INTRODUCTION TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

lecture course

Code: BBNAN10400

Lecturer: Pintér Károly

Time: Thursday 2.15–3.45 p.m.

Place: BME Building Z, 005 (Great lecture hall)

Availability: during office hours: Thursday 4.00–5.00 p.m. in Z, Room 110 or Friday 2.00–3.00 p.m. in Sophianum Room 001

by email: pinter.karoly@btk.ppke.hu

Homepage (containing a lot of helpful downloadable material): http://btk.ppke.hu/karunkrol/intezetek-tanszekek/angol-amerikai-intezet/oktatok/pinter-karoly/pinter-karoly/compulsory-lecture-courses-english-majors

Purpose: To present a comprehensive survey of the contemporary social, political, and cultural reality of the USA, and to teach the special expressions and vocabulary necessary for a fluent discourse on such topics.

Compulsory Textbook: The USA section of the electronic study material Júlia Fodor–Károly Pintér: *Land Rover: A Survey Course about the British Isles and the USA* (2006); since the program no longer runs under Windows 7 or more recent operating systems, I have converted the readings into .pdf files that can be downloaded from the department's homepage (as well as from my own homepage, see above): Angol Tanszék → Anglisztika BA → Nappali képzés → Tematikák, segédanyagok → BBNAN10400. Feel free to print them out in any format you prefer.

Recommended literature and further readings: There are a number of books available on American life and culture, most of them published by Longman or Oxford University Press. The reason we do not use any of them as a single compulsory textbook is partly their high price, partly their differing emphasis on various aspects. I would like to recommend, however, two volumes that are especially useful in preparing for the classes:

- *Oxford Guide to British and American Culture*, OUP, 2005: an excellent reference volume on both Britain and America, which contains definitions of cultural concepts, identifies various famous personalities, and offers brief and very clear descriptions of many of the topics listed on the reverse side (e.g. elections in the US, education in the US, legal system in the US, etc.). I am convinced that it is an indispensable reference book which will be useful for you all long after the exam!
- Jancsó-Pintér-Suba-Szántó-Surányi: *Cultural Relations*, Akadémiai Kiadó, 2nd edition, 2010: a cultural textbook discussing the four largest and most populous English-speaking countries: Britain, the USA, Australia and Canada. The special advantage of the book is that it consists of short introductory texts followed by a number of comprehension and vocabulary exercises, all of them designed specifically for Hungarian students of English. It is of course less comprehensive on the US than the textbook, but it gives students a great opportunity to practice the relevant vocabulary and concepts.

Class 1 (Feb 13): Introduction to the Geography of the USA (topography, climate, rivers, hills)

Text for Class 1: "Geography of the US" text

Class 2 (Feb 20): Regions of the USA (distinctive features, major states, important cities, ethnic groups) Part 1: New England, Mid-Atlantic, Midwest

Text for Class 2: "Geography of the US" text

Class 3 (Feb 27): Regions of the USA (distinctive features, major states, important cities, ethnic groups) Part 2: South, West

Text for Class 3: "Geography of the US" text

Class 4 (March 5): How modern American society emerged: natives and immigrants

Text for Class 4: "History of immigration into the US" text

Class 5 (March 12): Contemporary American society: divisions by place, race and ethnicity

Text for Class 5: "Society of the US" text

Class 6 (March 19): System of government: The Constitution, the three branches of government, separation of powers, checks and balances

Text for Class 6: Articles I and II of the Constitution; "The Constitution" and "The Congress of the US" parts of the "Government and Politics in the US" text

Class 7 (March 26): Practical politics: the President's powers and the elections

Text for Class 7: Article III of the Constitution; *Land Rover,* USA section, "The President" and "Federal Elections in the US" parts of the "Government and Politics in the US" text

Class 8 (Apr 2): Party politics: the major US political parties

Text for Class 8: The "Political Parties in the US" part of the "Government and Politics in the US" text

April 6–19: SPRING BREAK

Class 9 (Apr 23): The US legal system and legal issues: the Supreme Court and the application of the Bill of Rights

Text for Class 9: "The Supreme Court" part of the "Government and Politics in the US" text

Class 10 (Apr 30): American public education: elementary and high schools, colleges and universities

Text for Class 10: "Education in the US" text

Class 11 (May 7): Religion in the US

Text for Class 11: "Religion in the US" text

Class 12 (May 14): Final summary

TIP: Download the Comprehension Exercise Workbook as well as useful maps, articles and other helpful materials from my homepage (Angol tanszék → Oktatók → Pintér Károly → Pintér Károly honlapja → Kurzusok)! It's highly recommended for all!

Rules of attendance and examination:

1. Attendance at the lectures is not checked by the lecturer, but that does not mean that it is not **highly recommended to attend the lectures** since the examination is based partly on the compulsory texts, partly on the material of the lectures.
2. It is also highly recommended to read each set text right after (preferably BEFORE) each lecture to digest the material more easily and thoroughly.
3. The examination will be written, in the form of a test, consisting of an outline map exercise (the requirements for that see below), factual questions about the topics covered by the lectures, and a comprehension exercise, in which a short piece of original English text (usually a newspaper or magazine article excerpt) is provided and after reading it, students are required to answer a few questions about the text. It is highly recommended to **practice comprehension exercises with the help of the workbook on the lecturer's homepage!**

COMPULSORY GEOGRAPHICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE INTRODUCTION TO THE US COURSE

1. To outline the 6 main cultural regions of the US (New England, Mid-Atlantic, South, Midwest, Southwest, West)

2. To identify all 50 states by region (which region does it belong to?).

3. To identify the following states on the map:
   - Massachusetts
   - New York
   - Pennsylvania
   - Ohio
   - Michigan
   - Illinois
   - Missouri
   - Virginia
   - Georgia
   - Florida
   - Louisiana
   - Tennessee
   - Texas
   - Arizona
   - Utah
   - California
   - Washington state

3. To identify the following important cities on the map (together with the state they belong to; see previous list)
   - Boston
   - New York City
   - Philadelphia
   - Washington D.C.
   - Cleveland
   - Detroit
   - Chicago
   - St. Louis
   - Kansas City
   - Atlanta
   - Miami
   - New Orleans
   - Memphis
   - Dallas
   - Houston
   - Phoenix
   - Salt Lake City
   - Los Angeles
   - San Francisco
   - Seattle

4. To identify the Great Lakes (Lake Ontario, Eire, Huron, Michigan and Superior) and the Great Salt Lake.