

Inštitút anglistiky a amerikanistiky FF PU v Prešove

Program: anglický jazyk a anglofónne kultúry, Mgr.

Štátnicové témy

American studies

Brief exam description: The exam focuses on a variety of issues surrounding the topics listed in this document, related to American history and culture. As the cultural tradition of the US is very rich and complex, the focus will be put on general topics (involving specific examples) consisting of the students' knowledge related to various historical events, historical figures, their (often far-reaching) impact on contemporary society and culture of the US, as well as up-to-date information concerning the present-day status of societal and cultural aspects of the US.

Areas of competence required:

- Candidates are required to demonstrate their ability of creative thinking and to analyze, compare and contrast a variety of issues relevant to the chosen topic, using specific examples they consider relevant and avoiding unsupported generalizations.
- Candidates are required to identify various idiosyncrasies of American culture in order to be able show adequate understanding of the issues presented.
- Candidates are required to provide support for their general claims, i.e. to use specific examples from relevant sources, referring to specific events, historical figures, etc.
- Candidates are required to introduce the chosen topic briefly, then move on to discuss relevant details, and try and respond to any questions raised or comments made by members of the state exam committee.
- Candidates are required to avoid stating the obvious (e.g. irrelevant claims, extended biographies or historical accounts, etc.).
- Candidates are required to make references to any of the recommended literature they consider relevant.
- Candidates are required to use established academic terms/concepts related to cultural theory or history rather than non-academic ones.
- Most importantly, candidates are encouraged to use their original ideas and interpretations, however unusual or controversial, as long as they can be supported by evidence from sources relevant to the chosen topic.

Exam topics and areas:

1. Colonial America – the religious, economic and social diversity of the British colonies
2. The Birth of the U.S. – the American and the rise of the new nation (Declaration of Independence and the philosophical background to the American Revolution; the discrepancies between the ideals as anchored in the Declaration and the realities of the time; the essential documents anchoring the tenets of US democracy and their resonance in contemporary US)
3. Race and Ethnicity in US history and culture (selected issues, such as – African American slavery and its aftermath / consequences, the emergence of the Chicano/a America – the Mexican War of 1848 and beyond, Native American history, Asian Americans [Chinese Exclusion, Japanese American internment])
4. U.S. Political System – the foundations, two-party system, the political process, US media in relation to US politics
5. Contemporary issues in US culture – race (Black Lives Matter, [criminal justice system]), LGBTQIA rights, reproductive rights, gun control, etc.
6. The Doctrine / Ideology of US exceptionalism – foundations, manifestations (US history and present), critique
7. Trump and Trumpism - the complexity of the reasons that gave rise to Trump, the response in the U.S. and around the world to the Trump Presidency – as we speak... (*potentially connect this question to / include also the developments and “moods” in Britain that led to Brexit, etc.*)
8. US Media – the reflection of and the impact on US life and culture (traditional and alternative media, the impact of the Internet, the rise of “fake news” and the “post-truth” world, Wikileaks, corporate consolidation of news, etc.)

Recommended literature:

- Zinn, Howard. 2003. *A People's History of the United States*. London: Longman.
(available, e.g. - http://library.uniteddiversity.coop/More_Books_and_Reports/Howard_Zinn-A_peoples_history_of_the_United_States.pdf)
- Or, Norton et al., 2004. *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Takaki, Ronald. 2008. *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Urofsky, Melvin I. (ed). *Basic Readings in U.S. Democracy*. United States Information Agency (Primary documents – many are also available online).
- Breidlid A., et al. 1996. *American Culture: An Anthology of Civilization Texts*. New York: Routledge.
- Judis, John B. 2016. *The Populist Explosion: How the Great Recession Transformed American and European Politics*. New York: Columbia Global Exports, University of Columbia.

See e.g. www.robertreich.org - on current socioeconomic issues in the U.S., or Reich's book *Beyond Outrage*. Vintage Books.

Graber, Doris A. 2017. *Mass Media and American Politics*. New York: CQ Press. 10th edition.

Postman, Neil. 2005. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. New York: Penguin.

For current events – a variety of sources available online (youtube, US newspapers, etc.)

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