

INTRODUCTION TO U.S. HISTORY (PART TIME LECTURE COURSE)

Bevezetés az Amerikai Egyesült Államok történelmébe

Course Code: BBLAN12600 D0

Instructor: Balogh Beatrix

Time and place: March 13 and 27, Fridays 14.30-18.45

BTK D 309

Availability: via email: balogh.beatrix@btk.ppke.hu

Purpose: To provide a comprehensive survey of the social, political, and cultural history of the United States from the colonial times to the present. **Compulsory Texts:** *The American Yawp*. (eds Joseph Locke and Ben Wright). Stanford University Press, 2022. <https://www.americanyawp.com/>; Essays from the volume *Historians on America* (ed. George Clack), U.S. Department of State (available from the Institute's homepage <https://btk.ppke.hu/uploads/articles/463213/file/historians-on-america.pdf>); Compulsory historical Documents listed at the end of the syllabus.

Material for the Examination: The content of the coursebook/compulsory texts and the complete material of the lectures. There are two longer **on-site lecture sessions** in your timetable (see above). Some additional course material (eg Task sheet for westward expansion, excerpt from Pro-Slavery argument) will be posted to Teams. It is also strongly recommended that you consult at least a reference volume for the precise definition and interpretation of the compulsory concepts (see "Essentials") as well as the role and relevance of historical figures. You may find further study tips at the end of the document.

Requirements: kollokvium (see *at attendance and evaluation*)

LECTURE TOPICS

- Introduction, study goals, summary
- First Encounters and Colonial America
- War of Independence and the "making" of the United States; The Early Republic
- Growth and Reforms in the early 19th century
- Westward Movement: territorial expansion, shaping the frontier, and fight over slavery
- Civil War and Reconstruction

Reading: Chapters 2-15 of *American Yawp* from [Colliding Cultures](#) to [Reconstruction](#).

The US Constitution; start with the annotated Hungarian translation available on the website; 1-5 of the Historical documents listed below. Text available at

https://btk.ppke.hu/uploads/articles/463213/file/UShistory_sourcetexts_2018.pdf

- Assuming an international role: from the Spanish American War to Wilson's Fourteen Points
- Gilded Age, Progressivism, and the Roaring 20s
- The Nation in Crises: Great Depression, New Deal, and World War II
- The US in the Cold War; 1950s and 1960s: escalating interventions and changing society
- From Identity Crisis of the 70s to the Reagan Revolution
- Post 9/11 US: (re)Negotiating identity and international role

Reading: From Chapters 16 to sections II. & III. of Chapter 30 of *American Yawp*; 6-11 of the assigned historical documents.

Evaluation:

1. The exam questions will be based partly on the compulsory texts, partly on the material covered by the lectures.
2. Credits for the course can be earned by successfully completing a written test (55% of maximum scores) in the exam period.

Form and Content of the Exam/Written Test: Multiple-choice questions will be designed in various formats to **test your knowledge of the most basic US history concepts**, your ability to judge the validity of more nuanced

statements, and your familiarity with the entire span of US history. The test will also feature open questions: gapped sentences, short-answer, concept-matching and explanation tasks, and a short essay question.

Short answer and essay questions. One will require students to answer a specific question about a historical event, whilst the essay type will ask you to briefly discuss the milestones and historical relevance of a given event/period. Eg: Briefly describe the a, Westward Movement, b, New Deal, c, Civil Rights Movement. Writing should be succinct concentrating on the key features and events. There will be space and sentence limitation.

Some questions may inquire about the information/insights you gained from the assigned essays from *Historians on America*:

“The Colonial Convention”, 9-15.
“The Sherman Anti-Trust Act”, 30-38.
“The GI Bill of Rights”, 46-53.

“The Marshall Plan”, 54-61.
“Brown v Board of Education”, 62-69.
“The Immigration Act of 1965”, 76-83.

Students will also have to answer questions about one of the set historical documents or glean information from the “original texts” or excerpts provided at the exam. Compulsory historical documents downloadable from http://btk.ppke.hu/uploads/articles/463213/file/UShistory_sourcetexts_2018.pdf, unless specified differently here):

1. John Winthrop Dreams of a City on a Hill (1630) http://www.americanyawp.com/reader/colliding_cultures/john-winthrop-dreams-of-a-city-on-a-hill-1630/
2. Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776)
3. The Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution (1791)
4. The Emancipation Proclamation (1862)
5. Abraham Lincoln: Gettysburg Address (1863)
6. Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)
7. Woodrow Wilson: Fourteen Points Speech (January 1918)
8. Franklin D. Roosevelt: First Inaugural Address (1933)
9. Brown v. Board of Education (1954)
10. John F. Kennedy: Inaugural Address (1961)
11. Martin Luther King Jr: I Have a Dream (1963)
12. Ronald Reagan: Farewell Address (1989). Reagan Library, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjEC_Sv8KFN4

Recommended Readings: Essentially any book on American history including the following:

- Philip Jenkins: *A History of the United States* (Palgrave/Macmillan)
- Sellers-May-McMillen: *Az Egyesült Államok története* (Maecenas)
- Magyarics-Frank: *Handouts for U.S. History* (Panem)
- Magyarics Tamás: *Az Amerikai Egyesült Államok története (1918–2001)* (Kossuth)
- Hahner Péter: *Az Egyesült Államok elnökei* (Maecenas)

Study tips:

Reading American Yawp: Each chapter of *American Yawp* has its own dedicated link. Read actively: focus on the chapter’s main argument, the major turning points, and the connections between political, social, economic, and cultural developments. **Working with the ESSENTIALS List:** After each lecture or your own reading of a textbook chapter, review the ESSENTIALS (compulsory dates, events, concepts, and historical figures). For each item, write **brief contextual notes** in your own words. These “definitions” should aim to explain *why* the concept or figure matters, *how* it connects to the broader historical processes discussed in the lecture, and *where* it fits chronologically and thematically. The goal is contextual understanding, not memorizing dictionary definitions.

Lecture Notes: Notetaking—preferably longhand—can immensely help you with processing and retaining the material. Record not only the “buzzwords” that appear on the slides but also the historical relevance, or transformative consequences discussed in class.