipped Question                | 0 points    |
| Incorrect Answer                             | - 1/4 point |

The -1/4 point “penalty” for incorrect answers is to minimize the effect of random guessing. You should still answer any question in which you can eliminate 1 or 2 of the answers as incorrect.



**Should I Guess?**  
Bars Reflect 'Adjusted Score' Penalty (-1/4 point)  
for Incorrect Answers



Occasionally a student will be so afraid of failure that they won't answer a question unless they're absolutely sure of the answer. This is too cautious for AP. This graph shows the effect that guessing would have on a student's score.

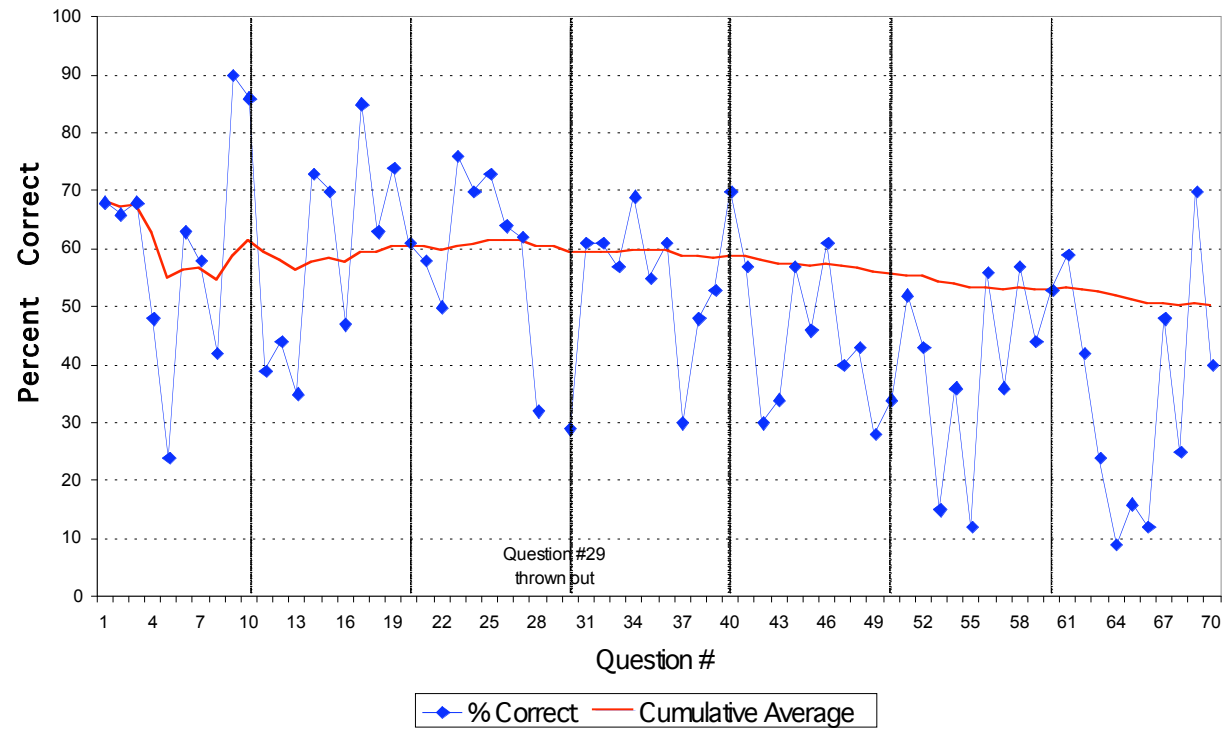
- The first bar shows how a 'perfect' student would score on the multiple choice section of the exam.
- The second bar shows a student's score if the student narrowed the answers down to two, then guessed. (Remember that there is a -1/4 point 'penalty' for incorrect answers, which neutralizes the effect of random guessing). The point of this chart is that the effect of guessing between two answers is NOT neutral, but will in fact HELP a student's score.
- Skipping a question is better than incorrectly answering a question, but not MUCH better.

Given the difficulty of AP-level multiple choice questions, it is common for students to experience mental fatigue ("brain drain") by the end of the 70 questions.

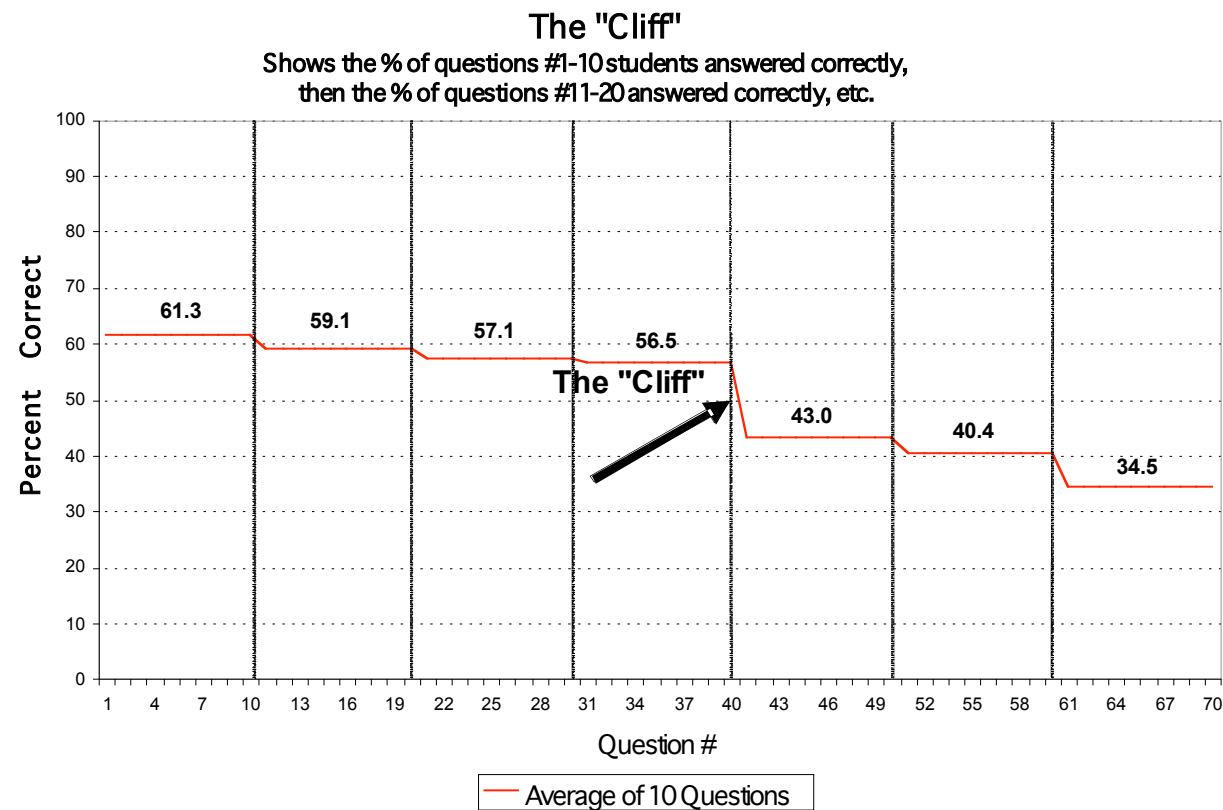


### 2002 AP World History % Correct

What percent of students correctly answered each Multiple Choice question?



This shows the percentage of students who answered each question on the 2002 AP World History Exam correctly. (e.g. 90% of students answered Question #9 correctly, while only 9% answered Question #64 correctly). Note how the cumulative average stays roughly constant for the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the exam, then inexorably drops for the rest of the exam. This trend becomes even more obvious in the following graph.



This is the same information as in the previous graph, just simplified to see the overall trend more easily. Note how students seem to hit the “Cliff” around Question #40. It would seem that students lose their mental focus after ~35 questions. This chart shows how important it is for students to have experience concentrating for a solid hour of sustained mental effort

## The Free Response (Essay) Section

There are three essay (officially called “Free Response”) questions. They are the

- Document Based Question (DBQ)
- Continuity & Change Over Time (CCOT), and
- Comparative (sometimes called the “Compare and Contrast”)

Each question requires you to demonstrate different skills and knowledge, and each is graded on a different rubric. You should familiarize yourself thoroughly with the rubrics used to grade each of these essays. Most of the essay writing advice is detailed in the Essay Writing Section, below is just a quick summary to give you an overview of what to expect.

### The Document Based Question (DBQ)

The purpose of the DBQ is to test students’ ability to *do* what professional historians actually do: use and interpret historical documents to make conclusions based on those documents. It is NOT a test of students knowledge (you’re not expected to know anything about the topic before the exam) but rather a test of





students *skills* to perform a variety of analytical tasks. See p. ??? for more information.

### **The Continuity and Change Over Time Question (CCOT)**

Fundamentally, every piece of historical information can be sorted into “that which changed” and “that which stayed the same” categories. The CCOT question requires students to analyze both changes and continuities two ways: chronologically (say, from 1450-1750 C.E.) and geographically. (compare events in one region to events on a larger, global scale during the same time period) This essay has traditionally been the most difficult for students because it requires students to not only “know” historical facts, but be able to “place” each known fact into the correct chronological and geographical place in comparison to all other known facts. Additionally, the CCOT asks students to analyze *why* certain changes and/or continuities occurred. See pp. ??? for more information.

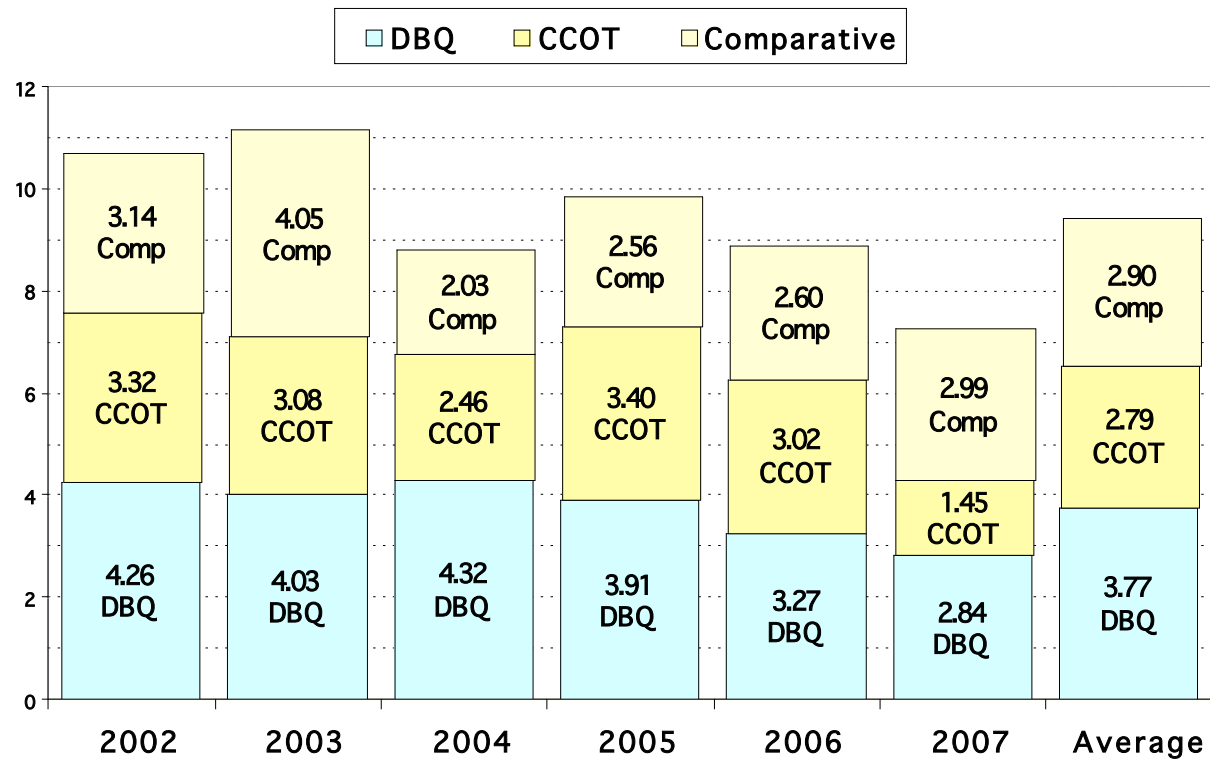
### **The Comparative Question**

The comparative question is one with which most students are familiar. APWH uses the verb “compare” to mean *both* “find the similarities *and* differences” (what some students think of as “compare and contrast”). Questions often choose different geographical regions and ask students to analyze two or more characteristics from those regions. Like the CCOT, the Comparative question also asks students to analyze *why* certain similarities and/or differences exist between the two regions. See pp. ??? for more information.

Each Essay Question is graded according to a separate rubric. The maximum score for each essay is 9, but most students score well below that.



### AP World History Essay Mean Scores

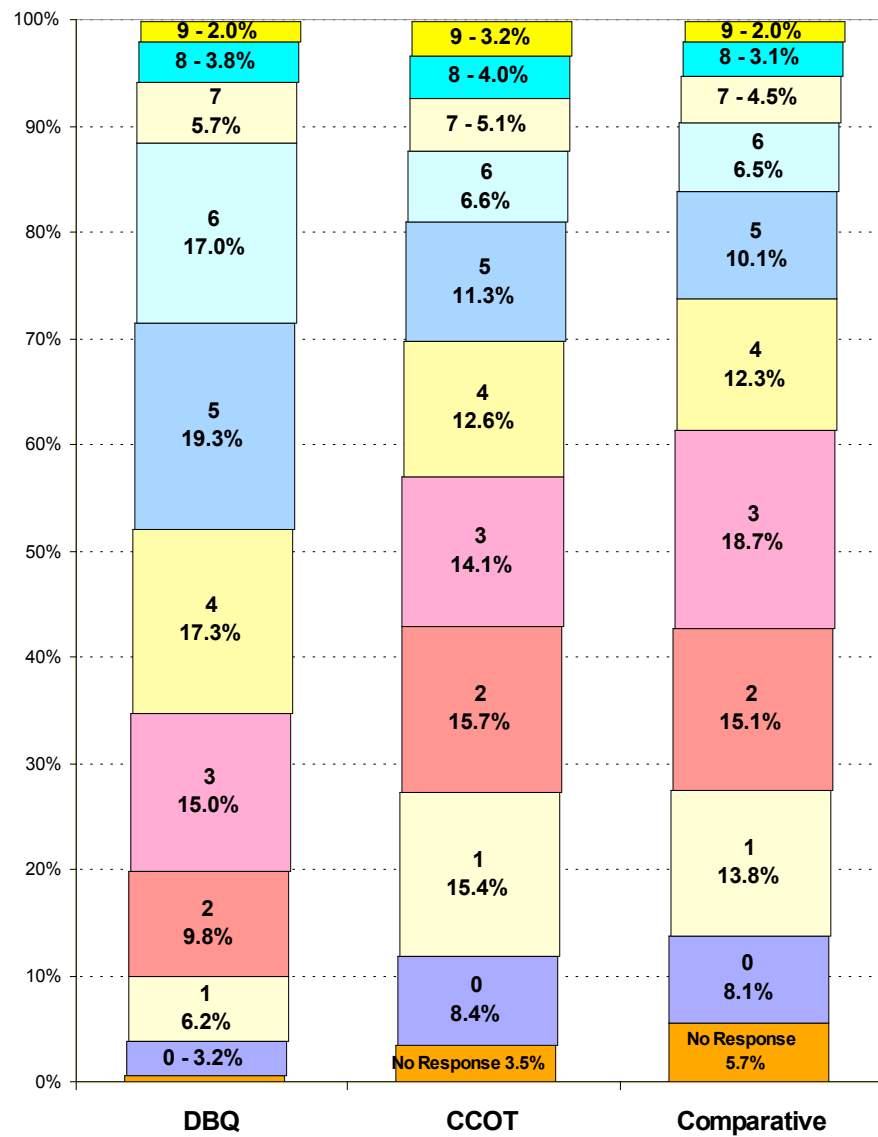


The important thing to realize from looking at this graph is that students should not despair if they “only” write a 4-point essay. Writing three 4-point essays is well *above* the national average! Superior students can raise their scores considerably by writing superior essays, but that takes hard work and repeated practice.

Also keep in mind that you have two *self-monitored* hours to write the Essays. You have to be disciplined in forcing yourself to budget your time wisely.



### 2002 AP World History Essay Scores Distribution



Note how the average essay scores drop, and the frequency of “No Response” essays increases. Students often lose track of time during the exam, or become tired and less able to write a quality essay as they struggle through the two hours of the writing portion. If you are well prepared, you won’t “wilt” during the last hour of the exam as you write your essays.

### ONE LAST COMMENT

Motivation is an internal phenomenon most influenced by success; the more successful someone is at a task, the more likely he or she is willing to keep trying. We’ve tried to organize this resource to help you



be successful in your own preparations or in your world history class and of course on the national AP Exam.

Finally, we think the most valuable aspect of this course is that you will learn a lot about the history of the world, which enables you to become a better, more educated citizen capable of making intelligent and thoughtful decisions.

