



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on June 17, 2016

New Advanced Placement European History Standards Promote Secular-Progressive Worldview

The new Advanced Placement European History (APEH) standards, promulgated by the The College Board “warps and guts the history of Europe to make it serve today’s progressive agenda,” is the blunt conclusion of the National Association of Scholars (NAS).



The NAS is a network of scholars and citizens united by their commitment to academic freedom, disinterested scholarship, and excellence in American higher education. After reviewing the new standards for AP European History, Dr. David Randall, the director of communications at NAS, wrote a scathing 12,000-word analysis of the standards. Randall, who has both written and taught European history, concluded that the new APEH minimizes religion, the history of liberty, the destructiveness of communism and Soviet rule, and the particular history of Britain. It omits key figures of history, including Christopher Columbus and even Winston Churchill.

Besides having a decidedly left-wing slant, Randall discovered that the standards give teachers and students no reason to find European history compelling.

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Advanced Placement history classes, offered in high school, allow students an opportunity to obtain college credit without having to take the class in college and pay tuition — thus making the course enticing for cost-conscious students and parents, and at least partially explaining the course’s popularity. NAS has previously documented the leftist slant taken concerning the AP American History course.

It is essential to note that the students receive college credit not by the grade they make in the class, but by making a certain score on the national test. This means that regardless of the political inclination of the high-school teacher, the progressive bias of the national test pushes the student toward a secular and progressive world view.

The College Board, which developed the two courses — AP American History and AP European History — have recently redesigned them so that even students who took these courses just a few years ago would not recognize them today. Peter Wood, president of NAS, had this to say about the redesigned AP



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History class. “One group oppressing another is the dominant motif of AP U.S. History, a history of the oppressors always finding new ways to impose their desire for wealth and gain and the people being repressed always resisting.”

Of particular concern to critics of the left-wing bias of the two courses is that many of the students who take the classes will likely be the leaders of tomorrow.

In his analysis of the AP European History class, Randall wrote, “APEH turns Europe’s history into a foreshortened, neo-Marxist, generic narrative of historical modernization, powered by abstract social and economic forces. It defines modernization around secularism, the state, and a thin supportive intellectual history.”

According to Randall, “APEH points the arrow of European history toward a well-governed, secular welfare state, whose interchangeable subjects possess neither national particularity nor faith nor freedom.” Randall laments that APEH “presents the history of government rather than of liberty.”

Defenders of the revised AP history courses argue that local teachers could “populate the course with content that is meaningful to them,” but this evades the point. If a person or idea does not appear on the standards and the test, the pressure is intense to drop that person or idea from the course. Classroom teachers across America understand this concept very well, since they have seen valuable class time taken away to meet the demands of increased federal-required testing imposed by President Bush’s No Child Left Behind law. What gets taught is what is on the test, and not any additional material a teacher may wish to use in the classroom.

After all, it matters little what a student actually knows, if it cannot be demonstrated on the national test. And if you have national standards, assessed by a national test, you have a national curriculum.

This leads to another defense offered by the College Board: “The AP U.S. History course is an advanced college-level course — not an introductory U.S. history course. It is not meant to be the students’ first exposure to the fundamental narrative of U.S. history.”

But this defense evades the point. If students do not receive “the fundamental narrative” of U.S. history in the AP class, exactly when are they going to receive it? The AP class is a substitute for the regular high-school class in history — students do not take both classes. And then, when they get to college, unless they major in history or something closely related, this is likely all the U.S. history or European history they will ever get.

“The College Board’s progressive distortion of European history powerfully resembles its bias in its 2014 Advanced Placement United States History examination (APUSH),” Randall notes, adding it is part of the College Board’s “long march to impose leftist history on the half a million American high school students each year who prepare themselves for college by taking APUSH or APEH.”

Among other problems Randall found with the new standards for AP European History, include the way it treats religion “as an instrument of power rather than as an autonomous sphere of European history.” While APEH does discuss the movement to abolish slavery, it does not mention how the abolitionist movement was led by the Christian faith, “led by saints such as William Wilberforce,” the member of Parliament who was inspired by John Newton, the author of the great hymn “Amazing Grace.” APEH passes over medieval Christianity, and gives no explanation for Reformation theology.

The standards underplay British history throughout, “thus minimizing the importance of Britain’s distinctive history in the European tradition as the champion of liberty.” As Stanley Kurtz writes in



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National Review Online, America's republican form of government "is rooted in the history of European and especially British liberty," including the writings of John Locke, the tradition of English common law, and the roots of economic liberty, with writings of Adam Smith, but all of these historical figures and ideas, along with the benefits of the Industrial Revolution, are neglected.

On the other hand, the evils of communism are minimized, along with "the brutal destructiveness of Soviet rule, and the aggressiveness of Soviet foreign policy."

Finally, Randall notes that APEH fails to argue that "European history is important or interesting in itself," and "never gives a reason why students should study Europe's history in particular," or that the most important reason that students should study the past of Europe: "because it is our history."

Larry Krieger, a retired AP history teacher, examined the new "framework" of the revised American history curriculum, and declared, "I was shocked by what wasn't in the framework and what was in the framework." According to Krieger, the AP framework "ignores the philosophical underpinnings of the Declaration of Independence and the willingness of the signers to pledge 'our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor' to the cause of freedom."

When Krieger read some of the practice test questions, and the proposed correct answers, he considered it obvious that the intent is to indoctrinate students into a liberal, big government viewpoint. For example, he noted a question that showed an image of a family living in poverty conditions. The "correct" answer, at least according to the College Board, was, "Government should act to eliminate the worst abuses of industrial society." Another suggested answer, which the College Board had as an incorrect answer, was "Capitalism free of government regulations would improve social conditions."

"What we have here," Krieger said, "is a repetition of a theme: There's another problem: the progressives come to the rescue, and who are the villains?" The villains, according to the College Board, are those who favor limited government.

To paraphrase George Orwell, writing in his famous dystopian novel *1984*, if one can control what is taught about our nation's past, and Europe's past, to the next generation of Americans, then one can surely expect to control the future.

Steve Byas is a professor of history at Randall University (formerly Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College) in Moore, Oklahoma. His book History's Greatest Libels is a challenge to the distortions of the past intended to denigrate personalities, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Christopher Columbus, and Marie Antoinette.



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