

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. Formation of American cultural values. †
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;). Central myths, values, and beliefs of American culture and cultural identity (e.g. cowboy culture, frontier narrative, etc.)
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). Race, ethnicity and the issues of representation and power relations in American popular culture. Critical race theory and the myth of the ‘model minority’. ‘Perpetual foreigner’ syndrome, cultural perception, cultural prejudice, and cultural stereotypes and how they affect ethnic minorities in the USA.
4. U.S. Political System – the foundations, two-party system, the political process, US media in relation to US politics. Race and gender – aesthetic standards and power structures in American political discourse.
5. The nature, origins, and metamorphoses of the myth of American Dream. American consumerism. “You are what you buy” identity construction.
6. Contemporary issues in US culture – race (Black Lives Matter, criminal justice system), LGBTQIA rights, reproductive rights, gun control, MAGA, ICE repressions, etc. Does the myth of a melting pot of cultures still apply?
7. The Doctrine / Ideology of US exceptionalism – foundations, manifestations (US history and present), critique
8. Populism in American political, media, and cultural discourses. Populism vs elitism, clash of values and beliefs. Give examples of American subcultures, alternative cultures, and countercultures that respond(ed) to populism and/or elitism.
9. Media, technologies, and American culture. The impact of the recent information and communication technologies on the lifestyles in the US. Their influence on American cultural myths, values, and beliefs.
10. AI as a key transformative factor in present-day culture (Baudrillard’s simulations and hyperreality, reality vs fiction, etc.).
11. Humour in American culture. Characteristic features of American humour. Differences between British and American humour. Humour as a foundational marker of American cultural identity.
12. Migration and American national identity. Major milestones of historical migration within

the USA. Historic waves and patterns of immigration to the USA. How has migration shaped modern American national-cultural identity.

13. The USA as ‘the world’s police’. Major military events in American history and culture during the 20th and 21st Centuries. The protest movement in modern American history and society. How has American society and culture been shaped by war. Representations of war in popular American culture (literature, TV, film, music).

14. Cultural appropriation. Types of cultural appropriation. Examples of cultural appropriation in popular culture (TV, films, literature, music, fashion, food). Cultural appropriation vs cultural appreciation. ‘Voluntary cultural appropriation’ in American society and culture.

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](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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