



SOCIOLOGY 180C: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON U.S. AND EUROPEAN SOCIETIES: CULTURE

SPRING 2011

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LECTURES: Tuesdays 5:00 – 8:00 pm
LECTURE HALL: Room 145, Dwinelle Hall
OFFICE HOURS: Thursdays 2:00 – 4:00 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Is America different from other developed nations? Attempts to answer this question are frequently lumped together under the concept of “American exceptionalism.” Scholars use this term when describing various characteristics – such as individualism, egalitarianism, and religious fervor – that distinguish the United States from its European forebears. The notion of exceptionalism is, of course, not only a descriptive term. It is also an ideology. After all, many versions of the exceptionalism thesis suggest that America is empowered with a special role in world affairs due to its resources, national character, and (even) divine providence. Implied by this view is that America is not only different from the rest of the world but is, in fact, superior. In this class we will critically evaluate a number of versions of American exceptionalism by comparing the United States to its European peers in the domain of culture.

COURSE MATERIALS

We selected a broad range of articles, book chapters, and opinion pieces for you to read throughout the semester. From time to time, we will supplement these with movie fragment, as well as brief contemporary videos. On average, you will be asked to read 100 pages per week. All the course materials will be available to you online at our bSpace website.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

You final grade in this course will be based on your performance on two in-class exams, 10 weekly commentaries, as well as on your participation in class.

Two In-Class Exams: There will be two in-class exams in this class. The first one of these will take place on Tuesday, March 6th and it will cover materials in Weeks 1-7. The second exam will be on the last day of class, on Tuesday, April 24th and it will cover materials in Weeks 9-14. In the case of each exam, we will provide you with four or five possible essay questions one week before the exam and, on the day, we will select one of these for you to answer in a closed book setting. You will need to bring your own blue/green exam book with you to these exams. (You can buy small exam books for about 35 cents at the *Cal Student Store*, 108 Martin Luther King Jr. Student Union #4505; telephone: 510.642.9000). The exams will start at 5 pm exactly in our usual classroom; you will be given one hour to write your essay. These in-class exams will jointly contribute towards 50% of your overall grade (with each exam being worth 25%).

Weekly Commentaries: Beginning with the third week of classes, you will be asked to answer a weekly substantive question about the readings. Your commentary should be about a paragraph long. We will not give you feedback on these commentaries, but we will grade them on the basis of effort (not correctness). In order to earn full points on these, you will need to demonstrate that you have completed the readings for the week and that you have thought about the issues at stake. There will be ten (10) such commentaries during the semester; each will be worth 3 points (or 3% of your total grade).

The purpose of this assignment is to make sure that you read the required materials before coming to class. As a result, commentaries are going to be time-sensitive. We will post commentary questions on Friday nights in your bSpace "Assignment" folder and ask that you submit your response electronically in the same folder four days later (by noon on Tuesdays). We will not accept late commentaries unless (1) you have a doctor's notice that you were prevented from doing the commentary, or (2) you have secured permission from Szonja (by email) in advance of the submission deadline that a late submission would be accepted. In either case, you will earn only 1 point for you excused commentary instead of the usual 3.

Class Participation: This class meets once a week for 3 hours. In terms of its basic format, it will be a mixture of lectures and discussion. We will keep attendance starting in Week 3. This will be monitored through a series of one-minute paragraphs. At some point during the lecture, we will ask you to take out a piece of binding paper, put your name (legibly!) on top, and write down a short answer to a question that relates to our class discussion. We will then collect these responses and use them to assign class participation grades. There will be ten (10) such one-minute paragraphs during the semester, with each counting 2 points (or 2%) towards your overall grade.

We do not give credit for missed attendance unless (1) you have a doctor's notice that you were prevented from being present, or (2) other valid excuse, for which you informed the instructor in advance of class. (It goes without saying that family/friends visiting you during the lecture, a birthday celebration, or a quick trip to Las Vegas will not be acceptable excuses.) In any case, excused absence will earn you only 1 point for attendance, as opposed to the full 2 points.

Course Grades: Your final grade in this class will be based on your performance on the two in-class exams (25% each), your weekly commentaries (30%), and the weekly one-minute papers to monitor class participation (20%). In assigning final grades, we do not "curve" the class. It is, therefore, entirely possible for everyone to get an A. Needless to say, it is also possible (although quite unlikely) for everyone to fail. In assigning final grades, we will use the following basic scheme:

A	95 – 99%	C	73 – 76%
A-	90 – 94%	C-	70 – 72%
B+	87 – 89%	D+	67 – 69%
B	83 – 86%	D	63 – 66%
B-	80 – 82%	D-	60 – 62%
C+	77 – 79%	F	00 – 59%

In this grade-inflated world of ours we are not opposed to the idea of awarding students an A+ for exceptional work. However, in order to earn such a grade, you will have to earn 100 points in this class. There will be no extra credit work assigned in Sociology 121, so your only way to secure these points is to turn in superior work throughout the semester.

CLASS WEBSITE

We have set up a bSpace website for the class. You can find here a copy of the syllabus, an electronic version of our class schedule, PDF files for all the readings (under "Resources"), handouts and lecture notes (also under "Resources"), as well as a place for you to submit your weekly commentaries (under "Assignments"). This is also where you will find announcements from us, and your grades. It is essential that you gain access to our class website as soon as possible because (1) all of our required readings reside at our class website and (2) your first assignment is an online assignment and it is due during the third week of classes.

How do you log in to bSpace? Log in to <http://bspace.berkeley.edu> with your CalNet ID and Passphrase. If you are enrolled through Telebears, you should see a tab at the top of the screen for our course when you log in. If you are enrolled in more than one course using bSpace you will, of course, see a tab for each course. If you are a concurrent enrollment student you cannot be assigned bSpace access until the status of your application is "Approval Completed." It is your responsibility to make sure that your application is reviewed and approved in a timely fashion. If you have questions about this, please email concurrent@unex.berkeley.edu.

COURSE TIMELINE

Tuesday, January 17	American Exceptionalism? Introduction and Overview
Tuesday, January 24	Values, Culture and Society
Tuesday, January 31	Individualism and Mass Society. We begin taking class attendance this week. <i>First commentary is due by noon.</i>
Tuesday, February 7	Land of Opportunity and the American Dream. <i>Second commentary is due by noon.</i>
Tuesday, February 14	Why Is There No Socialism in the United States? <i>Third commentary is due by noon.</i>
Tuesday, February 21	Material Well-Being and Mass Consumption. <i>Fourth commentary is due by noon.</i>
Tuesday, February 28	Practicality, Efficiency, and the Disenchantment of the World. <i>Fifth commentary is due by noon.</i>
Tuesday, March 6	First In-Class Examination (covering Weeks 1-7) <i>Exam begins at 5 pm in our usual classroom. You will have one hour to complete your work.</i>
Tuesday, March 13	Religion and Science. <i>Sixth commentary is due by noon.</i>
Tuesday, March 20	Romantic Love, Family, and Sexuality. <i>Seventh commentary is due by noon.</i>
Tuesday, March 27	No Class: Spring Break
Tuesday, April 3	Democracy and Civil Society. <i>Eighth commentary is due by noon.</i>
Tuesday April 10	Nationalism, Militarism, and Empire Building. <i>Ninth commentary is due by noon.</i>
Tuesday, April 17	American Exceptionalism Revisited: Myth or Reality? <i>Tenth commentary is due by noon.</i>
Tuesday, April 24	Second In-Class Examination (covering Weeks 9-14) <i>Exam begins at 5 pm in our usual classroom. You will have one hour to complete your work.</i>

COURSE SCHEDULE AND WEEKLY READINGS

In order to obtain the greatest benefit from our classroom discussions, we strongly encourage you to complete the reading assignments before our class meets and definitely before the in-class exams.

Week 01: American Exceptionalism? Introduction and Overview

James Truslow Adams. [1931] 2001. "Epilogue." Pages 401-417 in *The Epic of America* by James Truslow Adams. Safety Harbor, FL: Simon Publications.

Josef Joffe. 2008. "A Canvas, Not a Country: How Europe Sees America." Pages 597-626 in *Understanding America: The Anatomy of an Exceptional Nation*, edited by Peter H. Schuck and James Q Wilson. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

Seymour Martin Lipset. 1996. "Introduction." Pages 17-28 in *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* by Seymour Martin Lipset. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

Week 02: Values, Culture and Society

Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton. 1996. "Culture and Character: The Historical Conversation." Pages 27-51 in *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, edited by Robert N. Bellah et al. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Claude S. Fischer. 2010. "The Stories We Tell." Pages 1-16 in *Made in America: A Social History of American Culture and Character* by Claude S. Fischer. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

David Riesman. [1961] 2001. "Some Types of Character and Society." Pages 3-36 in *The Lonely Crowd*, by David Riesman. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Robert Wuthnow. 2008. "The Sociological Study of Values." *Sociological Forum* 23 (June): 333-343.

Week 03: Individualism and Mass Society

Claude S. Fischer. 2008. "Paradoxes of American Individualism." *Sociological Forum* 23 (June): 363-372.

Loek Halman. 1996. "Individualism in Individualized Society? Results from the European Values Survey." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 37 (3-4): 195-214.

Jeremy Rifkin. 2005. "Creating the Individual." Pages 119-132 in *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream* by Jeremy Rifkin. New York, NY: Penguin.

Alexis de Tocqueville. 2003. *Democracy in America*. Selections. London, UK: Penguin Books.

Robert Wuthnow. 2006. "Quandaries of Individualism." Pages 38-78 in *American Mythos: Why Our Best Efforts To Be a Better Nation Fall Short* by Robert Wuthnow. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Week 04: Land of Opportunity and the American Dream

Gary Burtless and Ron Haskins. 2008. "Inequality, Economic Mobility, and Social Policy." Pages 495-538 in *Understanding America: The Anatomy of an Exceptional Nation*, edited by Peter H. Schuck and James Q. Wilson. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

Jason DeParle. 2012. "Harder for Americans to Rise From Lower Rungs." *The New York Times*, January 4, 2012. Link: www.nytimes.com/2012/01/05/us/harder-for-americans-to-rise-from-lower-rungs.html

Peter Dreier. 2007. "Just the Numbers: The United States in Comparative Perspective." *Contexts* 6 (Summer): 38-46

Anu Partanen. 2011. "What Americans Keep Ignoring About Finland's School Success." *The Atlantic* (December). Link: <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2011/12/what-americans-keep-ignoring-aboutfinlands-school-success>

Wuthnow, Robert. 2006. "Self-Made Men and Women." Pages 104-127 in *American Mythos: Why Our Best Efforts To Be a Better Nation Fall Short*, by Robert Wuthnow. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Week 05: Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?

Eric Foner. 1984. "Why is there no Socialism in the United States?" *History Workshop Journal* 17 (1): 57-80.

David Halle. 1984. "Position in the System of Production: The Concept of the Working Man." Pages 202-230 in *America's Working Man: Work, Home, and Politics Among Blue-Collar Property Owners* by David Halle. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Ronald Inglehart. 1997. "The Rise of New Issues and New Parties." Pages 237-266 in *Modernization and Post-Modernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*, by Ronald Inglehart. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks. 2000. "The End of Political Exceptionalism?" Pages 261-294 in *It Didn't Happen Here* by Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks. New York, NY: Norton & Co.

Week 06: Material Well-Being and Mass Consumption

Claude S. Fischer. 2010. "Goods." Pages 59-94 in *Made in America: A Social History of American Culture and Character*, by Claude S. Fischer. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Sheldon Garon. 2011. "Why We Spend, Why They Save." *The New York Times*, November 24, 2011. Link: www.nytimes.com/2011/11/25/opinion/why-we-spend-why-they-save.html

Jeffrey D. Sachs. 2011. "The Distracted Society." Pages 133-158 in *The Price of Civilization: Reawakening American Virtue and Prosperity*, by Jeffrey D. Sachs. New York, NY: Random House.

Juliet Schor. 1999. "The New Politics of Consumption: Why Americans Want So Much More Than They Need." *Boston Review* (24) Link: <http://bostonreview.net/BR24.3/schor.html>

Robert Wuthnow. 2006. "Saving Ourselves from Materialism." Pages 192-217 in *American Mythos: Why Our Best Efforts To Be a Better Nation Fall Short*, by Robert Wuthnow. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Week 07: Practicality, Efficiency, and the Disenchantment of the World

Benjamin R. Barber. 2007. "Branding Identities: The Loss of Meaning." Pages 166-212 in *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole* by Benjamin R. Barber. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

Michael Krondl. 2011. "A Democracy of Sweetness." Pages 305-362 in *Sweet Invention: A History of Dessert* by Michael Krondl. Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press.

Wei Zhao. 2005. "Understanding Classifications: Empirical Evidence From the American and French Wine Industries." *Poetics* (33): 179-200.

Week 08: First In-Class Examination

Week 09: Religion and Science

Mark Chaves. 2002. "Abiding Faith." *Contexts* 1 (Summer): 19-26

Andrew Kohut. 2006. "A Blessed People." Pages 91-119 in *American Against the World*, by Andrew Kohut. New York, NY: An Owl Book.

Ronald Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker. 2000. "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values." *American Sociological Review* 65 (February): 19-51.

Robert Wuthnow. 2008. "Religion." Pages 275-305 in *Understanding America: The Anatomy of an Exceptional Nation*, edited by Peter H. Schuck and James Q. Wilson. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

Week 10: Romantic Love, Family, and Sexuality

Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M. Tipton. 1996. "Love and Marriage." Pages 85-112 in *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, edited by Robert N. Bellah et al. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Andrew J. Cherlin. 2005. "American Marriage in the Early Twenty-First Century." *The Future of Children* 15 (Autumn) 33-55.

Linda J. Waite and Melissa J. K. Howe. 2008. "The Family." Pages 309-340 in *Understanding America: The Anatomy of an Exceptional Nation*, edited by Peter H. Schuck and James Q. Wilson. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

Amy Schalet. 2010. "Sex, Love, and Autonomy in the Teenage Sleepover." *Contexts* 9 (3): 16-21

Week 11: No Class – Spring Break

Week 12: Democracy and Civil Society

Arthur C. Brooks. 2008. "Philanthropy and the Non-Profit Sector." Pages 539-562 in *Understanding America: The Anatomy of an Exceptional Nation*, edited by Peter H. Schuck and James Q. Wilson. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

Nina Eliasoph. 1997. "'Close to Home': The Work of Avoiding Politics." *Theory and Society* 26: 605-647.

Mary A. Glandon. 1991. "The Land of Rights." Pages 1-17 in *Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse*, by Mary A. Glandon. New York, NY: Free Press.

Andrew Kohut. 2006. "Doing Business, Practicing Democracy." Pages 120-137 in *America Against the World* by Andrew Kohut. New York, NY: An Owl Book.

Week 13: Nationalism, Militarism, and Empire Building

Jack Citrin. 2008. "Political Culture." Pages 147-180 in *Understanding America: The Anatomy of an Exceptional Nation*, edited by Peter H. Schuck and James Q. Wilson. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

Andrew Kohut. 2006. "Globalization and Americanization." Pages 138-161 in *America Against the World* by Andrew Kohut. New York, NY: An Owl Book.

Jeremy Rifkin. 2005. "Waging Peace." Pages 283-314 in *The European Dream*, by Jeremy Rifkin. New York, NY: Penguin.

Howard Zinn. 2005. "The Power and the Glory: Myths of American Exceptionalism." *Boston Review*, Summer 2005. Link: <http://bostonreview.net/BR30.3/zinn.php>

Week 14: American Exceptionalism Revisited: Myth or Reality?

Peter Baldwin. 2009. "Acorn and Oak." Pages 243-249 in *The Narcissism of Minor Differences: How America and Europe Are Alike*, by Peter Baldwin. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Godfrey Hodgson. 2009. "The Corruption of the Best." Pages 155-190 in *The Myth of American Exceptionalism*, by Godfrey Hodgson. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Tony Judt. 2005. "Europe vs. America." *The New York Review of Books*. February 10, 2005. Link: www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2005/feb/10/europe-vs-america

Seymour Martin Lipset. 1996. "A Double-Edged Sword." Pages 267-292 in *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* by Seymour Martin Lipset. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

Week 15: Second In-Class Examination