

Washington University in St. Louis

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Volume 12

Washington University
Undergraduate Research Digest

Spring 2017

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Recommended Citation

Elliott, Sophie, "Trumpeting American Exceptionalism: The Implications and Consequences of the 2015 Revision to the AP U.S. History Exam" (2017). *Volume 12*. 49.

https://openscholarship.wustl.edu/wuurd_vol12/49

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TRUMPETING AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM: THE IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE 2015 REVISION TO THE AP U.S. HISTORY EXAM

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In May 2016, approximately 500,000 high school students took the Advanced Placement U.S. History exam. The exam—and corresponding high school course—is created and administered by the College Board, a private nonprofit corporation that also owns the SAT and related programs. In 2014, the College Board revealed a complete revision of the course and exam for the 2014-2015 school year. Responding to teachers' complaints that the test covered too much material, the rewrite emphasized depth over breadth. The College Board touted an improved structure of the exam, highlighting historical inquiry and analysis over memorization of dates. However, the update to the *content* was met with a great deal of backlash primarily from conservative groups across the country, declaring it anti-American and inaccurate in its understatement of American accomplishments. These protests ranged from school-board level to a resolution published by the RNC denouncing the exam and recommending that the federal government withhold funding for the College Board. Consequently, the exam was once again rewritten for the 2015-2016 school year with more stress on the positive aspects of American history. The change itself is significant, because it means that an amended version of U.S. history is now the standard for curriculums across the country. Equally significant, however, is the fact political motivations undermined a decision that should have been purely educational. This change represents a lack of respect for students' ability to weigh material and come to an informed conclusion about the nature of our nation by withholding information. To decide what students learn is an extraordinary responsibility, and particularly given that the curriculum for this subject is effectively dictated by a private corporation, it is especially vital that we hold the College Board accountable for how that curriculum is shaped.