

# The Disappearing Continent

A Critique of the Revised Advanced Placement  
European History Examination



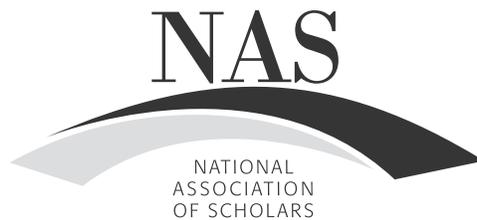
DAVID RANDALL  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS,  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS  
JULY 2016



# THE DISAPPEARING CONTINENT

## **A Critique of the Revised Advanced Placement European History Examination**

July 2016



DAVID RANDALL

# ABOUT THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS

## **Mission**

The National Association of Scholars is an independent membership association of academics and others working to sustain the tradition of reasoned scholarship and civil debate in America's colleges and universities. We uphold the standards of a liberal arts education that fosters intellectual freedom, searches for the truth, and promotes virtuous citizenship.

## **What We Do**

We publish a quarterly journal, *Academic Questions*, which examines the intellectual controversies and the institutional challenges of contemporary higher education.

We publish studies of current higher education policy and practice with the aim of drawing attention to weaknesses and stimulating improvements.

Our website presents a daily stream of educated opinion and commentary on higher education and archives our research reports for public access.

NAS engages in public advocacy to pass legislation to advance the cause of higher education reform. We file friend-of-the-court briefs in legal cases, defending freedom of speech and conscience, and the civil rights of educators and students. We give testimony before congressional and legislative committees and engage public support for worthy reforms.

NAS holds national and regional meetings that focus on important issues and public policy debates in higher education today.

## **Membership**

NAS membership is open to all who share a commitment to its core principles of fostering intellectual freedom and academic excellence in American higher education. A large majority of our members are current and former faculty members. We also welcome graduate and undergraduate students, teachers, college administrators, and independent scholars, as well as non-academic citizens who care about the future of higher education.

NAS members receive a subscription to our journal *Academic Questions* and access to a network of people who share a commitment to academic freedom and excellence. We offer opportunities to influence key aspects of contemporary higher education.

Visit our website, [www.nas.org](http://www.nas.org), to learn more about NAS and to become a member.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The publication of *The Disappearing Continent* was made possible by the generous support of many donors to and members of the National Association of Scholars, including

Anonymous, Roger W. Barnett, Sudipta Basu, Robert L. Berkowitz, MD, H. Michael Biscan, William L. Brown, PhD, M. Northrup Buechner, Drs. Stephen H. and Joanne R. Burns, David Clemens, Peter Cohee, Pearl J. Compaan, Candace and Cortes de Russy, Thomas G. Dineen III, Daniel D. Dolan, Jr., Marsha Familiaro Enright, James Enstrom, Bruce Gans, John M. Gist, Dennis Gouws, Roger W. Haskell, Daniel Hepler, Emmett Holman, Thomas Horrell, Albert Huff, Katherine Kersten, Adam Kissel, Larry Madison, Wight Martindale, Jr., Andrew Melnyk, Peter Merry, Maureen Mullarkey, Anthony Nicastro, B. Nelson Ong, Robert Paquette, Paul Parlato, John D. Peebles, Dyanna Pepitone, David Popenoe, Michael Rauer, James Reid, Karen Richardson, Stephen M. Robinson, Norman Rogers, Michael J. Saxton, Alvan I. Shane, Harrison Sheld, Jamie Spencer, Alan Spira, Thomas T. Taylor, Eric Terzuolo, John C. Thomas, Robert Tomanek, Virginia Tschanz, Tom Vinson, Keith Whitaker, Raymond Wolters, and Johnny Zamrzla.

The National Association of Scholars is grateful to them all.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	6
<b>Prologue: The APUSH War</b> .....	6
<b>The Disappearing Continent</b> .....	7
<b>The Battle for Europe</b> .....	7
<b>America Needs a Choice</b> .....	8
<b>THE EXAM'S SUBSTANCE</b> .....	10
<b>A Modernization Narrative</b> .....	10
<b>Emphasizing Modernization</b> .....	11
<b>Compressing Europe's Modernization</b> .....	11
<b>A Narrow Intellectual History</b> .....	12
<b>Distorting Modernization</b> .....	13
<b>Erasing Religion</b> .....	13
<b>Instrumentalized Religion</b> .....	13
<b>Culture's Formative Role Erased</b> .....	14
<b>No Religion in the Nineteenth Century</b> .....	14
<b>Islam, Orthodoxy, and Judaism Expunged</b> .....	17
<b>Erasing Liberty</b> .....	18
<b>Erasing Britain</b> .....	19
<b>Progressive Distortions</b> .....	22
<b>Hostility to Free Enterprise</b> .....	22
<b>Capitalism and Consumerism</b> .....	22
<b>Whitewashing Marxism and Communism</b> .....	23
<b>Minimizing European Exceptionalism</b> .....	25
<b>The Age of Discovery Without Discoverers</b> .....	25
<b>Exaggerated Importance of the Outside World</b> .....	25
<b>Postwar Europe as Cold War Pawn</b> .....	26
<b>The Overlooked Architecture of Modern Knowledge</b> .....	27
<b>Insecure Feminism</b> .....	29
<b>Chopping Off What Doesn't Fit</b> .....	30
<b>THE EXAM'S FRAMEWORK</b> .....	31
<b>Introduction</b> .....	31
<b>History Indifferent to Europe</b> .....	31
<b>Present-Minded History</b> .....	31
<b>History Made Alien</b> .....	32

<b>Inevitable History</b> .....	32
<b>Flat Style</b> .....	33
<b>Narrow Historiography</b> .....	34
<b>Ahistorical Abstractions</b> .....	34
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	36
<b>Summary</b> .....	36
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	36

## INTRODUCTION

### **Prologue: The APUSH War**

In the winter of 2013/2014 the College Board released a new Course and Exam Description for its Advanced Placement United States History examination (APUSH). APUSH presented a progressive version of American history that downplayed American exceptionalism and virtue, made America's failings the heart of its history, and left students ignorant of broad stretches of America's past. In July 2014, NAS president Peter Wood's article, "The New AP U.S. History: A Preliminary Report," brought the College Board's revisions to national attention.<sup>1</sup> Wood's article inspired a drumbeat of criticism of APUSH from public figures and organizations including academics, local school boards, the Texas State Board of Education, and the Republican National Committee, and in July 2015 the College Board responded by releasing a revised version of the Advanced Placement U.S. History course.

The NAS forced the College Board to respond to its critics and substantially modify the language of its APUSH framework. The new version, APUSH 2.0, included important individuals such as James Madison who had been omitted from APUSH 1.0, gave greater attention to American inventiveness, and reduced the exam's heavy progressive bias.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, serious questions remain about how much has actually changed. The College Board altered the APUSH Course and Exam Description, but the bulk of the APUSH course materials—teacher training, textbooks, and other instructional materials—still have the same controversial biases as the original 2014 APUSH framework. The NAS won an important battle in the College Board's drive to revise the SAT and its Advanced Placement examinations along progressive lines, but it did not stop the College Board.

The NAS decided to follow up its APUSH report by examining the College Board's other examinations, to find out if they also forwarded a progressive agenda. This report shows that the intellectual slant of the new AP European History examination (APEH) powerfully resembles the bias of the original 2014 APUSH framework. The College Board's persisting progressive distortion of history substantiates concerns that the 2015 APUSH revisions do not represent a genuine change of direction, but only a temporary detour in 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.

---

1 Peter W. Wood, "The New AP History: A Preliminary Report," July 1, 2014, [https://www.nas.org/articles/the\\_new\\_ap\\_history\\_a\\_preliminary\\_report](https://www.nas.org/articles/the_new_ap_history_a_preliminary_report).

2 Peter W. Wood, "The College Board's Modified, Limited Hang Out," September 11, 2015, [https://www.nas.org/articles/Re-re-re-revising\\_American\\_History](https://www.nas.org/articles/Re-re-re-revising_American_History).

## The Disappearing Continent

In Fall 2015 the College Board continued its campaign by releasing a new Course and Exam Description for its AP European History exam.<sup>3</sup> APEH does not mention Christopher Columbus (the discoverer of America), Michel de Montaigne (the great exponent of tolerance), John Wesley (Protestantism’s man of the heart), the Duke of Wellington (the conqueror of Napoleon), Florence Nightingale (the founder of nursing), or Václav Havel (the icon of intellectual resistance to and triumph over Communist tyranny). Winston Churchill only appears as a prompt for learning how to analyze primary sources (p. 142). These absences proclaim APEH’s minimization throughout of European triumphs, tolerance, faith, generalship, religious humanitarianism, resistance to the left, and liberty. APEH shreds European history to serve today’s progressive agenda.

## The Battle for Europe

This document extends NAS’s critique of the College Board from Advanced Placement U.S. History to Advanced Placement European History. The College Board distorts APEH in the same way that it distorted the first version of APUSH. The traditional history of Europe tells how Europeans, uniquely, articulated the ideals of freedom, put them into practice, and created the modern world. APEH’s leftist skew transforms the history of Europe into a story of a generic modernization process that turned Europe into a secular, well-governed welfare state. This skew disserves American high school students by presenting a badly distorted history of Europe that ignores or minimizes the parts of Europe’s history that contradict its progressive narrative. It reduces, above all,

1. the history of liberty;
2. the history of religion; and
3. the history of Britain.

APEH also warps with progressive spin the history that remains. Its worst distortions are

1. anti-free-market economic history;
2. whitewash of the socialist and Communist movements; and
3. denial of Europe’s exceptionality.

In sum, APEH follows modern progressive historians’ soft-Marxist interpretation of the history of Europe, which works to justify modern progressivism’s soft-Marxist political action in the present. APEH’s approach is at odds with all historiographical schools of thought that take culture, religion, or liberal democracy as primary categories of historical experience. APEH’s approach also undercuts European history as a source of ideals to inspire political action, except for progressives. In effect, it teaches that the lesson of all European history is that progressivism is the task for today.

---

<sup>3</sup> “APEH” hereafter refers to the European History Course and Exam Description.

APEH compounds these distortions by turning European history into nothing more than a means for students to practice their analytical skills. European history itself becomes an arbitrarily chosen rock on which to sharpen the analytical blade. It is the blade that supposedly matters, not the stone picked up by the wayside. APEH never gives a reason *why* students should study Europe's history in particular. It neither claims nor presents European history as important or interesting in itself, and never mentions that Americans should care about Europe because we model our ideals, our government, and our society on Europe. APEH will seriously reduce the numbers of the next generation of teachers, writers, and readers of European history by giving today's students no grounds to like European history.

Throughout this report we provide lists of topics missing from the APEH framework to illustrate APEH's exclusion of key themes and subject areas from its curriculum. We mention a large number of missing subjects to make clear the scale and the distorting character of APEH's omissions. We do not call on the College Board to insert all of these topics into a revised APEH. Any year-long survey of European history must be selective. The range of topics and significant events is too large to permit a truly comprehensive approach. Our point in noting so many omissions is not that they all should be corrected in detail, but that APEH should change its examination to include whole categories of history that it currently neglects.

The College Board can correct these broader thematic omissions by adding broad programmatic statements and well-chosen illustrative examples. For example, we aren't asking the College Board to include every single example of the nineteenth-century religious developments that we cite in the section titled "No Religion in the Nineteenth Century." Rather, the College Board should restore religion to its rightful place in nineteenth-century European history by providing appropriate thematic guidance, illustrated by at least some examples of the sort we cite. We want the College Board to revise its standards throughout APEH so that its selection of broad topics and illustrative details accurately portrays Europe's exceptional history.

APEH, like APUSH, is part of a large bureaucratic and pedagogical enterprise that includes not only the standards but also an examination, preferred text books, teacher preparation, and many ancillary materials prepared by independent organizations that are meant to align with the College Board's standards. The College Board's revision of the Advanced Placement curriculum ultimately affects the entire scope of high school education, as well as introductory college instruction. We don't attempt to cover all these subjects here. We focus primarily on the substance of APEH's distortions of European history and secondarily on how APEH's framework gets rid of most reasons to study the subject.

### **America Needs a Choice**

The discipline of history by its very nature speaks from many perspectives and in many voices. Since the problem with APEH is its monolithic bias, there are two obvious remedies. One would be for the College Board to modify its curriculum to provide a greater diversity of historical perspectives. At the end of this report we make several specific recommendations about how this should be

done. The other option is for Americans to follow the suggestion made by more than 100 scholars in 2015's "Letter Opposing the 2014 APUSH Framework,"<sup>4</sup> namely to restore variety, choice, and accountability to secondary education in America by developing one or more competitive alternatives to the College Board's AP testing program. There should be no "official" account of either American or European history, or of any other subject, much less a one-sided account of the sort forced on students by the new APUSH and APEH frameworks. These two options are not mutually exclusive. The College Board should inject greater intellectual variety into the APUSH and APEH curriculums, but America should also move beyond the model of a College Board monopoly. The best way to achieve excellence in high school courses intended to prepare students for college courses is to foster competition. The monopoly approach we now have lends itself far too easily to conformist dogma.

---

4 Letter Opposing the 2014 APUSH Framework," June 2, 2015, [https://www.nas.org/images/documents/Historians\\_Statement.pdf](https://www.nas.org/images/documents/Historians_Statement.pdf).



## THE EXAM'S SUBSTANCE

### A Modernization Narrative

APEH divides European history from c. 1450 to the present into four historical periods, further subdivides it into 19 key concepts, and then categorizes it with five themes that overlap with these historical periods: “Interaction of Europe and the World,” “Poverty and Prosperity,” “Objective Knowledge and Subjective Visions,” “States and Other Institutions of Power,” and “Individual and Society.”<sup>5</sup> These periods, key concepts, and themes tell how Europe became modern, while characterizing *modern* as *secular* and *rational*. APEH first emphasizes Europe’s modernization by

1. compressing Europe’s modernization, and
2. presenting a narrow slice of Europe’s intellectual history.

It aligns Europe’s modernization around secularization and the state by

1. minimizing the importance of religion,
2. minimizing the history of liberty, and
3. minimizing the history of Britain.

APEH also warps this narrative with progressive obsessions that include

1. hostility to free enterprise,
2. whitewashing Marxism and Communism,

---

<sup>5</sup> The historical periods and key concepts are:

1. Period 1, c. 1450 to c. 1648: 1) the development of the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution (p. 34); 2) the emergence of the sovereign early modern state (p. 39); 3) the religious conflicts and wars of the Reformation era, and the consequent emergence of religious pluralism (p. 42); 4) overseas exploration, trade, and settlement (p. 45); and 5) the economic and social characteristics of early modern Europe, and its transformation under the impetus of the ongoing commercial and agricultural revolutions (p. 50).
2. Period 2, c. 1648-c. 1815: 1) the way in which “Different models of political sovereignty affected the relationships between states and between states and individuals” (p. 56); 2) the combined growth of European commerce and a global economic system (p. 64); 3) the rationalizing Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment (p. 68); and 4) the period’s social, economic, and demographic history (p. 75).
3. Period 3, c. 1815-c. 1914: 1) the nature and spread of the Industrial Revolution (p. 78); 2) everyday life as it was shaped by industrialization (p. 82); 3) the ideological, political, and social responses to the problems of industrialization (p. 87); 4) the diplomatic and political history of European states navigating their way between nationalism and revolution (p. 93); 5) the imperial expansion and rivalries of European states at the apogee of their collective power (p. 98); and 6) the oscillation of European intellectual and cultural history between the ideals of “objectivity and scientific realism on one hand, and subjectivity and individual expression on the other” (p. 102).
4. Period 4, c. 1914 to the present: 1) a political and military history of twentieth-century Europe (pp. 106-07); 2) a grab-bag history of early Soviet Russia, Fascist Europe, liberal democratic weakness during the Great Depression, the postwar Western welfare states, and the postwar Soviet empire and its collapse (p. 116); 3) an intellectual history focused on the continuing retreat from reason toward subjectivity (p. 124); and 4) another grab-bag history of twentieth-century Europe’s demographic, economic, and social history (p. 129).

3. minimizing European dynamism and exceptionalism, and
4. insecure feminism.

APEH's distortions turn Europe's extraordinary history and unique contribution to the formation of our world into a generic narrative of modernization.

## Emphasizing Modernization

### COMPRESSING EUROPE'S MODERNIZATION

APEH first emphasizes Europe's modernization by choosing c. 1450 as the exam's starting point. Unlike the rest of APEH, this is not new: the old exam also started with the Renaissance. APEH could justify this starting date on the grounds that it couldn't expect students to study the entire span of European history, but this truncation already let students ignore classical and medieval European history.<sup>6</sup> The combination of the old starting point with the new standards produces five separate distortions in APEH's account of modern European history:

1. The absence of medieval Christendom removes Christianity's role as the cornerstone of European civilization, and radically reduces religion in European history as a whole.
2. The absence of medieval Islam removes the most dynamic period of Islamic history, and with it the knowledge of the Muslim world's role as a millennial rival to Christendom and to its secular European heirs.
3. The absence of the medieval past gets rid of the knowledge needed to judge whether continuities or modernization mattered more in any nation's history.
4. The absence of the medieval English past removes much of the argument for English exceptionalism by erasing such aspects of English history as
  - the state-building of Anglo-Saxon England,
  - the survival of fragments of Saxon liberty,
  - the emergence of common law, Magna Carta, and the birth of Parliament,
  - the early freedom of England's serfs,
  - the relative wealth of the *rosbifs* of Olde England, and
  - the medieval history of the English wool trade.

---

<sup>6</sup> The AP World History covers classic and medieval European history, but only as a small fragment of the whole. In any case, not many students will take both AP European History and AP World History.

5. APEH substitutes for the absence of medieval Europe by attributing Europe's traditional society to Renaissance Europe (p. 55 [Learning Objective {LO} 1.5.V]). As a result, APEH sketches faintly, ignores, or credits to a later historical period the innovative aspects of the urban Renaissance, such as

- print culture,
- popular theatre,
- the humane substance of the new vernacular literatures, and
- the Republic of Letters (p. 36 [LO 1.1.II.A], p. 68).

APEH makes Renaissance Europe artificially backward so that the subsequent modernization will appear more rapid and dramatic.

APEH's starting date c. 1450 foreshortens Europe's modernization and shears it of the contexts of Christendom, Islam, national continuity, and English exceptionalism.

#### **A NARROW INTELLECTUAL HISTORY**

APEH's narrow selection of Europe's intellectual history also promotes its modernization narrative. The title of APEH's intellectual history theme, "Objective Knowledge and Subjective Visions," accurately describes a standard history-of-philosophy narrative c. 1950 that focuses on the history of epistemology—a high road that travels the peaks of secularizing reason from Bacon, Descartes, and Newton, and then turns toward subjectivity and postmodernism by way of Nietzsche, Freud, and Sorel (pp. 20, 105). The theme ruthlessly prunes the portrait of European intellect.

For example, APEH presents its narrow account of the Enlightenment around a spine of Beccaria, Diderot, Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Voltaire (pp. 68-69), the culture-heroes of the politically engaged secular left, but ignores intellectually diverse Enlightenment thinkers such as Burke (oddly delayed [p. 88] to the nineteenth century), Gibbon, Johnson, Pufendorf, Shaftesbury, Spinoza, and Vico, who bequeathed multiple Enlightenments to legatees who include conservatives, religious believers, communitarians, and apolitical devotees of the inquiring mind alive with thought. APEH's definition of twentieth century European arts around aesthetic and political radicalism (p. 128 [LO 4.3.IV]) likewise obscures artists who combined aesthetic radicalism and right-wing commitment (Cela, Celine, Eliot, Riefenstahl), artistic witness against leftist tyranny (Kundera, Orwell, Solzhenityzn, Tarkovsky), and masters of aesthetic and political traditionalism (Tolkien). APEH overlooks the entire European tradition of film (Buñuel, Eisenstein, Fellini, Hitchcock, Truffaut), since *aesthetic radicalism* is too simple a description.

APEH's framework even reduces the role of women in the Enlightenment. Since APEH frames the history of the Enlightenment around the *philosophe* tradition, and that tradition explicitly aimed to exclude women (Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters* [1994]), APEH delays mentioning women

until the French Revolution.<sup>7</sup> Wollstonecraft and Gouges (p. 69 [LO 2.3.I.C]) are born from the forehead of Rousseau, and the entire tradition of *salonnière* and Bluestocking intellectual women from Madeleine de Scudéry to Hannah More disappears. APEH’s cramped intellectual history of the Enlightenment excises even an otherwise favored topic such as women’s history.<sup>8</sup>

## Distorting Modernization

### ERASING RELIGION

APEH weds the exaggeration of modernization to a secularized definition of modernity. It does this by distorting and minimizing the role of religion throughout European history. The most important of these distortions are:

1. the reduction of religion to an instrument of power;
2. the elimination of religion’s role to foster and shape economic modernity;
3. the almost complete elimination of religion from the nineteenth century; and
4. the almost complete elimination of Islam, Orthodox Christianity, and Judaism.

These distortions redefine modernity around secularism by reducing the explanatory power of religion—and even religion’s mere presence.

### Instrumentalized Religion

APEH presents religion throughout as an instrument of power rather than as an autonomous sphere of European history. Notably, it fails to convey the actual content of even the most basic developments in Reformation theology. It reduces the entire Age of Reformation to the flat and uninformative phrase that “Differing conceptions of salvation and the individual’s relationship to the church were at the heart of the conflicts among Luther, subsequent Protestant reformers such as Calvin and the Anabaptists, and the Roman Catholic Church” (p. 42). Neither does APEH explain the brief mention that “Christian humanism, embodied in the writings of Erasmus, employed Renaissance learning in the service of religious reform” (p. 43 [LO 1.3.I.A]). Erasmus’ re-translation of the Bible and its consequences go unmentioned. APEH edits out theological substance from the thought of pivotal figures such as Erasmus, and by this omission trivializes the formidably intelligent religious devotion that animated both the Renaissance and the Reformation.

APEH likewise overlooks the radical strand of Reformation thought that powered a religious critique of economic and social power: it mentions neither the Peasants’ Revolt in Germany

<sup>7</sup> Save for a brief reference to the salons: pp. 32 [IS-9], 71 [LO 2.3.II.A].

<sup>8</sup> APEH likewise delays mentioning the history of European concepts of race to the nineteenth century (pp. 98, 99 [LO 3.5.I.C], 104 [LO 3.6.II.B]), and thus avoids mentioning how the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment midwived modern racism—save for the note that “Natural sciences, literature, and popular culture increasingly exposed Europeans to representations of peoples outside Europe (p. 71 [LO 2.3.II.C]).

(1524-25) nor the Christian social critique embodied in both More's *Utopia* (1516) and the anonymously published *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554). The nature of Christian devotion likewise disappears, since it isn't part of the history of power: APEH doesn't mention liturgy, voluntary religion, saints' cults, iconoclasm, martyrdom, or pastoral duties. APEH presents a Machiavellian account of religion instead: "Religious reform both increased state control of religious institutions and provided justifications for challenging state authority. ... Conflicts among religious groups overlapped with political and economic competition within and among states" (pp. 43-44 [LO 1.3.II-III]). APEH's account of the Age of Reformation illustrates vividly how APEH generally portrays religion as an adjunct to secular conflicts.

### **Culture's Formative Role Erased**

Historians have explored the ways religion and culture shaped Europe's economic development ever since the publication of Max Weber's classic study *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905). Yet though APEH emphasizes economic history throughout, it focuses exclusively on how economic changes affect religion and culture, and never mentions the critical roles that religion and culture play in shaping economic development. So far as APEH is concerned, economic causation is a one-way street.

APEH never mentions Max Weber's thesis that Protestant faith nurtured economic modernity. APEH emphasizes economic history throughout, but it never describes how the thrifty and striving Protestant culture in Geneva, Amsterdam, and London helped create the modern economic world. Neither does APEH mention how many entrepreneurs and technological innovators were members of this Protestant culture. APEH obscures the link between the Protestant work ethic and the creation of mass European prosperity.

Neither does APEH explore how religion affected the Industrial Revolution's development: it does not ask whether Germany's industrialization outpaced France's because Germany was largely Protestant and France was not. APEH doesn't even mention religion in the relevant question: "Explain how geographic, economic, social, and political factors affected the pace, nature, and timing of industrialization in western and eastern Europe" (p. 18 [PP-3]). Nor does APEH ask whether Catholic, Orthodox, and Muslim societies modernized more slowly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries precisely because of their religious distance from Protestantism. APEH eliminates religion's role in economic modernization by erasing Weber's thesis. It also ignores the very idea that culture and religion shape economic development, not just in Europe but in the world as a whole.

### **No Religion in the Nineteenth Century**

After its discussion of the Reformation, APEH largely skips over both religion and the secular persecution of religion. It doesn't mention the varieties of early modern religious experience that are the subject of a major work such as Natalie Zemon Davis' *Women on the Margins* (1995). APEH's summary of the French Revolution briefly notes that the Revolutionaries "nationalized the Catholic

Church” and pursued “a policy of de-Christianization” (p. 60 [LO 2.1.IV.B-C]), but without hinting at the wholesale killings of Catholic priests or the Revolutionary butchery of tens of thousands of fervently Catholic peasants in the Revolt of the Vendée (1793-96). APEH’s section on twentieth-century religion mentions Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Second Vatican Council, Solidarity, and Pope John Paul II (p. 127 [LO 4.3.III]), but it euphemizes the Soviet Union’s atheistic hostility to religion as a “challenge” presented by Communism to the churches. APEH also omits entirely the mass-murderous anti-clerical fury of Republican Spain during the Spanish Civil War, as well as religion’s role in bolstering the opposition to Communism in movements such as Fascism and Christian Democracy. APEH’s abstractions include *secularism* and *atheism*, but not *anti-clericalism*.

APEH’s account of religion between 1815 and 1914 greatly intensifies its general minimization of religious faith and secular persecution. It presents nineteenth-century religion as the object of conservative ideological and political support (pp. 88 [LO 3.3.I.C], 94 [LO 3.4.I.B]), euphemistically refers to it under the label of “Various private, nongovernmental reform movements” (p. 92 [LO 3.3.III.D]),<sup>9</sup> and alludes to it in the passing mention of missionaries as one interest group that promoted the “new imperialism” (p. 98). APEH mentions nineteenth-century religion nowhere else. APEH thus presents nineteenth-century religion as an intellectual nullity, save as a cheerleader for conquest abroad, while omitting religion’s importance in everything from Tolstoyan pacifism to the ways in which growing knowledge of other faiths helped awaken European interest in and respect for non-European peoples. APEH also veils the nineteenth-century drumbeat of secular hatred and persecution of religion, ranging from Marx’s condemnation of religion as “the opiate of the masses” to the German Kulturkampf to the Third Republic’s campaign for *laïcité*. APEH’s account of nineteenth-century European history almost eliminates both religion and its secular enemies’ dynamic and powerful hatred of religious faith. This is a history that treats the movement to abolish the slave trade and then slavery itself without mentioning how it was inspired by blazing religious faith, led by saints such as William Wilberforce, and hymned to *Amazing Grace*.

APEH’s omission of religion shreds every area of nineteenth-century European history:

5. In the realm of internal politics, APEH removes
  - the Kulturkampf from German history,
  - Catholic anti-Republicanism and *laïcité* from French history,
  - the destabilizing lack of reconciliation between the Pope and the state in post-Risorgimento Italy, and

---

<sup>9</sup> The illustrative examples include the Sunday School Movement, the Temperance Movement, the British Abolitionist Movement, and Josephine Butler—but APEH doesn’t hint that these reform movements and reformers were inspired by religion, save in its mention of Sunday.

- the entire fabric of British political history revolving around the conflicts of the Tory Church of England, the Whig and Liberal English Dissenters, the Methodist Welsh, and the Catholic Irish.
6. In international relations, APEH erases
    - the religious inspirations behind the rival French, Russian, and British policies toward the Ottoman Empire,
    - the Catholic rationale for Napoleon III's defense of the Papacy, and
    - the religious affinities between Russia and Serbia that underpinned their alliance in 1914 and helped to set off World War One.
  7. In the study of European imperialism, APEH removes
    - the religious triggers to the Sepoy Mutiny (1857),
    - British and Russian accommodations to and manipulations of Islamic sensibilities, and
    - the growing knowledge of other faiths (Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist) that helped awaken European interest in and respect for the peoples of the outside world.
  8. In the study of nationalism, APEH erases
    - Catholicism's role in Irish, Belgian, and Polish nationalism,
    - Orthodoxy's role in Russian nationalism and in the resurrections of Greece, Bulgaria, and Serbia, and
    - Protestantism's role as an annealing force in Britain, less southern Ireland.
  9. In the realm of ideas, APEH removes
    - both Tolstoyan pacificism and its influence on Gandhian beliefs and tactics,
    - the recession of faith articulated in Matthew Arnold's composition of "Dover Beach" (1851),
    - Christian socialism and Christian trade unions as rivals and complements to their secular counterparts,
    - the anti-clericalism and divorce from religious faith that simultaneously animated and weakened liberalism, socialism, and anarchism,
    - religion's role to inspire Florence Nightingale and thus the creation of modern nursing,
    - the role of anti-clericalism in inspiring opposition to feminist movements,

- the conflict of Darwinism with religion,
- the importance of either the declaration of papal infallibility (1870) or the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), and
- the reconceptions of religion by the Oxford Movement, Friedrich Schliermacher, and Charles Peguy.

10. In the realm of culture, APEH removes

- Dostoevsky's engagement with Orthodoxy,
- the ecstatic Catholicisms of Thérèse of Lisieux and Gerard Manley Hopkins,
- the Lutheran roots of Ranke's historiography, and
- the religious roots of the Victorian culture of respectability.

The absence of religion mutilates every domain of nineteenth-century European history.

### **Islam, Orthodoxy, and Judaism Expunged**

APEH also nearly eliminates Islam, Orthodoxy, and Judaism, because their very existence complicates and compromises APEH's simple narrative of secular modernization. APEH's removal of Islam may also be motivated by modern progressives' reluctance to mention modern Islamist terror, much less to confront its deep roots in Islam's millennial tradition of jihad. Certainly Islam's disappearance is the most dramatic of the three, because the portions of Europe under Islamic rule disappear as well. APEH scarcely mentions the history of the Ottoman Empire, or of southeastern Europe, except for

1. brief mentions of the Battle of Kosovo (1389) (p. 180),
2. the Battle of Vienna (1683) (p. 59 [LO 2.1.III.B]), and
3. the decaying end of Ottoman rule between the Crimean War and Kemal's formation of modern Turkey (pp. 93, 95, 108, 114, 116, 181, 192).

APEH also overlooks

1. the fall of Constantinople (1453), traditionally cited to justify beginning the history of modern Europe c. 1450 in the first place,
2. janissaries,
3. Phanariots, and
4. the millet system.

With minor exceptions (pp. 42, 45-46, 113, 124), the rest of Islam's role in European history scarcely appears: in early modern Europe, not

1. the Moriscos of Spain,
2. the Christian incursions into North Africa, or
3. the raids of the Barbary Corsairs,

and in modern times, not

1. the Islamic inflection of anti-colonial movements in the Middle East,
2. the Islamic component of modern immigration into Europe, or
3. the existence of Islamist terror.

APEH likewise overlooks Orthodox Christianity, and with it the fissure within Christendom that helps explain Russia's distinctive history. APEH also eliminates Jewish religion, except as the object of religious tolerance (p. 68). This absence in turn excises

1. the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conflict between *Maskalim*, *Mitnageddim*, and *Hasidim*,
2. the religious roots of Zionism,
3. the importance of the vast nineteenth-century secularization of Jewry, and
4. the role of sublimated messianism as an inspiration for the Jewish turn to Marxism.

APEH's secularized modernization narrative gives pride of place to economic causation and short shrift to the religious and cultural mainsprings of historical change. In consequence, it also edits out the religious diversity of Europe.

### **ERASING LIBERTY**

APEH presents the history of government rather than of liberty. APEH's fourth theme, "States and Other Institutions of Power," frames Europe's political and intellectual history around *the state* and *power*. APEH barely mentions civil society, liberty, or freedom. Two of the theme's nineteen learning objectives summarize the entire history of European liberty, in language that scarcely reveals what was at issue:

Analyze how new political and economic theories from the 17th century and the Enlightenment challenged absolutism and shaped the development of constitutional states, parliamentary governments, and the concept of individual rights. .... Analyze how religious and secular institutions and groups attempted to limit monarchical power by articulating theories of resistance to absolutism and by taking political action (pp. 25 [SP-4], 27 [SP-11]).

APEH asks students to “Explain the emergence of representative government as an alternative to absolutism” (p. 26 [SP-7])—but not to explain it on its own terms, as something of positive value. APEH’s approach to political theory and practice makes liberty secondary at best.

APEH damages the history of early modern Europe especially badly by excising the ideals of freedom. APEH mentions that “Secular political theories, such as those espoused in Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, provided a new concept of the state” (p. 40 [LO 1.2.I.D]), but not that secular political theories also provided new concepts of freedom from the state. APEH hints that “Admiration for Greek and Roman political institutions supported a revival of civic humanist culture in the Italian city-states and produced secular models for individual and political behavior,” (p. 35 [LO 1.1.I.C])—but it obscures civic humanism’s connection to *republicanism* and *liberty*. So too tolerance: APEH directs students to “Trace the changing relationship between states and ecclesiastical authority and the emergence of the principle of religious toleration” (p. 25 [SP-3]), but it only cites examples of toleration that were granted reluctantly (pp. 42, 44). APEH doesn’t mention Michel de Montaigne at all; neither does it cite Erasmus or Bodin as champions of tolerance.

APEH also nearly eliminates the connection between religion and liberty. APEH mentions that religion provided occasions for challenges to state authority (p. 43 [LO 1.3.II]), but never the deep affinity between the Protestant championing of every man’s right to read and interpret the Bible himself and the emergence of liberty and democracy. APEH likewise excises Bartolomeo de las Casas’ Catholic opposition to the enslavement of the Indians, Charles V’s assent to de las Casas’ opposition, and its enactment as Spain’s official policy.

APEH also removes the entire history of radical liberty, including

1. the ideas of John Amos Comenius, John Milton, and John Lilburne,
2. the critique of power articulated in works such as Lope de Vega’s *Fuenteovejuna* (1619) and Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s *El Alcalde de Zalamea* (1636), and
3. the radical aspirations in the entire history of peasant revolt from the Peasants’ Revolt to the Diggers, which APEH reduces to “The attempts of landlords to increase their revenues by restricting or abolishing the traditional rights of peasants led to revolt” (p. 52 [LO 1.5.II.D]).

APEH displaces the history of liberty where it does not remove it entirely. It shoehorns the entire Renaissance *querelle des femmes* debate about the status of women (p. 54 [LO 1.5.IV.B]) into a social and economic history subsection because it provides no history of European liberty.

### **ERASING BRITAIN**

APEH’s general excision of liberty leads to a parallel excision of British history, since so much of Britain’s history is the history of liberty.

1. In the seventeenth century, APEH reduces the English Parliament's domestic struggle for liberty, and the complementary struggle for the ideals of the ancient constitution and the common law, to,

The competition for power between monarchs and corporate groups [that] produced different distributions of governmental authority in European states. ... The English Civil War, a conflict between the monarchy, Parliament, and other elites over their respective roles in the political structure, exemplified this competition. ... The outcome of the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution protected the rights of gentry and aristocracy from absolutism through assertions of the rights of Parliament" (p. 41 [LO 1.2.III, LO 1.2.III.A], p. 58 [LO 2.1.II.A]).<sup>10</sup>

2. In the eighteenth century, APEH frames the political history of Europe around France, progressing on a high road from the absolute monarchy of Louis XIV to wars with England to the French Revolution and Napoleon (pp. 56-63). APEH presents England and the Dutch Republic as exceptions that "gradually developed governments in which the authority of the executive was restricted by legislative bodies protecting the interests of the landowning and commercial classes" (p. 56). APEH's narrative silently excludes the argument that England formed a great alternative to France. APEH therefore also excludes
  - acknowledgment that Parliamentary rule was more than the tool of a class,
  - mention of England's explosive politics from Titus Oakes to John Wilkes,
  - recognition of the radical Commonwealth tradition from the Levellers to Thomas Paine,
  - acknowledgment of the social revolution implied in the prime ministry of Robert Walpole and in the relaxed sense of dignity that allowed Walpole to accept public mockery in John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* with easy good humor, and
  - mention of the nation of bankers and shopkeepers' ability to defeat absolutist France in a century of wars precisely because it was free as France was not.

---

<sup>10</sup> APEH offers a similarly reductionist analysis of Dutch liberty: "The Dutch Republic developed an oligarchy of urban gentry and rural landholders to promote trade and protect traditional rights" (p. 58 [LO 2.1.II.B]).

3. In the nineteenth century, APEH likewise minimizes the role that Britain’s political, economic, and social liberty played in fostering the Industrial Revolution, the global regime of free trade, and the gold standard: APEH only makes abstracting and euphemizing reference to economic institutions, private initiative, and human capital (p. 79 [LO 3.1.I.A-B]), along with the tautology that “Britain’s parliamentary government promoted commercial and industrial interests because those interests were represented in Parliament” (p. 79 [LO 3.1.I.C]). The reforming and radical aspects of British nineteenth-century history go unmentioned:

- British aid that helped bring about the independence of the bulk of Latin America from Spain and Portugal,
- the free-trade empire,
- the British tradition of Parliamentary reform,
- radical sympathy and aid for revolutionary movements in Greece and Italy, and
- Little-Englander opposition to the Boer War in particular and British imperialism in general (save perhaps in the generic reference to “debate over the acquisition of colonies” [p. 101]).

4. In the twentieth-century, APEH doesn’t mention

- the political strength of the free and democratic Parliamentary system that led Britain to victory in two world wars,
- the Labor Party’s championship of a distinctively British social democratic vision that created the model welfare state for Western Europe, or
- the Thatcherite counterrevolution against the welfare state.

APEH underplays British history throughout, and so minimizes both the general importance of the European tradition of liberty and limited government and the particular importance of Britain’s distinctive history within the European tradition as the champion of liberty.

## PROGRESSIVE DISTORTIONS

### Hostility to Free Enterprise

APEH further warps its history with several progressive distortions that make plain the Marxist roots of APEH’s historiography. The first of these is a bias against free enterprise and its fruits. The second theme, “Poverty and Prosperity,” indeed gives equal weight to both, argues further that “Capitalism produced its own forms of poverty and social subjection,” and minimizes the Industrial Revolution’s liberation of the vast majority of Europeans from poverty (p. 16).<sup>11</sup> APEH then attributes “social and political instability across Europe” exclusively to “conditions of economic inequality,” and doesn’t mention the rising expectations of an unprecedentedly well-off mass of Europeans. APEH also presents such instability as leading to actions governments should take, and to socialist and Marxist ideologies (p. 16), but fails to mention the alternatives of economic liberalism and government non-intervention (Liberal Britain’s “the big loaf and the little loaf”).<sup>12</sup>

APEH also overlooks the commercial virtues of middle-class culture in its description of the emergence of European prosperity, and instead mentions inadequate substitutes, “consumer revolution” and “consumer culture” (pp. 17-18). APEH also replaces culture and individual striving with impersonal economic forces: “Market demands generated the increasingly mechanized production of goods through the technology of the Industrial Revolution” (p. 16). APEH’s invocations of market demands and consumer culture give no hint of Richard Arkwright, Alfred Krupp, Alfred Nobel, or the Europe that they made.<sup>13</sup>

### Capitalism and Consumerism

APEH disingenuously and distortingly uses both *capitalism* and *consumerism* as simple descriptions of history. *Capitalism* is a mid-nineteenth century abstraction derived from the socialist tradition, and *consumerism* is a mid-twentieth century abstraction also rooted in leftist thought. Both words assume partial, leftist historiographies, and both also encapsulate a combination of theoretical critique and polemical invective against the free-market system. APEH uses them to interpret five centuries of European economic history through the framework of left wing theory.

APEH first uses *capitalism* to describe the European economy between c. 1450 and c. 1648: “The new pattern of economic enterprise and investment that arose from these changes would come to be called capitalism (p. 50).” It barely hints that “these changes” would not “come to be called

11 APEH’s grasp of economics is shaky: for example, it states that capitalism’s “trading system shifted production from expensive regions to inexpensive regions, reducing or holding down the wages of workers” (p. 16)—without considering that while this might reduce wages in expensive regions, it might also raise wages in the inexpensive regions.

12 For other examples of skewed language in this vein, see pp. 18 [PP-8], 19 [PP-14, PP-15].

13 APEH also presents an essentially Marxist theory of nineteenth-century imperialism: “The European imperial outreach of the 19th century was in some ways a continuation of three centuries of colonization, but it also resulted from the economic pressures and necessities of a maturing industrial economy. ... The search for raw materials and markets for manufactured goods, as well as strategic and nationalistic considerations, drove Europeans to colonize Africa and Asia” (pp. 98-99).

capitalism” for centuries, and only by critics of this kind of economic enterprise. Other questions also assume the existence of capitalism without acknowledging that the very concept is ahistorical and tendentious. “How has capitalism developed as an economic system? .... How has the organization of society changed as a result of or in response to the development and spread of capitalism (p. 17)?” APEH even claims that Adam Smith defended capitalism: “Large-scale production required capital investment, which led to the development of capitalism, justified by Adam Smith through the concept of the “invisible hand of the marketplace (p. 16).” Unsuspecting students will believe Smith advocated a concept that was formulated long after his death.

APEH likewise gives retroactive substance to *consumerism*, without explaining that it is also an ahistorical and tendentious concept: “By the late 19th century, a new mass society had emerged defined by consumerism, expanding literacy, and new forms of leisure” (p. 29). Consumerism and the consumer economy also appear as important factors in the late twentieth century economy, “although not without criticism” (p. 17), “as a catalyst to opposition movements in Eastern and Western Europe” (p. 19 [PP-12]), as a product of the postwar economic miracle (p. 122 [LO 4.1.IV.A]), and in a Good Response for a Short Question Answer: “Both American culture and globalization encouraged rampant consumerism that was destructive of the environment” (p. 198). People buying stuff somehow emerges as a reified abstraction that characterizes and animates much of European history.

### **Whitewashing Marxism and Communism**

APEH also minimizes the revolutionary violence of the Socialist tradition and the evil of the Soviet regime. APEH begins by echoing socialism’s and Marxism’s self-descriptions: the statement that “Socialists called for a fair distribution of society’s resources and wealth and evolved from a utopian to a Marxist scientific critique of capitalism” (p. 88 [LO 3.3.I.D]) sounds as if it endorses the claim that these ideas were *fair* and *scientific*, and euphemizes *redistribution* as *fair distribution*. At the same time it soft-pedals the revolutionary aspects of Marxism. APEH’s statement that “Marxism developed a systematic economic and historical theory that inspired working-class movements and revolutions to overthrow the capitalist system” (p. 16) muffles the clarion, “Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.” APEH minimizes the revolutionary aspirations that animated the European working classes and did much to inspire conservative opposition to socialism. APEH ignores the Paris Commune, as well as the German Socialist Party’s persisting theoretical commitment to revolution.

APEH also attributes Russia’s “active revolutionary movement, which employed political violence and assassinations” to Russian reforms rather than to the ideals and actions of Russian revolutionaries (p. 93). APEH repeats this formulation a few pages later: “In Russia, autocratic leaders pushed through a program of reform and modernization, which gave rise to revolutionary movements and eventually the Revolution of 1905” (LO 3.4.II.D; p. 96). APEH explains Russian revolution without reference to the beliefs of the Russian revolutionaries.

APEH also minimizes and extenuates the evils of Communism, the brutal destructiveness of Soviet rule, and the aggressiveness of Soviet foreign policy. Its most remarkable minimizations are its use of Stalin’s own euphemistic phrase, “liquidation of the kulaks,” to refer to the arrest, deportation, and murder of millions of peasants, the parallel use of the phrase “purges of political rivals” to refer to the Great Terror, the concealment of the genocide of the Ukrainians under the rubric of “famine in the Ukraine,” and the justification of these horrors with the traditional Communist excuse that “Stalin’s economic modernization of the Soviet Union came at a high price” (p. 118, [LO 4.2.I.E]). APEH entirely ignores the incomplete genocides of the Balts, the Tatars, and the Chechens, and its passing mention that World War II led to “forced large-scale migrations” glides over the Soviet ethnic cleansing of millions of Germans and Poles as the USSR remade the boundaries of Eastern Europe (p. 130 [LO 4.4.I.B]).

APEH’s account of Communism after 1945 also minimizes Soviet brutality. APEH

1. ascribes the Cold War and the division of Europe to “a power vacuum” and unexplained “deep-seated tensions between the USSR and the West” rather than to obdurate Soviet hostility to and opportunistic subversion of the West (pp. 106, 111 [LO 4.1.IV.A]);
2. describes the tyrannical regimes of the postwar Soviet bloc as authoritarian welfare states with increased opportunities for women, broadly comparable to their Western peers (pp. 30, 116, 131 [LO 4.4.II.B]);
3. refers to the Soviet subjugation of Eastern Europe as a “domination” that “oscillated between repression and limited reform” and provided “challenges” that “brought mixed responses from the Christian churches” (pp. 111 [LO 4.1.IV.A], 123 [LO 4.2.V], 127 [LO 4.3.III.A]);
4. gives the impression by its note that “After 1956, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization policies failed to meet their economic goals within the Soviet Union and prompted revolts in Eastern Europe” that it was de-Stalinization policies rather than Communism as such that prompted the revolts against Soviet rule (p. 123 [LO 4.2.V.B]); and
5. makes no mention in its brief remark that “Environmentalists argued that the unfettered free-market economy could lead Europe to ecological disaster” (p. 129) of the far worse ecological disasters Communism unleashed on Eastern Europe, from industrial wastelands to Chernobyl.

APEH’s account of twentieth-century European history remarkably obscures the evil and dysfunctionality of Communism.

## Minimizing European Exceptionalism

### The Age of Discovery Without Discoverers

APEH follows the modern multicultural line by minimizing European exceptionalism throughout. It does so in part by emphasizing the importance of Europe’s place in the world rather than its internal importance; “Interaction of Europe and the World” is the first theme, and hence implicitly the most important one (p. 12). APEH partly recapitulates the old high Imperialist narrative, but reduces Europe from the protagonist achieving extraordinary feats to a member of the ensemble. APEH mentions that “scientific and intellectual advances—resulting in more effective navigational, cartographic, and military technology—facilitated European interaction with other parts of the world” [p. 13 [INT-4], but it never mentions

1. the daring and skill of navigators such as Columbus, da Gama, and Magellan,
2. the conquering genius of Cortes and Pizarro, or
3. the piratical exploits of Englishmen such as Drake and Raleigh — except for the bland statements that “The Spanish established colonies across the Americas, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, which made Spain a dominant state in Europe” (p. 48 [LO 1.4.III.B) and “The competition for trade led to conflicts and rivalries among European powers” (p. 48 [LO 1.4.III.D]).

### Exaggerated Importance of the Outside World

APEH also assumes the importance of the external interaction to European history while minimizing the native contributions of Europe:

The encounters with non-European peoples profoundly affected European trade, social life, and ideas. ... Analyze how contact with non-European peoples increased European social and cultural diversity and affected attitudes toward race. ... The successes and consequences of these explorations, and the maritime expansion that followed them, rested on European adaptation of Muslim and Chinese navigational technology as well as advances in military technology and cartography. ... Overseas products and influences contributed to the development of a consumer culture in Europe” (pp. 12, 14 [INT-7], 45, 66 [LO 2.2.II.C]).

APEH mentions sugar, tea, tobacco, and rum; it overlooks

1. the Dutch trade in North Sea herrings,
2. the Scandinavian timber trade, and
3. the East European grain trade.

Neither does APEH mention

1. the technological prowess behind the pottery industries of Saxony and England,
2. the continuing strength of the silk industry in Lyons, or
3. the serf ironworks of Petrine Russia.

APEH overlooks the historiographical schools that argue the relative unimportance of the outside world to Europe's society, culture, and economy, and contradicts them simply by making "Interaction of Europe and the World" one of APEH's five organizing themes.<sup>14</sup>

### **Postwar Europe as Cold War Pawn**

APEH's minimization of European exceptionalism at the other end of the historical sequence also diminishes postwar Western European choice and distinctiveness. APEH presents the Cold War as a duel between the Soviet Union and the United States that left the Europeans no autonomy (p. 106), and so minimizes the Western European states' voluntary decision to ally with the United States. APEH likewise

1. minimizes the European states' role in forging their own destiny by creating a unique complex of international organizations;
2. describes the Common Market as a product of the Cold War (p. 107), without mentioning that it was also a product of European ideals in general and French ideals in particular;
3. presents NATO as an American creation, without mentioning that it served European interests by lashing American military force to the defense of Western Europe (p. 111 [LO 4.1.IV.C]); and
4. overlooks European cooperation and initiative in its description of the Marshall Plan (p. 122 [LO 4.2.IV.A]).

APEH never acknowledges either that

1. the desires of Attlee, de Gaulle, Adenauer, Gaspari, Franco, de Valera, and Brandt significantly shaped the European order and their own states,

---

<sup>14</sup> E.g., APEH does not even bother to contradict Paul Bairoch: "Analysis of British colonial exports and, generally, non-European markets during the crucial first phases of the Industrial Revolution shows that their role was a very negligible one." Paul Bairoch, *Economics and World History: Myths and Paradoxes* (Chicago, 1993), p. 82. Nor does it challenge David Armitage: "most recent scholars have taken for granted the indebtedness of English literature to the British Empire in the early-modern period. ... In fact, as this chapter will show, the impress of Empire upon English literature in the early-modern period was minimal ... to apply modern models of the relationship between culture and imperialism to early-modern literature and Empire demands indifference to context and inevitably courts anachronism. It is therefore necessary to be as skeptical about post-Imperial demystifications as it once was about mid-Imperial complacencies." David Armitage, "Literature and Empire," in Nicholas Canny, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Volume I. The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford and New York, 1998), pp. 101-02.

2. that Christian Democracy, Social Democracy, and the postwar welfare states emerged as distinctive European arrangements,
3. that European states by their policies shaped the pace and nature of decolonization rather than simply succumbing to an inevitable process of decolonization (as is suggested by the wording in p. 115 [LO 4.1.VII]), or
4. that the European Union emerged as a unique political arrangement, unparalleled elsewhere in the world.

APEH's minimization of European exceptionalism reduces the agency and individual character of recent generations of Europeans in creating a European order as much as it does the agency and individual character of their ancestors who created an imperial one.

### **The Overlooked Architecture of Modern Knowledge**

APEH discusses Europe's invention of modern scientific rationalism as part of its simplified secularization narrative, but it scarcely mentions the content, the mechanisms, the scope, or the significance of Europe's intellectual advances. APEH therefore virtually ignores Europe's unique development of the architecture of modern knowledge, which made possible almost every modern form of intellectual inquiry. APEH mentions some ideas of the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution, but not the institutions that made Europe's intellectual advances possible, such as

1. the Renaissance Republic of Letters;
2. the early modern scientific society and the scientific journal, above all *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* (1665-);
3. the Enlightenment birth of the seminar; and
4. the nineteenth-century flourishing of the research university and the ideal of academic freedom.

APEH also overlooks the substance of Europe's advances in the different disciplines.<sup>15</sup> It minimizes Europe's exceptional history of scientific endeavor after the end of the Scientific Revolution c. 1700, save for a brief mention of Darwin's theory of evolution (pp. 102, 104 [LO3.6.II.B]), Einstein's theory of relativity, and quantum mechanics (pp. 102, p. 105 [LO 3.6.III.C]; and also see p. 126 [LO 4.3.II.A]). APEH's omissions include:

---

<sup>15</sup> History courses should provide at least a brief history of the other disciplines as well, since they cannot be relied upon to teach their own histories. E.g., the *AP Art History Course and Exam Description* includes no historiography of art history. <https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/ap/ap-art-history-course-and-exam-description.pdf>.

1. the history of mathematics, illustrated by figures such as Nikolai Lobachevsky (non-Euclidan geometry), George Boole (Boolean algebra), and Georg Cantor (set theory).
2. the history of computer science, illustrated by figures such as Charles Babbage and Ada Lovelace (difference engine), Alan Turing (computing algorithms), and Tim Berners-Lee (World Wide Web).
3. the history of modern astronomy, illustrated by figures such as William Herschel (discovery of Uranus), Georges Lemaître (Big Bang theory), and Fritz Zwicky (inference of supernovae and dark matter).
4. the history of geology, illustrated by figures such as the Comte de Buffon (Enlightenment polemic against young-earth creationism), Abraham Werner (chronological succession in rocks), and Alfred Wegener (theory of continental drift).
5. the history of chemistry, illustrated by figures such as Antoine Laurent de Lavoisier (father of modern chemistry), Dmitri Mendeleev (periodic table), and Francis Crick and Rosalind Franklin (DNA).
6. the history of biology, illustrated by figures such as Carl Linnaeus (species classification), Gregor Johann Mendel (genetics), and Ernst Haeckel (ecology).
7. the history of medicine, illustrated by figures such as Robert Koch (bacteriology), Karl Landsteiner (blood groups and transfusion medicine), and Alexander Fleming (penicillin).

APEH also omits Europe's development of the humanities and social sciences. These omissions include:

1. the history of anthropology, illustrated by figures such as Bronislaw Malinowski (participant observation), A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (structural functionalism), and Claude Lévi-Strauss (structuralism).
2. the history of sociology, illustrated by figures such as Émile Durkheim (founder of the discipline), Max Weber (polymathic theorist), and Georg Simmel (interpretive sociology).
3. the history of historiography, illustrated by figures such as Edward Gibbon (Enlightenment history), Leopold von Ranke (source-based history), and Marc Bloch (socio-economic history).
4. the history of art history, illustrated by figures such as Johann Winckelmann (founder of the discipline), Heinrich Wölfflin (stylistic analysis), and Erwin Panofsky (iconography).
5. the history of archaeology, illustrated by figures such as Heinrich Schliemann (uncoverer of Troy and Mycenae), William Petrie (systematic archaeology), and Mortimer Wheeler (grid system of excavation).

6. the history of linguistic analysis, illustrated by figures such as William Jones (establishment of the Indo-European language family), Jean-François Champollion (decipherment of Egyptian hieroglyphics), and Ferdinand de Saussure (structural linguistics).
7. the history of philosophy, illustrated by figures such as Immanuel Kant (transcendental philosophy), Bertrand Russell (analytical philosophy), and Martin Heidegger (existentialism).

APEH removes how Europe invented the modern intellectual world when it removes these topics.

### Insecure Feminism

APEH articulates an oddly insecure feminism, which argues for women’s history without being forthright about the matter. Its fifth theme, “Individual and Society,” is actually at least half the history of women and the history of families. Three sentences on Europe between c. 1920 and c. 1960 show how APEH’s insecure feminism warps its social history:

Between the wars, Soviet communism theoretically endorsed equality, yet women often performed double duty as laborers and mothers, while kulaks were considered enemies of the state and thus liquidated. On the other hand, fascist regimes emphasized a domestic role for women and created states based on a mythical racial identity. After World War II, the welfare state emerged in Western Europe with more support for families, choices in reproduction, and state-sponsored health care (pp. 29-30).

APEH distorts its social history so as to keep women’s history front and center. Its placement of “women often performed double duty as laborers and mothers” in front of “while kulaks were considered enemies of the state and thus liquidated” strangely implies that women’s overwork was a worse evil than the murder of millions of peasants. Even this history contains odd omissions—the extract above glides over interwar French pronatalist policies—and tendentious word choices, such as the euphemistic “choices in reproduction.”

APEH adds to these distortions cases of special pleading on the behalf of the importance of women in European history, such as the invocation of Artemisia Gentileschi as an artist the equal of El Greco, Bernini, and Rubens (p. 37 [LO 1.1.III.C]). Elsewhere APEH flattens nineteenth-century feminism into a mere search “for legal, economic, and political rights for women as well as improved working conditions” (p. 91 [LO 3.3.III.C]), and omits mention of the complexities of European women’s lives variously evoked by George Eliot, Gustave Flaubert, Sigmund Freud, George Gissing, Henrik Ibsen, and August Strindberg.<sup>16</sup> APEH is so anxious to burnish its feminist *bona fides* that it deserves women’s history by presenting it clumsily, flatly, and with peculiar moral miscues.

---

<sup>16</sup> This flattening is typical: APEH likewise describes realism as depicting “the lives of ordinary people and drew attention to social problems” (p. 104 [LO 3.6.II.D]), and so reduces an extraordinary and innovative interest in human interiority to an exercise in social inquiry.

### Chopping Off What Doesn't Fit

These broad subjects scarcely exhaust APEH's distorting omissions. APEH also fails to mention in just the first two historical periods

1. Poland at the height of its power, save for its involvement in the Reformation;
2. all of pre-Petrine Russia, including both its expansion from the Volga to the Pacific and its internal convulsions under Ivan the Terrible and in the Time of Troubles;
3. the Russian serf revolts that signaled Russia's incomplete westernization (p. 57 [LO 2.1.I.E]);
4. the eighteenth-century Bourbon reforms in Italy and Spain; and
5. the history of military tactics between the military revolution and the *levée en masse*, personified in the generalship of Marlborough and Frederick the Great.

All these subjects would complicate APEH's modernization narrative because none of them centrally has to do with the secularization and modernization of a homogenous European continent; all therefore disappear. Their absence illustrates the wealth of European history that fell by the wayside as the College Board assembled its examination guide. No document such as APEH can cover every topic—but APEH disembowels Europe's history.

## THE EXAM'S FRAMEWORK

### Introduction

APEH's presentation of European history disservices students as much as its distortion of the substance. The flaws in its presentation are:

1. history indifferent to Europe;
2. present-minded history;
3. history made alien;
4. inevitable history;
5. flat style;
6. narrow historiography; and
7. ahistorical abstractions.

These flaws together severely degrade APEH's utility for European history.

### History Indifferent to Europe

APEH focuses on developing students' Historical Thinking Skills (pp. 7-9) so that they can learn *how* to think about history. It doesn't argue that European history is important or interesting in itself, or give a reason *why* students should study Europe's history in particular. APEH instead gives an arbitrary rationale: "History is a story of the past that serves to guide the present and the future. In a personal way, it enriches one's sense of belonging to a human community that transcends both time and space (p. 139)." APEH offers no reason to care more about the history of Europe than about the history of the Andaman Islands: either one would serve equally well to guide future conduct or to embed oneself in undifferentiated humanity.<sup>17</sup>

### Present-Minded History

APEH translates *transcendent* as *just like us*, which makes its rationale for studying history present-minded and incurious: "As we study the past, we learn that during the Renaissance, for example, educated individuals strove to identify and enhance the qualities that made them unique, just as we do" (p. 139). APEH ignores the ways people in the Renaissance were different from us, doesn't challenge students to learn from understanding those differences, and claims a similarity that is only true to the extent that it lacks historical detail. APEH presents history as a commonplace book

---

<sup>17</sup> This rationale also offers a misleading justification for history. The entire point of the discipline is to study the nature and actions of human beings differentiated into communities bounded by time and space, and to create historical sympathy precisely from a knowledge of how historical circumstances define human beings. The College Board's appeal to a transcendent human community is profoundly unhistorical.

designed to reinforce our preconceptions.

APEH likewise cites examples to “aid in the formulation of one’s own goals and commitments” (p. 139). These examples consist entirely of past victimization intended to inspire future struggle:

The study of the Holocaust serves as a constant reminder of the dangers of discrimination; the past struggles of women and workers can inspire us as we develop tactics in the struggle for the rights of others today; and understanding how governments responded to the Great Depression in the 1930s helps us formulate responses to current economic crises (p. 139).

APEH reduces European history to a just-so story that affirms today’s progressive jargon and agenda. It doesn’t include any positive part of European history to motivate students to study the continent’s history, much less to inform *the formulation of one’s own goals and commitments*.

### History Made Alien

APEH never mentions that Americans should study Europe’s past *because it is our history*. APEH never acknowledges that we care about Europe because Europeans founded and settled America, because Americans modeled our ideals, our government, and our society on Europe, or because America shares in the Western tradition that stretches from the Battle of Thermopylae to the Battle of Britain. America’s knowledge of its European legacy is part of our own history — but APEH obscures the reason George Washington’s peers called him Rome’s Cincinnatus reborn, or why Union soldiers sang of their president as Father Abraham at Shiloh, Big Bethel, and Jerusalem Plank Road. APEH relinquishes the most important reason to study Europe’s history — because its heritage is our birthright.

APEH sunders America from its European past particularly by minimizing British history. APEH distorts European history in and of itself by its partial erasure of Britain, but it also removes the hinge that connects America to Europe through people, language, literature, law, government, ideals, society, and culture. *Our* Europe above all is Britain, and APEH amputates our mother country’s story as the necessary means to make Europe’s history a chronicle of a foreign land.

### Inevitable History

APEH presents European history mostly as abstract social and economic forces operating with grinding and inexorable power, and politics, religion, and culture as their byproducts. For example, APEH assigns three of the six key concepts about the nineteenth century to the Industrial Revolution and its social and political consequences. The Industrial Revolution was enormously important, but APEH’s heavy emphasis on social and economic history turns it into half of nineteenth-century European history. APEH obscures the individual efforts that made Europe’s history more than an account of force succeeding force, overlooks how wonderful and unlikely were the birth and growth of Europe’s skeins of liberty, and suppresses the radical movements that challenged established power throughout Europe’s history.

APEH even makes plain misstatements because of its preference for abstraction and inevitability, such as its claim that between 1815 and 1914 “The development of advanced weaponry invariably ensured the military superiority of Europeans over colonized areas” (p. 100 [LO 3.5.II.A]). The Afghan triumph in the British retreat from Kabul (1841-42), the Ethiopian triumph at Adowa (1896), and the Japanese triumphs at Port Arthur, Mukden, and Tsushima (1904-05) all show that *invariable* is a pointless overstatement—but a typical result of APEH’s approach.

APEH’s suppression of contingency and individual effort removes European history’s use as a guide to individual action in the present, and gets rid of most of its appeal as well. APEH doesn’t leave much reason to study Europe’s history with the human choice, human triumph, human models, and human interest left out.

### Flat Style

APEH’s flat language reduces the appeal of its subject matter still further. APEH sometimes uses flat language to avoid controversy: e.g., “Medical theories and technologies extended life but posed social and moral questions that eluded consensus and crossed religious, political, and philosophical perspectives,” with illustrative examples of eugenics, birth control, abortion, fertility treatments, and genetic engineering (p. 126 [LO 4.3.II.B]). APEH clearly wants to avoid angering either pro-life or pro-choice advocates. APEH’s flat language elsewhere drains the appeal from otherwise interesting subject matter for no apparent reason. APEH subsumes the entire second phase of the Military Revolution, when Europeans first conquered large tracts of Asia, under the unrevealing note that “Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British rivalries in Asia culminated in British domination in India and Dutch control of the East Indies” (p. 67; [LO 2.2.III.B]). APEH’s language obscures fascinating particulars such as the Sepoy military complex, as well as the names of Dupleix and Clive, the conquering generals of India.

APEH makes this flatness worse by resorting to historiographical cliché: “Evaluate how identities such as ethnicity, race, and class have defined the individual in relationship to society” (p. 31 [IS-7]). Tellingly, APEH describes dispassionately the most horrifying sufferings, such as trench warfare and the totalitarian slaughters of the twentieth century. APEH uses emotive language only twice, when it talks of “the notorious Middle Passage .... The vast and cruel slave system” (p. 12) and when it describes the Thirty Years War as “brutal and destructive” (p. 42). APEH’s style sparks the reader’s interest here and nowhere else.

APEH is a guide for teachers, of course, and not a textbook. Its prose should not be judged by textbook standards. That said, the framework must serve teachers who are not themselves scholars of European history. Teachers need inspiration as much as students do; without it, they are poorly equipped to motivate their students. APEH, however, provides nothing to fire the imagination of teachers. It relegates them to the role of parroting APEH’s passive abstractions to forward APEH’s ideological presumptions. APEH’s flatness of idea and expression will affect millions of students who never read it themselves.

### Narrow Historiography

While APEH states that “exposure to a variety of diverse historical interpretations builds students’ ability to evaluate the effectiveness of different types of historian’s [sic] arguments” (p. 139), it omits major areas of historiography—and doesn’t alert its readers to the possibility that these views exist. The most glaring absence, as noted above, is Max Weber’s argument that (Calvinist) Protestant faith aligned with and promoted the development of capitalism. Another symptomatic omission is the *Sonderweg* thesis, which argues that Germany turned Nazi because German history followed a distinctive path (*Sonderweg*) from that of other European countries. APEH excises all historiographies, such as the Weber and the *Sonderweg* theses, which undermine APEH’s master narrative of historically inevitable and homogenous secularizing modernization by highlighting the enduring salience of the particularities of nation, religion, and culture. APEH’s omissions silently suppress interpretive variety throughout.

### Ahistorical Abstractions

APEH smuggles in historical interpretations by using ahistorical abstractions. The tell for these unacknowledged historical interpretations is APEH’s use of “-ism.” We have already noted how APEH distorts economic history by using *capitalism* and *consumerism*, but APEH turns all of European history into a tissue of abstractions. APEH’s catalog of *isms* includes:

absenteeism, absolutism, anarchism, anticolonialism, anti-Semitism, atheism, Calvinism, capitalism, Catholicism, chauvinism, colonialism, communism, conservatism, constitutionalism, consumerism, Cubism, Dadaism, Darwinism (social and racial), deism, emotionalism, empiricism, Existentialism, Expressionism, fascism, feminism, feudalism, Futurism, humanism (Renaissance, civic, and Christian), imperialism, Impressionism, individualism, industrialism, isolationism, Keynesianism, liberalism, localism, Lutheranism, manorialism, Marxism, mercantilism, militarism, modernism, mysticism, nationalism, naturalism, Neoclassicism, neonatalism, nepotism, patriotism, positivism, Post-Impressionism, postmodernism, Primitivism, racism, radicalism, rationalism, realism, relativism, religious pluralism, Romanticism, secularism, sentimentalism, skepticism, socialism, Surrealism, totalitarianism, Wilsonian idealism, and Zionism.

Historians shouldn’t avoid *isms* entirely, since they provide a useful shorthand for historical analysis. APEH is right to use *ism* to refer to recent, self-conscious ideologies such as Marxism and Fascism, or self-conscious artistic movements such as Futurism and Surrealism. Yet APEH’s constant use of *ism* further flattens Europe’s history, and reinforces APEH’s resort to impersonal and abstract forces to explain European history. APEH’s use of *ism* also further silences those historiographies that emphasize individuals and contingency—as well as historiographies such as the Cambridge School of Quentin Skinner and J. G. A. Pocock, which objects to the simplifications and present-mindedness that result from using such abstractions.

APEH also distorts history by using abstractions that don't end in *ism*, such as “marginalization.” APEH directs students to “Analyze how and why Europeans have marginalized certain populations (defined as ‘other’) over the course of their history” (p. 32 [IS-10]).” APEH then illustrates *marginalization* with everything from “Imperial-influenced art” to “genocide.” It uses marginalization, in other words, to conflate Ingres with Auschwitz. APEH’s vocabulary pushes such tendentious interpretations throughout.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> APEH scarcely mentions Europe’s geography either, except as an influence on the progress of industrialization (pp. 18 [PP-3], 79 [LO 3.1.I.A], 80 [LO 3.1.II.C]). APEH also abstracts away the effects of Europe’s particular geography on Europe’s history.

## CONCLUSION

### Summary

At points, APEH gets many things right, even if those insights are sometimes partially or poorly carried out in the framework as a whole. At times, it acknowledges the importance of military and diplomatic history (p. 27 [SP-13 to SP-16]), and at one point it takes an Arendtian approach toward fascists and communists as twin enemies of parliamentary democracy (p. 26 [SP-8]). We do not criticize all of APEH because significant amounts of APEH are solid work.

But far from all. APEH turns Europe’s history into a foreshortened, neo-Marxist, generic narrative of historical modernization, powered by abstract social and economic forces, and defines modernization around secularism, the state, and a thin supportive intellectual history. APEH forwards this modernization narrative by minimizing the history of European liberty and religion in general and the history of Britain in particular. APEH then distorts European history by inserting leftist apologetics, consistently denigrating the free market, downplaying European exceptionalism, and mishandling women’s history. 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.

APEH seeks to deepen historical thinking skills, but overlooks Europe’s connection with America, presents European history in flat language as abstract and inevitable, and excises alternate historiographies. APEH thus eliminates almost every reason to care about Europe’s history.

### Recommendations

The College Board needs to revise APEH root and branch. We make 8 recommendations:

1. **The College Board should justify the study of European history as the study of Americans’ history—the birthplace of our founding settlers, our government, our society, and our ideals.** The College Board should also incorporate this justification into the framing and the substance of APEH.
2. **The College Board should justify the study of European history because of its intrinsic interest.** APEH should present Europe as distinctive and its history as exceptional. APEH should have students study Europe’s history as much for its subject matter as for the development of *historical thinking skills*.
3. **The College Board should add an examination on Classical and Medieval European history up to c. 1450.** The College Board should construct the two European history exams as complementary halves of a long study that gives equal weight to Europe’s continuities and discontinuities.

4. **The College Board should shift its historical framework to restore the importance of contingency, culture, politics, and the individual historical actor, and reduce the importance of inevitability, society, and economics.** The College Board should make this revision both to portray Europe’s history more accurately and to make students interested in European history. The College Board should work toward this goal by eliminating as many abstractions, reifications, and passive constructions as possible, so as to bring APEH’s prose and history jointly to life. The College Board should also include decisive historical turning points and plausible historical alternatives in APEH.
5. **The College Board should live up to its own goal by providing a guide that reflects a diverse historiography.** This properly broad historiography should include the Greater Whig school that ties the history of Europe to the history of human liberty and flourishing. The College Board should be especially diligent to ensure that its choice of vocabulary and silent omissions do not present a one-sided interpretation of Europe’s history. It should work hardest to root out its characteristic deformation of unquestioned progressive neo-Marxism, exemplified in its whitewash of Communist history and the substitution of leftist theory and progressive historiography for historical description.
6. **The College Board should place the history of religion (including the histories of Islam, Orthodoxy, and Judaism), the history of liberty, and the history of Britain at the heart of APEH.** APEH’s worst minimizations and distortions fall under these three rubrics. The College Board should include these three histories in APEH’s organizing architecture so as to provide an accurate portrait of European history. The College Board should also include significant material on European geography and European contributions to the history of modern intellectual inquiry since c. 1700.
7. **The College Board should also place the emergence of the theory and practice of free-market economic liberty at the heart of APEH.** Economic liberty is as important a part of the history of Europe as political liberty, and it should not be neglected. To make economic liberty an organizing principle of APEH will also serve as an institutional barrier to progressive historians’ reflexive, neo-Marxist disdain for the free market.
8. **The College Board should accompany changes to APEH with parallel changes in all AP European History materials, including textbooks, instructional materials, and teacher training.** The College Board should make a thorough revision of APEH, not a cosmetic one.

These changes together will provide a more accurate account of European history — and one that will give students a reason to study the subject.

Americans should not rely on the College Board, or any one organization, to make these changes. We make one final recommendation:

- 9. Americans should restore variety, choice, and accountability to secondary education in America by developing one or more competitive alternatives to the College Board's AP testing program.** America's schools and America's students will take the best tests and learn the best history only when America's advanced college-placement testing market opens up to competition.

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOLARS**

8 W. 38TH STREET, SUITE 503 | NEW YORK, NY 10018 | 917.551.6770

[CONTACT@NAS.ORG](mailto:CONTACT@NAS.ORG) | [WWW.NAS.ORG](http://WWW.NAS.ORG)

