

CENTRE FOR CANADIAN, US & LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
M.A. (PIS) COURSE

Course No.	: IS 598N
Course Title	: Introduction to American Society
Course Teacher	: Dr. Saumyajit Ray
Credit Allotted	: 4
Instructional Method	: Classroom Lectures
Evaluation Method	: Term Paper & End Semester Examination
Semester	: Monsoon
Course Duration	: 1 Semester
Class hours	: 4 per week

This course intends to introduce students broadly to the United States as a society and to American ideas, institutions, culture, and social problems that are and continue to be typically American.

As important as how the world perceives America is the question of how Americans look at themselves and what measures they take—political, social, and economic—to preserve the United States as an “exceptional” nation in the post-modern world.

Classroom instruction will be directed to help students develop wide knowledge of America as a diverse and complex society with its own institutions and distinct culture, yet a “nation of immigrants” like no other. This course aims at giving students a “sense” of America, and at inculcating in them the understanding that politics in America is not merely a struggle for power but a concerted attempt to acquire freedom, equality, and justice for all Americans.

Course Content

Unit I: Studying American society

1. Why study American society
2. The characteristics of American society
3. The historical, functionalist, and conflict approaches

Unit II: The American idea

1. A nation of immigrants
2. The land of opportunity
3. Among many, one
4. One nation under God

Unit III: American ideals

1. Personal (competition, merit, honesty, hard work, rewards and punishments)
2. Political (liberty, equality, rights, individualism, republicanism, democracy)
3. Economic (free enterprise, absence of feudalism, Protestant work ethic, consumerism)
4. Foreign policy (nationalistic universalism, global leadership)

Unit IV: Americanism and American popular culture

1. Americanism (American language, sports, dress, cuisine and beverage, national symbols and festivals)
2. American popular culture (Hollywood, Broadway, talk radio, television, newspapers and magazines)

Unit V: Ideologies in the United States

1. Euro-American (conservatism, liberalism, socialism, environmentalism, American Marxism, libertarianism)
2. American ideologies (nativism, cultural pluralism)

Unit VI: Select socio-political issues and movements in the United States

1. Issues (gun violence, abortion, homelessness, school-prayer, racist violence, health care, immigration reform, assimilation, balanced budget, the Mob, same-sex marriage, terrorism)
2. Movements (Americanization, abolitionist, temperance, civil rights, labor, feminist, gay and lesbian, states' rights, anti-war, Official English)

Unit VII: Minorities in the United States

1. Approaches to the study of minorities
2. Ethno-cultural minorities (Hispanics)
3. Racial minorities (African-Americans and Native Americans)
4. Religious minorities (Jews, Moslems, and others)

Unit VIII: Recollections from American collective memory

1. Violence and arson (Watts riots)
2. Assassinations (JFK, MLK, RFK)
3. Foreign policy setbacks (Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq)
4. Presidential intrigue and inappropriate behavior (Watergate, Iran-Contra, Monica Lewinsky)
5. Terrorism and national security (9/11)

Reading List

Unit I

1. Cullen, Jim. 2003. *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea That Shaped a Nation*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
2. Haralambos, Michael & Martin Holborn. 2008. *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*. London: Collins.
3. Harper, Charles L. & Kevin T. Leicht. 2016. *Exploring Social Change: America and the World*. Sixth Edition. New York, NY: Routledge.
4. Levine, Rhonda F. (Ed.). 2006. *Social Class and Stratification: Classic Statements and Theoretical Debates*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
5. McMurrer, Daniel P. & Isabel V. Sawhill. 1998. *Getting Ahead: Economic and Social Mobility in America*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.
6. Merton, Robert King. 1968. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
7. Rank, Mark Robert, Thomas A. Hirschl & Kirk A. Foster. 2014. *Chasing the American Dream: Understanding What Shapes Our Fortunes*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Unit II

1. Ashabranner, Brent K. 1993. *Still a Nation of Immigrants*. New York, NY: Cobblehill Books.
2. Gavit, John P. 1922. *Americans by Choice*. New York, NY: Harper & Bros.
3. Gordon, Milton M. 1964. *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
4. Hulsether, Mark. 2007. *Religion, Culture and Politics in the Twentieth-Century United States*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
5. Huntington, Samuel P. 2004. *Who are We? America's Great Debate*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.
6. Lind, Michael. 2012. *Land of Promise: An Economic History of the United States*. New York, NY: Harper.
7. Portes, Alejandro and Ruben Rumbaut. 1990. *Immigrant America: A Portrait* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
8. Wald, Kenneth D. and Allison Calhoun-Brown. 2011. *Religion and Politics in the United States*. Sixth Edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers

Unit III

1. Bender, Thomas. 2006. *A Nation Among Nations: America's Place in World History*. New York, NY: Hill and Wang
2. Crunden, Robert M. *A Brief History of American Culture*. Armonk, NY: North Castle Books.
3. Kazin, Michael and Joseph A. McCartin (eds.). 2006. *Americanism: New Perspectives on the History of an Ideal*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.
4. Kelly III, James P. (comp. & ed.). 2004. *Christianity, Democracy, and the American Ideal*. Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press.
5. Lipset, Seymour Martin. 2003. *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
6. Madsen, Deborah L. 1998. *American Exceptionalism*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.
7. Schuck, Peter, H. and James Q. Wilson (eds.). 2008. *Understanding America: The Anatomy of an Exceptional Nation*. New York, NY: PublicAffairs.
8. Weber, Max. 2003. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc.

Unit IV

1. Ashby, LeRoy. 2006. *With Amusement for All: A History of American Popular Culture since 1830*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky
2. Bailey, Richard W. 2012. *Speaking American: A History of English in the United States*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
3. Cullen, Jim (ed.). 2013. *Popular Culture in American History*. Second Edition. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
4. Knight, Robert H. 1998. *The Age of Consent: The Rise of Relativism and the Corruption of Popular Culture*. Dalls, TX: Spence Publishing Company.
5. McKechnie, Gary. 2009. *USA 101: A Guide to America's Iconic Places, Events, and Festivals*. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society
6. Smith, Andrew F. 2004. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
7. Vaughan, Donald and Eric Peterson. 2011. *American Festivals: 100s of Hometown Celebrations*. Lincolnwood, IL: Publications International Ltd.

Unit V

1. Buhle, Paul. 2013. *Marxism in the United States: A History of the American Left*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books.
2. Farmer, Brian R. 2006. *American Political Ideologies: An Introduction to the Major Systems of Thought in the 21st Century*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.
3. Gair, Christopher. 2007. *The American Counterculture*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
4. Higham, John. 1988. *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
5. Mitman, Gregg. 1992. *The State of Nature: Ecology, Community, and American Social Thought*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
6. Schwarzmantel, John. 1998. *The Age of Ideology: Political Ideology from the American Revolution to Post-Modern Times*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
7. Walzer, Michael. 1994. *What It Means To Be An American: Essays on the American Experience*. New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Press Pvt. Ltd.

Unit VI

1. Ackerman, David M. (ed.). 2001. *Prayer and Religion in the Public Schools*. New York, NY: Novinka Books.
2. Bingle, Jennifer. 2011. *Homelessness in America Today*. New York, NY: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc.
3. Gerstmann, Evan. 2008. *Same-Sex Marriage and the Constitution*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
4. Hewitt, Christopher. 2003. *Understanding Terrorism in America: From the Klan to al Qaeda*. New York, NY: Routledge.
5. Jacobs, Lawrence and Theda Skocpol. 2012. *Health Care Reform and American Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
6. Kleck, Gary. 2009. *Point Blank: Guns and Violence in America*. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transaction.
7. Meyer, David S. 2014. *The Politics of Protest: Social Movements in America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
8. O'Neill, William L. 2009. *Feminism in America: A History*. Second Revised Edition. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

9. Orrenius, Pia M. and Madeline Zavodny. 2010. *Beside the Golden Door: U.S. Immigration Reform in a New Era of Globalization*. Washington, DC: The AEI Press.
10. Ray, Saumyajit. 2010. *America's Common Bond: Why English Should be the Official Language of the United States*. New Delhi: Reference Press.
11. Reppetto, Thomas A. 2005. *American Mafia: A History of Its Rise to Power*. New York, NY: Henry Holt & Co.
12. Valocchi, Stephen. 2010. *Social Movements and Activism in the USA*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Unit VII

1. Ba-Yunus, Ilyas and Kassim Kone. 2006. *Muslims in the United States*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
2. Bergad, Laird W. and Herbert S. Klein. 2010. *Hispanics in the United States: A Demographic, Social, and Economic History, 1980-2005*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
3. Diner, Hasia R. 2004. *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
4. Ewing, Katherine Pratt (ed.). 2008. *Being and Belonging: Muslims in the United States since 9/11*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
5. Painter, Nell Irvin. 2006. *Creating Black Americans: African-American History and Its Meanings, 1619 to the Present*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
6. Rivera, Geraldo. 2009. *HisPanic: Why Americans Fear Hispanics in the U.S.* New York, NY: Celebra.
7. Rossel, Seymour. 1995. *Let Freedom Ring: A History of the Jews in the United States*. West Orange, NJ: Behrman House, Inc.

Unit VIII

1. Bernstein, Carl and Bob Woodward. 1974. *All the President's Men*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc.
2. Hagopian, Patrick. 2009. *The Vietnam War in American Memory: Veterans, Memorials, and the Politics of Healing*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
3. Hill, Clint and Lisa McCubbin. 2013. *Five Days in November*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, Inc.
4. Kaiser, Robert Blair. 2008. *"R.F.K. Must Die!": Chasing the Mystery of the Robert Kennedy Assassination*. Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press.
5. Klobuchar, Lisa. 2008. *The Iran-Contra Affair: Political Scandal Uncovered*. Minneapolis, MN: Compass Point Books.
6. Olson, Keith W. 2003. *Watergate: The Presidential Scandal that Shook America*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.
7. Posner, Richard A. 1999. *An Affair of State: The Investigation, Impeachment, and Trial of President Clinton*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
8. Simpson, David. 2006. *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

N.B.: Relevant journal articles will be made available during the course of teaching as and when required.