

POTENTIAL EXAM ESSAY QUESTIONS

These are the questions that everyone will be expected to be prepared to answer for the examinations in this course. Students should be preparing responses for each question, in small chunks, as the material is covered in the course. Often times, the part of an essay that is the most important to develop is the thesis paragraph. This is also often the most difficult part of an essay to craft. Therefore, students should spend a great deal of time developing a thesis for each potential essay question over the course of the semester.

For the first and second examinations, only three of the four potential questions will appear on the actual exam. For the third exam, all three potential questions will appear on the exam.

FIRST EXAM

1. Discuss the similarities and differences of two (2) of the colonial regions in British North America during the 17th and 18th centuries (1607-1720). Be sure to discuss at least two (2) of the following 6 characteristics for both regions:

- regional economy
- ethnic diversity
- social class structure
- nature and organization of the labor force
- religion
- demographic profiles (the characteristics of the population)

2. How did the decision to cultivate tobacco as a staple crop shape the maturation process of colonial society in the Chesapeake between 1620 and 1720? Pay attention to the following 4 characteristics:

- the regional economy
- organization of the labor force(s)
- social class structure
- the characteristics of the population

3. Describe and analyze at least two major differences between the 17th (1600s) and 18th (1700s) centuries in British North America? Structure your essay in the following way: for each difference, discuss how the process worked in the 17th century, how it changed during the 18th century, and the reasons for the change.

4. What were the major societal changes in eighteenth-century (1689-1776) British North America and how do they help explain the American Revolution? Be sure not to begin answering this question from 1763 forward. Consider ideological changes, political changes, economic changes, and social changes occurring in British colonial society.

SECOND EXAM

5. What were the challenges that the new nation faced after the Revolutionary War?

- What were the reasons why the American government was unable to resolve these problems under the Articles of Confederation? Think about both the rationale for the government as well as its structure.
- How did the Constitution seek to fix these problems? How were the Constitution and Articles of Confederation different from one another? Why were those differences important to helping the government resolve the problems the nation was dealing with?

It is recommended to structure this essay in three main sections. Be sure to give specific examples and refer to the structure of both governments throughout the essay.

6. How did Alexander Hamilton's and Thomas Jefferson's economic and political visions for the future of the country differ and what were the reasons for those differences?

- What did Hamilton do to implement his "vision" as Secretary of Treasury?
- What were Jefferson's responses in terms of his ideology and policies as President?

7. The United States in 1836 was a far different country than in 1800. How had the nation changed during this entire period (1800-1836) politically, religiously, economically, and culturally? That means your essay should make an argument about the ways in which the country was different by 1836 than it had been in 1800. Also, provide historical evidence to back up your claims.

- Be mindful that this question is about identifying and analyzing the major patterns and trends that occurred between 1800 and 1836. This question is not meant to be a comparison of Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson or their presidencies.

8. Was Henry Clay the intellectual heir of Alexander Hamilton or Thomas Jefferson? Provide descriptions of all 3 of their philosophies, as well as specific historical examples to support your answer. The reader has to know about Hamilton and Jefferson before you begin discussing Henry Clay in detail, in order to know who you are comparing Clay against.

THIRD EXAM

9. A) Assume the persona of an enslaved man or woman in the 1840s South. You can place yourself on a cotton or tobacco plantation. Compose a short letter about your life experience to a descendant to be read in the present day. B) Then, write an essay breaking down the reasons why/ ways in which your letter is historically accurate. Talk about the typical life experiences of enslaved peoples based on the time period, the region or state they live in, the cultural practices of the black population, and the legal restrictions states imposed on African Americans.

10. Discuss the impact of these three social reform movements (temperance, abolition, and women's suffrage) on American politics and society.

- What were the ideas that linked social reformers together and where did they originate?
- What were the goals of each movement?
- How did different reformers go about trying to achieve the goals of their movement?
- How did each reform movement help change American politics and society?

11. Discuss the political, economic, and social forces that promoted union (helped to bring the nation together) and disunion (threatened to tear the country apart) in the United States from the end of the War of 1812 to the outbreak of the Civil War (1815-1860). The United States underwent many technological, economic, political, and social changes during these 45 years. It is possible that some of these changes promoted both union and disunion.

12. The politics of compromise that had successfully avoided sectional conflict since the drafting of the U.S. Constitution began to collapse during the fifteen years prior to the Civil War (1846-1861). In this essay, consider how the outcome of the Mexican-American War changed national politics in the U.S. after 1848. Discuss how and why political compromise became harder and harder to achieve over the course of the 1850s.

These bullets are meant to simply provide guidance about how to organize the essays. It is possible to write an effective essay while employing other methods of structuring the relevant historical information.