

GLOSSARY

The AP World History course focuses on the “big picture” of history. It is not critical that you memorize names, dates, or events, yet the knowledge of certain world history vocabulary terms can be crucial in framing the analysis of world history. The terms presented here come primarily from the words used by the College Board to describe the important content material in AP World History.

GENERAL TERMS

Civilization

This term can be a loaded issue of historical debate. Who is civilized and who is not? Strictly speaking, a civilization is a form of culture that is characterized by cities, specialized workers, complex institutions, recordkeeping, and advanced technology. At times, however, the term has been used to separate those cultures considered advanced from those that did not “measure up,” especially during the time of European imperialism.

Demography

The study of population dynamics. Demographics is important in the study of world history because population dynamics provide evidence of important historical trends, such as pandemics and migrations.

Diffusion

The spread of items from one place to another. In world history, the phrase *cultural diffusion* is used to describe the spread of ideas, such as religions.

Gender Roles

Describes the social roles that men and women adopt. Different cultures often have vastly different notions of gender roles. Even within a given society, gender roles may differ between different social groups, such as between the elites and the peasantry.

Historiography

The study of the way that historians write history. In one sense, it is the history of history. A person examining historiography would look at the way that a Marxist historian, for example, would frame the historical record differently than a person with an imperialist perspective.

Interregional

The connections between different regions of the world. Trade connections, for example, between South Asia and East Africa are an example of interregional connections.

Migration

The movement of people from one area to settle in another area. Migrations can be voluntary or forced, such as with the Atlantic slave trade.

Patriarchy

A social system in which the father is the head of the family or a system in which men dominate the social structure.

Periodization

The division of historical time into different periods. AP World History, for example, divides the course into six different periods of history. How history is divided is a matter of great debate since it, by nature, sets up different dates as the critical division points.

Technology

The way in which people adapt their knowledge to tools and inventions to meet their needs. The concept of technology in AP World History represents a major theme of the course.

UP TO 600 CE**Animism**

Religious beliefs that maintain that spirits are animals, plants, and other objects in nature.

Caste System

The social system of the Aryans divided people into four castes, also known as Varnas. This caste system had a profound impact on the development of the Hindu religion. Each of the four main castes had specific roles to fulfill in society. The caste system led to a lack of social mobility in India.

Classical

Represents a period of great cultural significance in society before the modern age. In a limited form of usage, classical refers to the age of Athens in ancient Greece and to the time of the Roman Republic and Empire. The term *classical*, however, can also be applied to non-Mediterranean cultures, such as the Qin dynasty of China.

Filial Piety

A form of respect shown by children to their parents. Filial piety is a crucial concept in Confucian thought and can also be seen in the respect and veneration shown to elders and ancestors.

Monotheism

The religious belief in one God. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all represent monotheist religions.

Neolithic Revolution

The term *Neolithic* means “new stone age.” During the early years of the Neolithic period, which corresponds to the starting point of the AP World History course of 8000 BCE, humans discovered agriculture and settled into fixed communities.

Nomadic

A way of life in which people do not have a settled home but rather move from place to place in order to support their livelihood. Pastoral nomads move in order to find places for their animals to forage; hunter-gatherer nomads seek out new areas for finding and hunting food.

Pastoral

Refers to a group that herds domesticated animals for their livelihood. Often, pastoral people are also nomadic.

Polygamy

A cultural trait in which one person is married to more than one spouse at a time.

Polytheism

Religious belief in more than one god. The ancient Greeks, for example, practiced polytheism.

Silk Roads

The trade routes that linked the Mediterranean area of the Roman Empire with the Chinese Qin dynasty. Silk textiles and other precious trade goods traveled across the Silk Roads about 2,000 years ago. Later, the Silk Roads flourished under the Mongol period of the 13th century.

600 TO 1450 CE

Caliphate

Caliphs were the political—and to a certain extent religious—successors of Muhammad. The term *caliphate* refers to the political-religious state comprising the Muslim community and the lands and peoples under its control, which was ruled by a succession of caliphs following the death of Muhammad.

Crusades

Military excursions during the Middle Ages by the Christians of Western Europe with the objective of capturing the Holy Land from the Muslims. Christian crusader states were established along the eastern Mediterranean coast until later Muslim counter-attacks reconquered the area. The Crusades were also responsible for increasing the cultural and economic integration of Europe with the rest of the world.

Dar al-Islam

A term meaning “house of Islam” in Arabic. The Dar al-Islam is the expanse of the Islamic world. In the centuries that followed the death of Muhammad, Dar al-Islam stretched from the Iberian Peninsula of Western Europe to the far islands of Southeast Asia.

Feudalism

A social and political system in which lords are granted landed estates by a monarch in exchange for their loyalty, especially in military matters. Feudalism existed during the Medieval period in Western Europe and also in Japan during the age of the shoguns.

Indian Ocean Trade System

A network of trade established between the Indian subcontinent and the Swahili-speaking trade cities of Eastern Africa. Ocean-going merchants from the Arabian Peninsula used the regular patterns of the monsoon winds to travel back and forth carrying cargoes of textiles, spices, and precious metals. The domination of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean during the 16th century ended the previous dynamics of this trade system.

Manorialism

Manorialism refers to the manor system, which was the economic system that supported the political system of European feudalism. The manor system was based on a set of rights and obligations between a lord and his serfs. Because European feudal manors were economically self-sufficient, Europe did not take a large part in global trade during this period.

Missionary

A person who spreads his or her religious belief to others. In several of the major world religions, such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, missionaries were vital in the spread of the faith.

Pandemic

A widespread outbreak of disease. Pandemics, such as the bubonic plague of the 14th century and the smallpox pandemic in the Americas after contact with the Europeans, caused global transformations.

Papacy

Referring to the authority of the Roman Catholic Pope, who is seen as the spiritual successor to Saint Peter. During the Medieval period, the papacy had great religious and political power over almost all of Western Europe.

1450 TO 1750

Absolutism

A style of government that came about in Europe during the 17th century. Absolute monarchs generally ruled a highly centralized state by concentrating power in their own hands. State-run armies, religions, and economic policy often supported the absolutist state. Louis XIV of France represents what many historians consider to be the epitome of absolutism. European absolute monarchs often used divine right theory—the assertion that their rule represented the will of God—to legitimize their rule.

Coercive Labor

Any labor system that involves force, such as various forms of slavery, serfdom, and indentured labor. Almost all civilizations relied on some form of coercive labor up to the 19th century.

Columbian Exchange

The biological exchange that occurred as a result of European involvement with the Americas following Columbus's voyage. Diseases, animals, and plants were transmitted from the Old World to the New World, vastly changing both.

Empire

A political unit in which groups of people, often in different countries, are controlled by a single ruler. Imperial systems are by nature expansionist.

Enlightenment

An intellectual movement centered in Western Europe during the 18th century. The Enlightenment focused on rational thought, order, and logic. These concepts had widespread impacts, such as on the American Revolution and the emancipation of slavery.

Harem

Strictly defined, a harem is the place within a Muslim palace where women were housed. harems also refer to the women, typically concubines, who are attached to a powerful political ruler.

Neo-Confucianism

A movement to return to traditional Confucian values that occurred especially during the Song dynasty.

Reformation

The religious movement for reform of the Roman Catholic Church during the 16th century. The Reformation led to the creation of new Protestant Christian churches that sought authority separate from the Pope.

Renaissance

The period of intellectual and artistic "rebirth" that occurred first in Italy during the 14th and 15th centuries. During the Renaissance, many elite people sought inspiration in the ideals of classical times and focused on the ideas of humanism and individualism.

Scientific Revolution

A major period of change in scientific thought that occurred in Europe beginning in the 16th century. The scientific revolution was characterized by the use of observation and experimentation using the rational tools of the scientific method.

1750 TO 1900**Bourgeoisie**

The middle class in European industrial society. During the French Revolution, the social group of mostly wealthy professionals and businessmen, who helped lead the initial phases of the revolution, were known as the bourgeoisie. Later, Karl Marx would consider the bourgeoisie to be the social class most responsible for the capitalist exploitation of the proletariat (working class).

Colonialism

Rule by one country over another country. In colonialism, raw materials and markets of the colony are often used to enrich the mother country.

Communism

A political and economic philosophy best represented by the thinking of Karl Marx during the 19th century. In communism, a violent revolution is needed in order to overthrow capitalism and create a society based on social equality.

Emancipation

The liberation of a group of people from the control of other people. Typically, emancipation relates to the liberation of people under a coercive labor system, such as slavery or serfdom. Emancipation may also refer to female emancipation, in which women achieve rights equal to those of men, including suffrage.

Ideology

A system of ideas or ways of thinking that guides the decisions of a group of people. Ideology generally involves issues of politics, but it also has economic, social, and cultural implications.

Imperialism

The process by which mostly European countries established political, economic, and social control over other parts of the world starting in the 16th century and reaching its height in the 19th century.

Industrialization

The development of a complex economic system using the factory system of production. Industrialization is one of the main characteristics of a modern society.

Marxism

A system of political and economic thought developed first by Karl Marx in the mid-19th century. Marxism emphasizes class struggle as the dominant force of social change and historical transformation.

Nationalism

A political belief that people should have loyalty to their nation (specifically the people they share a culture and history) rather than to a monarch or emperor. Often in nationalism, people see their own nation as having special aspects that separate and elevate their people in relation to people of other nations.

Social Darwinism

An intellectual movement that applied Charles Darwin's biological ideas of natural selection and the survival of the fittest to human societies. European Social Darwinists of the 19th century saw other parts of the world as weak and thus justifiably exploited.

1900 TO THE PRESENT**Apartheid**

A governmental policy of racial separation that arose in South Africa during the middle of the 20th century. It was dismantled in the 1990s when black South Africans gained political representation.

Cold War

The period of conflict between the United States and its allies, and the Soviet Union and its allies. The Cold War began soon after World War II and ended in the last years of the 20th century.

Consumer Society

A society, especially in modern times, that expresses itself through the process of consumption of material goods. Issues such as the globalization of corporate brands and the role of multinational corporations in countries around the world are both indicators of the diffusion of the values of a consumer society.

Decolonization

The process by which former colonies became independent. Countries in South Asia and much of Africa became independent through decolonization during the middle of the 20th century.

Deforestation

The elimination of vast numbers of trees by logging operations as in Brazil and Indonesia or by individuals for firewood and construction material as in Haiti. Deforestation can have dramatic local environmental impacts, such as soil erosion. Widespread deforestation has been linked to broader ecological issues of a global nature such as global warming.

Demographic Transition

The shift to both lower birthrates and lower death rates, thus leading to stable population dynamics and increased longevity. Demographic transitions occur within countries that experience modernization and the advantages of modern medicine and lower child mortality.

Developing World

Parts of the world that have an economic system in which the process of industrial development is not advanced. Much of Africa, Asia, and Latin America is part of the developing world.

Fascism

A political system that emerged in Europe following World War II. Fascism combines ideas of extreme nationalism with authoritarian rule to oppose both liberal democracy and communism. Mussolini's Italy was the first fascist country.

Feminism

A social and political movement that views women as equal to men. Feminists demand equal rights and the elimination of patriarchal control.

Genocide

The planned, systematic killing of a group of people. The Nazi genocide of the Jews and other groups is known as the Holocaust. The 20th century also witnessed other acts of genocide, such as against the Armenians at the beginning of the century and in Rwanda at the end of the century.

Globalization

The process by which national boundaries become increasingly less important, as a result of economic, social, and cultural interactions between parts of the world.

Guerrilla War

A style of warfare that emphasizes irregular fighting units that use surprise attacks and unconventional methods.

Multinational Corporation

A company with operations in a variety of different countries. The late 20th century, with its rapid move toward globalization, saw a rise in influence of multinational corporations.

Non aligned Nations

Countries that remained neutral during the Cold War conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. For years, India was the symbolic leader among the nonaligned nations.

Pacific Rim

Those areas that surround the Pacific Ocean such as Taiwan and Singapore. The term is typically used to describe the new economic influence of the nations of East and Southeast Asia.

Popular Culture

Cultural issues of common identity that bind a group of people together. Film, music, and sports are all important aspects of modern popular culture. In recent years, popular culture has become increasingly globalized.

Third World

Strictly speaking, the Third World was the term used during the Cold War to describe those countries that were not Western allies of the United States or allies of the Soviet Union. Generally, it is applied to countries of the developing world, especially in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

Urbanization

The process involved in the growth of cities and the areas surrounding them. Typically, urbanization occurs as part of the processes of industrialism and modernization. People migrate from rural areas or from other countries into rapidly growing urban centers so that they can take advantage of economic opportunity.

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