

## BA Final Exam in British and American history and civilization

### Structure of the exam:

- There are two lists of 12 topics on British and American history and civilization, respectively, with 3 questions within each topic (see below); there are also two series of 15 iconic British and American images (see in a separate document).
- At the beginning of the exam, the student picks two random numbers between 1 and 12, which corresponds to a British and American topic, respectively. The student may decide which country's selected topic they would like to discuss at the oral exam. Having made a decision, the student then randomly selects one of the 15 images from the country that they opted against (i.e. an American image if they preferred a British topic, or a British image if they preferred an American topic).
- Then the student is given approximately 10–15 minutes to prepare for the oral exam. The student is given a choice to pick one of the three questions belonging to the topic and focus on it in their oral presentation, as well as providing a broad discussion of the significance of the selected image.
- The student should prepare a roughly 10-minute presentation on the main topic and devote a few more minutes to the image.
- The examiners may ask other questions related to the topic and the image, but the focus of the oral exam will stick to the question chosen by the student.
- Results will only be announced at the end, when all students completed all their final exams.

### Recommended literature for preparation:

#### A. On Britain:

PINTÉR Károly, *Introduction to Britain*. PPKE BTK e-textbook. Budapest, Akadémiai, 2018. ISBN 9789634542629 (search for an updated version by Kinga Földvály on the home page of the Institute of English and American Studies!)

ABERCROMBIE, Nicholas – Alan WARDE (eds.) *Contemporary British Society*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Cambridge, Polity Press, 2010. ISBN 9780745622972

OAKLAND, John, *British Civilization: An Introduction*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. London, Routledge, 2020. ISBN 9781138318144

O'DRISCOLL, James, *Britain: For Learners of English*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. ISBN 9780194306447

MCDOWALL, David, *An Illustrated History of Britain*. Longman, 2009. ISBN 9780582749146

BLACK, Jeremy, *A History of the British Isles*. Basingstoke, MacMillan, 1996. ISBN 0333662814

HAIGH, Christopher (ed.), *The Cambridge Historical Encyclopedia of Great Britain and Ireland*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990. ISBN 052139552

MORGAN, Kenneth O. (ed.), *The Oxford History of Britain*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001. ISBN 019280135X

B. On the USA:

PINTÉR Károly, *Introduction to the USA. A Textbook for Students of English*. e-textbook. PPKE BTK, 2022. ISBN 9789633084243

CROWTHER, Jonathan (ed.), *Oxford Guide of British and American Culture*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005. ISBN 9780194311298

JANCSÓ Daniella et al., *Cultural Relations*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Budapest, Akadémiai, 2010. ISBN 9789630589673

KEARNY DATESMAN, Maryanne – CRANDALL, Joann – KEARNY, Edward N., *American Ways. An Introduction to American Culture*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed., Pearson, 2014. ISBN 9780133047028

MAUK, David – OAKLAND, John, *American Civilization. An Introduction*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed., Routledge, 2017. ISBN 9781138631724

LOCKE, Joseph – WRIGHT, Ben (eds.), *The American Yawp. A Massively Collaborative Open U.S. History Textbook*. Stanford University Press, 2022. <https://www.americanyawp.com/>

FRANK Tibor – MAGYARICS Tamás, *Handouts for U. S. History: A Study Guide and Workbook*. 3rd ed. Budapest, Antall József Tudásközpont, 2018. ISBN 9786155559310

JENKINS, Philip, *A History of the United States*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. ISBN 9780230506787

# British and American History and Civilization: Topics for the Final Exam

## A. British History and Civilization

### 1. *Cultural regions and regional divides in the UK*

- What are the historical contrasts between England and the other countries of the UK?
- What kind of regional divisions can be made within the countries of the UK?
- How do regional differences appear in contemporary British popular culture? Choose one example to illustrate the differences.

### 2. *Scotland*

- What explains historically the distinct Scottish national identity within the UK?
- How do the Scottish Lowlands and Highlands differ in their geographic, social, economic, and cultural profiles?
- Describe the establishment and development of the Scottish devolved government after 1997 and its impact on the contemporary Scottish independence movement.

### 3. *Wales / Northern Ireland*

- How was Wales united with England, and how did the union determine the Anglo-Welsh relations? Or: Which historical factors contributed to the Troubles of Northern Ireland (1968-1998)?
- What are the most important aspects of cultural identity in Wales or in Northern Ireland?
- What are the major achievements and unresolved problems of devolution in Wales or in Northern Ireland?

### 4. *The British Constitution*

- What are the sources of the British Constitution?
- Explain the concept of parliamentary monarchy and the historical context of the birth of parliamentary monarchy (Bill of Rights).
- Which major constitutional reforms did the Blair government (New Labour) introduce in the period of 1997-2007?

### 5. *British government*

- Discuss the legislative branch of the British government and its relation with the Crown.
- How does the executive branch work in the UK? Present its core components and its relations with Parliament and with the Crown.
- Describe the Civil Service and the role of civil servants in the British government.

### 6. *Democracy in Britain: representation, parties and elections*

- Explain the concept of the two-party system. Discuss the historical roots of the two-party system (Tories and Whigs, late 17th century) and its major transformations (19th century and post-WWII).
- Which were the priorities of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government and Tony Blair's New Labour?
- Describe the British parliamentary electoral system. How does it affect political representation?

### *7. Legal systems in the UK*

- Explain the concepts of common law and statute law in the development of the English legal system. Provide examples for both.
- Who are the major professional and non-professional participants in the English judiciary system? Focus on the peculiar professions in the English legal system. How are these participants trained / prepared for legal work and career?
- How does the world of law appear in British popular culture?

### *8. British society and social institutions*

- Explain the concept of the welfare state. Describe the major steps of its creation and criticism after WWII.
- Describe the demographic trends of contemporary British society.
- Explain the historical concept of class. Which historical factors explain the class consciousness of British society?

### *9. Ethnic and racial diversity in the UK*

- Which were the major waves of post-WWII immigration to Britain?
- What have been the problems and trends in the relations between mainstream British society and minority groups since the beginnings of post-WWII Commonwealth immigration?
- How does racial and ethnic diversity appear in contemporary British popular culture? Choose an example (literary work, movie, visual representation, performative arts) to illustrate minority ethnic groups and the social-cultural stereotypes associated with them.

### *10. Religion in the UK*

- Explain the concept of an established church. Describe Britain's established church and the historical contexts of its establishment.
- How religious is British society today? Which religions and denominations are present? Which are the current trends of adherence in the case of the historically most significant religions?
- How does contemporary British culture reflect the presence of British Muslims in the UK?

### *11. Education in the UK (primary and secondary levels)*

- What have been the major transformations of the state-maintained educational system in England since 1944 (until the education reforms of Tony Blair's government)?
- Explain the concept of public school in England. Discuss the most significant historical traditions of these schools.
- How are British general educational institutions portrayed in literature and popular culture?

### *12. Higher education in Britain*

- Explain the notion of "Oxbridge". What are the historically particular features of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge?
- In which waves were universities founded in the course of British history? Present the different types of universities established in the various periods.
- Describe the various degrees offered by British education, and reflect on the changing financial aspects of higher education. What are the challenges faced by British universities and students today?

## **B. American History and Civilization**

### *1. Cultural regions and regional divides in the USA*

- What are the major characteristics of the cultural regions in the USA?
- Present the cultural and natural sites of a chosen cultural region in the USA.
- How do regional differences appear in contemporary American popular culture?

### *2. The American Constitution*

- What are the major principles of the US Constitution?
- Describe the relationship between the federal and state governments.
- What was the reason for adding the first ten amendments to the Constitution?

### *3. The federal legislative*

- How are members of the federal legislative elected?
- What is the role of the federal legislative in the system of checks and balances?
- How does a bill become an Act of Congress? Describe the structure and internal functioning of Congress with particular focus on the lawmaking process.

### *4. The president and the federal executive*

- What are the powers of the American president? Why is the office of the president peculiar in American government?
- How is the American president elected?
- What is the role of the federal executive in the system of checks and balances?

### *5. The federal Supreme Court*

- What is the role of the Supreme Court in the system of checks and balances?
- Discuss the role of the Supreme Court in the desegregation of American education and society.
- Choose one of the following famous Supreme Court cases and discuss the stakes of the debate, the contents of the decision, and its consequences: Marbury v. Madison (1803), Engel v. Vitale (1962), Miranda v. Arizona (1966), Roe v. Wade (1973).

### *6. Contemporary political culture in the US*

- Which are the two major parties of the American party system, and what are the main issues they advocate?
- What social groups form the primary support group of each party?
- Name a famous American political figure of your choice and describe their significance in American public life.

### *7. US society*

- Describe the demographic trends of contemporary American society.
- Discuss the major trends of domestic migration in post-WWII America.
- Discuss the significance of the American Dream and the idea of the self-made man in American social imagination.

### *8. Immigration and the "Nation of Immigrants"*

- Describe the main differences between settlement, Old Immigration, and New Immigration.
- Discuss how immigration patterns changed after World War II and how these changes reshaped the ethnic and racial composition of the United States.
- Which of these labels or cultural models do you find most fitting and why: Melting Pot, Salad Bowl, Mosaic.

### *9. Contemporary diversity in American society*

- Describe the major racial groups of American society, including their geographical distribution and socioeconomic characteristics in American society.
- Discuss the presence of racial discrimination in American society after the Civil War.
- Who are Hispanics, and what constitutes Hispanic / Latino identity? How has Hispanic immigration affected American attitudes to immigration and social diversity?

### *10. Religion in the USA*

- What was the role of religion in the foundation of the US?
- How religious is American society today? Which religions/denominations are present? Which are the current trends of adherence/belonging in the case of the historically most significant religions?
- Discuss the relations of religion and politics / government in contemporary America.

### *11. General education in the USA*

- What were the historical goals of education in the USA?
- Why is there a wide variety of school types and curricula in the United States? Bring an example of your choice.
- What are some of the critical issues of contemporary general education in the USA? How are American general educational institutions portrayed in literature and popular culture?

### *12. Higher education in the USA*

- Explain the various meanings of college. Discuss the characteristic features of American college life.
- What cultural, social, and political meanings are attached to such labels as Ivy League, state university, and community college? How do tuition or student loans affect social mobility in the US?
- Explain the concept of brain drain and provide examples for the ways in which the USA capitalized on the immigration of talent and professional intellectuals. You may also involve examples from American literature and culture.