AP European DBQ Guide

What is a DBQ?

DBQ stands for document based question. You are presented with an essay prompt and a series of documents (7 documents). Your task is to answer the essay prompt using evidence from the documents as well as your outside knowledge. You need to interpret the documents. Students often make the mistake of taking the documents as objective fact. Instead, students should apply critical thinking skills to documents, assessing their reliability and the ways in which they reveal the particular points of view of the authors.

DBQ Overview

- On the AP exam, the DBQ will be the first essay you write after section I.
- You have 15 minutes to read over the prompt, documents, and your long essay options
    - As you do this, mark up your documents
    - Underline or circle key parts of documents
    - Write notes in the margins or on the documents themselves
- For the AP exam, get a watch now to help keep track of time on exam day.
- You have a recommended 45 minutes for the DBQ essay (you can go over, but be aware that this detracts from your time for the long essay question).
- Please note that the DBQ is worth 25% of your total score.

The Basics

When writing an AP DBQ, always follow proper essay writing guidelines (if you need help with writing a general AP essay, feel free to see me). In addition, ALWAYS do the following:

- Explain the broader historical context relevant to the prompt (1 point).
- Provide an appropriate, explicitly stated thesis that directly addresses all parts of the question and does NOT simply restate the question. Needs to at the end of the introduction (1 point).
- Describe the content of at least THREE documents to address the prompt (1 point).
- Support your argument using ALL of the documents (1 point).
- Provide and explain an example or piece of evidence beyond that found in the documents to support your argument (include outside information) (1 point).
- Analyze the point of view, purpose, historical context, or audience for FOUR of the documents (1 point).
- Demonstrate a complex understanding of the historical development in the prompt (1 point).

All of the above equals up to the 7 rubric points for your DBQ.

Think of it this way: You are writing a regular essay and simply using the documents along with your outside knowledge for evidence.

The Process

<u>The Question</u>

- This may be obvious, but the very first thing you should do is understand what the question is asking you to do.
- Read the task carefully and underline any key components.
  - Pay attention to essay verbs ("analyze", "describe", "compare", etc.)
- Look for natural organization ("describe and analyze three reasons")

<u>Reading and Interpreting the Documents</u>

- Again, you are given 15 minutes to analyze and interpret the documents
- As you interpret the documents, keep CAPP (context, audience, point of view, and purpose) in mind

In addition, it may be helpful to design a t-chart to link documents to different points of the argument. Here is an example for a prompt on changing conceptions of French national identity since 1960.

Argument Points	**Documents**
• Anti-globalization	• 1,3, and 6
• Anti-immigration	• 4 and 5
• Tolerance for diversity	• 2 and 7

Essay Structure

Introduction

- The DBQ introduction should be like any other essay introduction. You should compose your introduction in the following way:
    - A broad topic sentence that introduces the reader to the essay and material (1 sentence).
    - Historical context/contextualization (3-4 sentences)
    - Thesis (1-2 sentences)
        - Your thesis should make a claim that can be defended and that responds to all parts of the question. Use the following DBQ prompt from 2016 as an example:
            - Prompt: Evaluate whether the policies of Otto von Bismarck's government represented traditional conservatism or a new kind of conservatism in nineteenth-century Europe.
            - Thesis: Bismarck's government represented a new form of conservatism since his policies focused on social welfare reforms, increased rights given to the people, and a manipulation of political parties not seen before.

Body Paragraphs

- Your body paragraphs should be composed just like a regular essay. However, there are a few extra things for a DBQ:
    - Each body paragraph should start with a topic sentence that links back to the thesis. This is absolutely crucial and critical. You will not score well at all if you do not have topic sentences. Examples:
        - "The first way Bismarck's government represented a new form of conservatism was through the use of social welfare reforms."
        - "Bismarck's government can also be classified as a new form of conservatism since he actually increased the amount of rights given to the people."
        - "Finally, Bismarck's government was a new form of conservatism since he manipulated political parties in a way that previous conservatives never did."
    - You need to use every single document throughout the essay. Each body paragraph should have at least one document to support the point you are making. I strongly suggest that you have at least two documents in a paragraph to support your point. It shows very strong analysis, which is helpful for the last rubric point.
    - You need to cite a document after you use it. For example, "Bismarck's early legislation from the period of 1869-1878 introduced many new reforms, including religious toleration, secular control over school, and the expelling of the Jesuits (doc. 1)."
    - Each body paragraph should support your argument in the following ways:
        - Evidence from the documents. (In total, you must use all of the documents)
        - Analysis of the documents (point of view analysis. See below for more details).
        - Outside knowledge
            - Content outside the documents that helps to support the argument
    - IMPORTANT: DO NOT QUOTE THE DOCUMENTS.

Conclusion

- Your conclusion should be like any other essay conclusion:
  - Have a transition sentence or topic sentence to start the conclusion.
  - Summarize the main argument you made.
  - Link toward the future or past and connect it to your argument.
- DO NOT just recopy your introduction as your conclusion. This is a waste of your time and my time.

Properly Using a Document as Evidence

- The documents should be used as evidence to support your argument and major points.
- Examples of good document use:
  - Traditional conservatives encourage a single religion to unite people behind the state, but Bismarck believed the people should be loyal to the state alone and not a religion. Bismarck started with eliminating all influence of clergy members in school, and this allowed the state to educate the youth without religious influence (doc. 1.).
- What not to do:
  - You should not simply summarize the document.
  - You should never quote extensively. Short 2-3 word quotations are ok occasionally to illustrate a point for effect. Otherwise, DO NOT QUOTE.
  - Avoid stating "Doc. 2 says….". As an example, let's say you are answering a prompt about the impact of American silver on Europe's economy during the Age of Exploration. Instead of stating, "Doc. 2 talks about higher prices in Spain" state "The Spanish began to experience high prices which ruined their economy as they became more focused on silver from the Americas (doc. 2)".

Citation of Sources

- Always ensure a reader of what document you are referencing in an essay.
- Specifically cite the document number in parentheses after the sentence you use it. AP readers have stated that this is extremely helpful in grading the essays and makes their job easier (this also gives them a higher opinion of the writer by extension). Please listen to this advice.
- DO NOT QUOTE
- How to cite:
  - Always cite in parentheses at the end of the sentence or end of the document reference/quote.
    - Count up the total number of documents you use to ensure you have used all of them. I recommend you make a list of documents in the margin (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and just circle them as you use them. There is no way you can miss using a document as a result.
- Citation examples:
  - The Russian official's report on an incident in Novgorod province **(Doc. 10)** demonstrates…
  - According to Mrs. E. Gaskell, an English author **(Doc. 8)…**
  - According to John Locke**…(Doc. 3).** [at end of the entire sentence]

<u>Analyzing a Document</u>

- You must also analyze at least 4-5 documents for me.
- You can analyze a document in the following ways (the primary source analysis handout is helpful here) (point of view is likely the easiest):
    - Point of View ("It is natural that _____ believes _____ because _____".)
        - How does the author's position or status in society impact how the document was written?
        - Was the author biased in any way?
        - How reliable is the author?
        - What might have influenced the author to write this?
    - Purpose (think of how each impacts reliability)
        - Why did the author create this source?
        - What did the author want?
        - Why was it created at this time?
    - Historical Context
        - What events might have impacted how and why this document was constructed?
        - What events might have impacted the author's message and meaning?
    - Audience
        - Who was the source created for and how might this affect the reliability of the document?
- Always read the source of a document. It likely has information that will greatly help you determine point of view/bias
- Do not just state that a document has bias. You must explain.
- Examples of document analysis:
    - As an important leader in French culture, Lang probably feels particularly obligated to protect the culture in order to defend his position as Minister of Culture (author's point of view).
    - As a communist, Marx would obviously believe that the capitalists' reforms would fail because they failed to address the true cause of society's problems: the oppression of the proletariat. (author's point of view)
    - Duverger's interview took place in 1964, when the Cold War was in full effect and the USA and USSR were pushing their beliefs onto other countries. In such a stressful environment, the French identity needed to be strong to preserve itself, which Duverger believes is true. (historical context).
    - As the British were at war with the Germans in 1917, it would make sense that this particularly author had an overly negative view of all Germans. (historical context).
    - With the Russian Civil War at its height, Lenin was likely trying to recruit more citizens to his side with this particular piece of propaganda. (purpose)
    - Having just obtained power after a long series of religious wars, Henry IV was likely attempting to calm the situation down by issuing this edict. (purpose)
    - This particular document was intended as private correspondence between the East German foreign minister and Soviet ambassador. One could assume that the contents are reliable as a result since the two allies would have no need to conceal information from each other. (audience)
    - This particular speech was delivered to a wartime audience. Churchill likely over exaggerated in his statements to rally the people behind the war effort. (audience)

Contextualization

- This simply means explaining the broader events that influenced or were influenced by the topic.
    - Think of this as the bigger picture.
    - You are tying into the historical era and explaining how something fits into this context.
- The best place to do this is in the introduction. This is basically the historical context portion of the introduction. This is where I want you to do it.
- This has to be relevant to the question and fully explained. Three sentences should be the aim.
- Example:
    - Prompt: ""Evaluate whether the policies of Otto von Bismarck's government represented traditional conservatism or a new kind of conservatism in nineteenth-century Europe."
    - Example: "Until 1871, the area today known as Germany existed as many smaller states rather than one large one. People had dreamed of a unified Germany for many years, and a failed attempt at unification occurred in 1848 based on romantic ideals. Otto von Bismarck was able to successfully unify Germany using a more realistic approach that featured multiple wars and political manipulations. [THESIS STATEMENT]"

Outside Evidence

- Along with using the documents as evidence, you must provide an additional example or piece of evidence that supports your argument.
- This must be fully explained and cannot be a mere reference (don't name or fact drop).
- This should be done in the body paragraphs to support your topic sentences/argument.
- Examples (using same prompt):
    - "While trying to purge the Catholics, Bismarck also attacked Jewish people. After a financial crash, Bismarck used Jewish people as the scapegoat and directed popular opinion against them. Bismarck directed his energy at these particular religious groups as part of his conservative agenda."
    - "Germany, under Bismarck, was the first country to implement a social welfare system in Europe. This was before other countries, such as Britain, in the 19th century."

Contextualization vs. Outside Evidence: What is the Difference?

- Contextualization generally is a more general statement or discussion that places the argument in a broader context.
- Outside evidence generally is a more specific detail or details that function as support of a particular point made in the argument.

In terms of an essay structure for your DBQ question, follow basic essay guidelines and rules. Please be aware of the following: DO NOT create a "laundry list" of documents. For example, NEVER do any of this:

- "The documents in this essay show this….". "Document 1 says this….document 2 says this….document 3 says this….". "Overall, the documents tell us…". "I am going to analyze these documents…." "This document is not biased…".
- DO NOT QUOTE

The following outline may be helpful:

I. Introduction
   a. Strong, broad topic sentence that relates to the question. (1 sentence)
   b. Historical context/contextualization (3 sentences)
   c. Thesis
      i. The thesis should directly answer the question and make an argument. You should have three major points.
II. Body
   a. Point #1 to support your argument
      i. Topic sentence (links back to your thesis)
      ii. Supporting facts/evidence from document(s)
         1. Remember to cite the document after you use it.
         2. Use documents individually to support. DO NOT say, "Documents 1 and 2 show Bismarck developed new social policies." Use specific evidence from each individual document.
         3. Do not just list the document or simply quote. Use the documents as evidence to support your argument. DO NOT QUOTE.
      iii. Analysis of document(s) (after you use each document)
      iv. Include any useful outside knowledge and/or contextualization
   b. Point #2 to support your argument (same process)
   c. Point #3 to support your argument (same process)
III. Counter-Argument. Counter-arguments may not work for some DBQ types (comparison DBQs)
IV. Conclusion
   a. Summarize your major argument
   b. Connect to the future

Other Specific Tips

1. Formulate a thesis about history, not merely about the documents. Make sure your thesis answers the question.
2. Focus your discussion on the documents, the inferences you draw from them, and outside information that you know about the topic. Use the documents to guide your answer, but incorporate outside knowledge as you do so.
3. Use ALL documents.
4. Avoid quotations unless making a strong emphasis to a point.
5. A good DBQ analyzes and draw conclusions from the documents. You should avoid the "laundry list" approach. Do not simply summarize each document in order.
6. Refer to the content, or the author, of the document so specifically in your text that the exam reader cannot help but recognize the document you are referring to.
7. According to qualified and highly trained AP Exam Readers, indicators of analysis include:
   a. Analytical essay structure (thesis, discussion of evidence, conclusion)
   b. Organization of evidence in categories, especially ones not specified in the question itself
   c. Frequent reference to the terms of the question
   d. Combination/juxtaposition of documents
   e. Recognition of contradictions and ambiguities in documents
   f. Reference to the point of view and the purpose of the document
8. If you follow everything listed above, you will do well on the AP Euro DBQ.

How you will be Graded:

I will grade you based on the following requirements:

General Essay Skills

_____ Proper introduction with historical context as explained in this handout.

_____ Proper thesis as explained in this handout.

_____ Each body paragraph has a topic sentence

_____ The conclusion is included and is NOT a restatement of the introduction.

_____ The essay does not include any historical errors and has no first person perspective

_____ The essay cites the documents in the correct manner and DOES NOT QUOTE

_____ The essay uses transitional phrases when appropriate and breaks body paragraphs up in a
           logical/appropriate way (essay follows proper organization structure)

_____ If required, the essay includes a counter argument

Format (Only if it is a take home essay. I view essays written in class as rough drafts to be fair.)

_____ The essay has little to no grammatical errors

_____ The essay has no spelling errors

_____ The essay is double spaced and uses default word settings

AP Rubric (I will use this to grade you in addition to or in combination with the above and award you an
AP score)

_____ The essay has a clear thesis

_____ The essay accurately describes the content of FIVE documents

_____ The essay uses ALL documents to support the thesis

_____ The essay analyzes POV, context, audience, and/or purpose for FIVE documents

_____ The essay includes contextualization and outside information (2 total points; 1 point for each)

_____ The essay illustrates a complex understanding of the historical development in the prompt.

AP Score: _____   Grade: _____