

INTRODUCTION TO U.S. HISTORY

Bevezetés az Amerikai Egyesült Államok történelmébe

Course Code: BBNAN02600

Instructor: Balogh Beatrix balogh.beatrix@btk.ppke.hu
Time and Place: Tuesday 12.30-14.00 D114
Availability: Office Hours: Tuesday 16.00-17.00 Rm 102
Requirements: kollokvium (see *at attendance and evaluation*)

Purpose: to acquaint students with the major turning points of US history and to uncover the changes and processes that have shaped the United States of America. We will survey the social, political and cultural history of the United States from the colonial times to the present but conventional chronological method of presenting history is occasionally replaced by thematic approaches. The required readings should invest students with the elementary terminology of history and with the skills of critically analyzing primary source texts.

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); Compulsory historical Documents listed at the end of the syllabus.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 presented in class.

This course is conducted **in person**, and attendance at lectures is required. Students are expected to engage with the material throughout the semester and to **take their own notes**. Lectures are not offered in parallel online formats. The in-class slides serve primarily to display visuals and highlight key terms, rather than to provide full definitions or substitutes for note-taking. Students are encouraged to engage with the assigned readings on a steady ongoing basis, including the relevant chapters of the **American Yawp** textbook, the selected **essays from *Historians on America*** and the assigned **primary source documents**.

All compulsory course materials—including the textbook, the essay volume, and the assigned source documents—are available online or through the links provided. Additional materials may occasionally be posted on Teams, but these do not replace attendance or active note-taking. The **ESSENTIALS** document outlines the key concepts, events, dates, and historical figures that students are expected to master.

To ensure accurate understanding of these concepts and figures, students are strongly encouraged to consult at least one reference work (e.g., Magyarics–Frank, listed under Recommended Literature). Consistent study throughout the semester is essential for successful completion of the course.

Students are welcome to ask questions during or immediately after the lecture, and individual consultations can be arranged during office hours.

Further study tips are provided at the end of this document.

LECTURE TOPICS

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| 1 | Introduction, goal orientation, study tips. 1B First Encounters and the Race for Colonies |
| 2 | The Early Colonies and the Founding Myths: <i>City Upon a Hill</i> , and the <i>American Dream</i> . |
| 3 | Revolution and the “making” of the United States, the Early Republic |
| 4 | Growth and Reforms: Westward Movement, Industrial Revolution, and Social Transformation |
| 5 | Civil War and Reconstruction |
| 6 | The Gilded Age and Progressive Era |
| 7 | Roaring Twenties: Industrial America and Modernism |
| 8 | The Nation in Crises: Great Depression, New Deal, and World War Two |
| 9 | The US in the Cold War |
| 10 | From the “Crisis of Confidence” to Post 9/11 US: (re)Negotiating identity and international role |

Evaluation:

1. Credits for the course can be earned by regularly attending the course and successfully completing a **written test** in the exam period.
2. The exam questions will be based partly on the compulsory texts, partly on the material covered by the lectures.

3. **The floor for passing grade is 55% but** the test is composed of two main sections: **a screening test and a comprehensive test**. The screening test on the top of the exam sheet will feature a few basic questions focusing on what/who/when, in other words, some fundamental concepts and events. You must earn 60% on this part for your comprehensive test to be reviewed and evaluated. You must earn 55% of the scores available in the comprehensive test to pass the course. Further grade brackets are generally drawn at 66, 75, 86 pts/% of scores available.
4. Multiple-choice questions in the comprehensive section will be designed in various formats to **test your knowledge of the most basic US history concepts, the causes/relevance/impact of events**, 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.

Some questions may inquire about the information/insights you gained from the **assigned essays** from *Historians on America*. (see compulsory readings above)

"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 the set historical documents or glean information from the "original texts" or excerpts provided at the exam. Compulsory historical documents are downloadable from http://btk.ppke.hu/uploads/articles/463213/file/USHistory_sourcetexts_2018.pdf, unless specified differently here):

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| 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/ , | 6. Woodrow Wilson: Fourteen Points Speech (January 1918) |
| 1. Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776) | 7. Franklin D. Roosevelt: First Inaugural Address (1933) |
| 2. The Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution (1791) | 8. <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> (1954) |
| 3. The Emancipation Proclamation (1862) | 9. John F. Kennedy: Inaugural Address (1961) |
| 4. Abraham Lincoln: Gettysburg Address (1863) | 10. Martin Luther King Jr: I Have a Dream (1963) |
| 5. <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> (1896) | 11. Ronald Reagan: Farewell Address (1989). Reagan Library,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjECSv8KFN4 |

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:

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. Your notes should help you connect the assigned readings with the lecture content and build a coherent understanding of the broader historical narrative. Connect with present: drawing on your familiarity of the contemporary United States—acquired in the *Introduction to the US* course—note how each event discussed may have shaped the country as it exists today. **Reading American Yawp**: Each chapter of *American Yawp* has its own dedicated link; students should follow the chapter-specific link corresponding to the lecture. 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, 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.