What this Course is About

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 many versions of American exceptionalism by comparing the United States to its European peers.
Readings
You do not have to purchase any books or course readers for this class. The main ideas will be communicated in lectures as well as through required readings, the latter of which will be posted at our class website. Please note that required readings are not merely recommended: they are, in fact, required. The expectation is that you complete them before coming to class so that we can have informed discussions and lively debates. It goes without saying that you will be tested on these readings in weekly quizzes, as well as in your take-home papers.

You will notice that the number of assignments in this class are, perhaps, somewhat smaller than in other classes. This is to compensate for the volume of reading that you will be asked to complete during the semester. So, while you may be writing somewhat less, you will be reading more than in your other classes. The more you read, the more you learn – it is as simple as that.

Course Requirements
During the semester, you will be required to complete weekly quizzes and write several essay-like papers.

Quizzes (10%): Class attendance will benefit you in several ways. Primarily, your understanding of the course material will be enhanced from double exposure to the material (in class as well as through readings). Second, you are responsible for all information presented in class even on days that you are absent. I will not take roll call at every class. Instead, attendance will be monitored though weekly quizzes. Beginning with the third week of classes, these will be posted at our class website each Friday (right after class). They will cover the material that we discussed and/or read about during the week. You will have 24 hours to complete the quiz online. Each quiz will present you with 5 multiple choice/true or false questions. The questions will be straightforward – you should have no problems answering them if you have completed the required readings and were present in class. The expectation is that you do these quizzes on your own: you are not permitted to assist others, nor are you allowed to receive assistance from others, in answering quiz questions. You may take your online quiz whenever it is most convenient to you, but you must observe the 24-hour rule. Please note that the deadline for these quizzes will not be extended for any reason, including human error. There will be no makeup quizzes, but two of your lowest quiz scores will be dropped in calculating your final grade. The two dropped quizzes are not a gift from me to you. They are there to mitigate the effects of such things as illness, job interviews, exam preparation for other classes/grad school applications, visiting parents, technical mistakes, or simple human error on your grades. Please use dropped quizzes wisely.

An important note on class participation: Class starts at 1:10 and ends at 1:59. Please do not come to class late as this creates a distraction for those who are participating. If your schedule regularly does not permit you to be in class from beginning to end, please do not register for this class.
Short Paper Assignments (90%): You will be asked to write four short papers in this class. These papers may take the form of a short essay, they may require that you define key terms and illustrate them with specific examples discussed in class, or you might be asked to review and comment on the work of one or more scholars. Rules for these short paper assignments are as follows:

1. I will post your assignment prompt one week ahead of the deadline. You will then have 7 days to complete your work. Your final paper must be posted inside your assignment folder no later than 11:59 pm on deadline day. ABSOLUTELY NO EXTENSIONS will be possible. You will receive 0 points on your paper if we do not see your entire assignment inside the assignment folder by the deadline.

2. You will be posting your papers in your assignment folder on bCourses. Technical problems will not be accepted as an excuse for late submissions, nor will I accept hard copies or emailed copies of your work. It is your responsibility to make sure that you have Internet access and that you are sufficiently familiar with bCourses to submit your work. If you need assistance with this, please contact Educational Technology Services (https://www.ets.berkeley.edu/services-facilities/bcourses).

3. These papers must be the result of your own work. While you may discuss the substantive content of your assignment with other students, you are ultimately responsible for making sure that what you submit to us is your very own original work. To encourage you in this regard, we will require you to submit your work to Turnitin - an online application that checks for the originality of your written work. All papers with a score of 10% or higher will be closely scrutinized for possible plagiarism. If you are not familiar with the meaning of plagiarism, I strongly encourage you to read this document: http://www.plagiarism.org/article/what-is-plagiarism.

4. Your assignment must be entirely in your own words. This is the best way for you to demonstrate that you have command over the class material. What does this mean? You will not be permitted to use direct quotations and you will be required to describe, paraphrase, and translate other people’s ideas/research in your work.

5. You cannot consult with me in the writing of these take-home assignments. I am happy to answer technical questions about these papers, but I will not respond to queries related to substance.

6. As is the case with all the assignments in this class, you will be expected to show full command of the material that you have learned in this class (readings, lectures, class discussions). Be sure to incorporate these into your essays to demonstrate that you are learning from them. It is, of course, perfectly fine to bring into your essay material that you have learned in other classes. However, do this only after you have demonstrated learning in Sociology 180c. My job as a teacher in this class is to evaluate how much you have learned in this class, not how much raw intelligence you have overall.
7. These papers are not designed to test for creativity in answers. Creativity in a class like ours is notoriously difficult to grade. We will use these short papers simply to evaluate your mastery of the material covered in this class.

8. I do not grade on the basis of effort. The only thing that matters in these exams is results: have you demonstrated that you have learned the material that has been presented to you in class?

9. I will drop the lowest of your four paper scores in calculating your final grade. As is the case with the quizzes, the dropped essay grade is not a gift from me to you. It is there to mitigate the effects of such things as illness, job interviews, exam preparation for other classes/grad school applications, visiting parents, technical mistakes, or simple human error on your grades. Please use your dropped paper grade wisely.

The dates for these assignments are as follows; please put them on your calendar now:

   Paper #1: Friday, February 22nd by 11:59 pm
   Paper #2: Friday, March 15th by 11:59 pm
   Paper #3: Friday, April 12th by 11:59 pm
   Paper #4: Friday, May 3rd by 11:59 pm

Please note that I do not offer alternative dates or times for these papers. If these dates (or times) do not fit into your schedule, please do not register for Sociology 180c this semester.

Course Grades
Grading – an uncanny manifestation of the urge to quantify the unquantifiable – will be based on: (1) your weekly quizzes, and (2) the quality of your short take-home papers. In assigning final grades, I will use the following basic scheme. Please take a good look at this distribution because it may differ from what you are used to in other classes. Please also note that I will not curve the class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94 – 99.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 93.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84 – 86.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 83.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 – 79.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74 – 76.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70 – 73.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67 – 69.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64 – 66.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>61 – 63.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>00 – 60.99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Is it possible to obtain an A+ in this class? Absolutely! In this grade-inflated world of ours I’m not opposed to awarding students an A+ for exceptional work. To do so, however, you need to earn 100 or more points (overall) in the class. There will be no extra credit work assigned in Sociology 180c, so the only way to secure an A+ is to turn in superior work consistently throughout the semester.
How Can You Do Well in This Class?

*Comparative Cultures* was not designed to be a particularly difficult class. To do well in the course, however, will require consistent work and attention on your part. Here are some suggestions for doing well in the course:

1. **Attend class.** By design, attendance and participation are two vital components of this course. While I do not directly grade you on participation (by taking a roll call at each class), coming to lecture regularly is important if you want to do well on tests, pop quizzes, assignments, and exams. You will be expected to integrate lecture materials into all graded work. Please do not take this class if you cannot attend regularly.

2. Don’t just sit in the classroom; come to lecture in mind as well as in body. **Come prepared** by completing the required readings ahead of time. These will give you a good understanding and base knowledge of the topics that we will cover during lecture. **Participate and ask questions.** Active participation in class forces you to focus your attention and limit outside and internal distractions.

3. **Put your face in my face.** This is a large survey class and, as a result, I will be doing a fair amount of lecturing during the semester. However, I very much welcome class participation. In fact, class participation makes learning a great deal more enjoyable for everyone. Help me get to know you by participating in class, by talking to me after lectures, and by visiting me during office hours.

4. **Sign up for office hours.** I hold office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays from 4:30 pm until 5:30 pm when classes are in session. For an appointment, please sign up at [wejoinin.com](http://wejoinin.com) (you will find the link on the front page of our bCourses website). If you cannot make it to either of these office hours, please drop me a note (szonja@berkeley.edu) so we can set up an alternative time to meet. If life gets in the way of your work, please do not wait until the last week of the semester to let me know about your struggles. Make an appointment, come see me, let’s talk about your concerns before it is too late. Please also use academic advisors made available to you by the Department, as well as by the University. We are here to help you succeed, but we can only do this effectively if you come to us with your worries in a timely fashion.

5. **Take your short paper assignments seriously.** Make sure that you do all the work that is required from you to complete each take-home paper. Write clearly and connect your argument to materials that we have consulted in readings and/or in class. Think about the work in front of you and use your brilliant analytic skills to craft a vibrant, interesting, and lively response. Support everything you say with empirical evidence from readings, lectures, and class discussions. Show me that you are learning by incorporating into your work material that I have shared with you during the semester.

6. **Do the required readings.** I will rarely go over required readings in lectures, but they are there for a reason and you must read them if you want to do well in the course. Your short paper assignments will specifically test your understanding of the reading materials, and you will be expected to work them into your final exam. If you are having problems understanding these readings, please come and see me.
7. **Turn in work on time.** All the assignments have firm deadlines associated with them. Put these deadlines on your calendar at the beginning of the semester and be sure to meet them. Don’t wait until the last minute to submit your work. Give yourself plenty of time for possible technical errors, Internet slowdowns, system overloads, and human error. When submitting work online, always double check to make sure that contribution is in your assignment folder. If it is not in your folder, we cannot grade it and you will receive a 0 on your work.

8. **Take good notes in class.** I will post lecture slides, but only in a rudimentary form. It is very important that you learn to take good lecture notes and that you rely on your notes, not the posted slides, for the basis of your quizzes and take-home papers. If you miss a class, be sure to borrow someone else’s lecture notes to keep up with the material covered. Please note, also, that it is inappropriate to share lecture notes with anyone beyond this class. Do not post lecture notes (either your own or my posted lecture slides) on a third-party website. Doing so is a violation of copyright law.

---

**Appealing a Grade**

Social science research has repeatedly shown that grades have absolutely no direct effect on people’s career or their earnings capacity (https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/2092789.pdf). This notwithstanding, I understand that grades are important to you. Consequently, if you are not happy with your grade on any of our class assignments, I will support you in a fair and consistent review process. Please report all errors in writing, no later than one week after the grade is posted at our class website. It is your responsibility to keep an eye on posted grades and it is also your responsibility to report errors in a timely fashion. If you don’t contact me within a week, the grade will become part of your permanent record. I will not accept late appeals. How do you appeal a grade? The following description pertains principally to grade appeals on essay exams, but the same logic applies to all other grade appeals as well. Look at them, take them seriously, and follow them. Here’s what you need to do step-by-step:

1. Look over your work carefully. Don’t do this immediately after receiving a grade. Give yourself a bit of time to deal with the blow of not having received the grade that you desired. Some distance helps you see your work in a slightly more objective light. When you come back to the paper, try to see it from the viewpoint of an outsider. Pretend, as much as possible, that you are the grader. Better still, if you are appealing an essay grade, use our grading rubric and self-grade your work.
2. As you evaluate the grade that you received, please pay special attention to the comments that your grader left for you in your assignment folder. Look at the grading rubric (not just the one that is attached to your assignment in your assignment folder, but also the detailed one that I share with you when I release the grades to the class.) Make sure that you understand what I expected from you on the exam. Remember: re-grade requests are not an opportunity for you to voice disagreement with our grading rubric, but a chance for you to point to serious errors that we have made in applying our rubric to your work.

3. Prepare a brief (250 words or fewer) typed document detailing why you think your grade is inaccurate. (Did we misunderstand you? If so, direct our attention to the place/s in the exam where you explain yourself.) A re-grade request is not an opportunity for you to re-write the assignment. Rather, your task here is to point to clear and convincing evidence that, given our rubric, we have made a serious error in evaluating your exam.

4. Place your grade appeal in my Departmental mailbox (in Room 410, Barrows Hall) no later than one week after grades are released to the class. Do not leave re-grade requests under my office door as these may get lost (many of us use the office and, occasionally, it is also cleaned so there are lots of opportunities for papers under the door to be mislaid.) I will not accept emailed requests for a re-grade. In re-grading your work, I reserve the right to increase or decrease the number of points that were awarded to you on the work.

5. I’m happy to meet with you to discuss your exam results and I’m eager to assist you in any way that I can so that you can shine in this class. Please note, however, that I will not consider re-grade requests in person, nor will I give you advice on whether you should submit your work for a grade appeal. This decision must be entirely your own.

Class Policies and Course Citizenship

Classes are learning communities. As such, we must abide by a set of rules, norms, and expectations for our community to operate effectively, harmoniously, and fairly. Here are some University and classroom policies that you need to keep in mind during the semester:

1. **Correspondence Etiquette:** Email has developed into an informal medium. I encourage you to treat class emails as you would any formal correspondence. Imagine that you are speaking directly to your recipient when you write an email, and monitor the content, tone, and attitude of your message accordingly. Among other things, this will require you to do simple things, like capitalizing letters when they should be capitalized, providing a salutation (like, “Dear Szonja”), and signing your full name. You are welcome to address me in any of the following ways you’re most comfortable: “Szonya,” “Dr. Ivester,” “Professor Ivester,” or “Professor Szonja.” However, please stay away from “Ma’am,” “Ms.” or “Mrs.” as they are inappropriate forms of address in an academic setting. “Hey” is no way to start an email message to your professor. I am not your buddy, so please don’t dude me.
2. **Classroom Behavior.** I ask that you respect our classroom community by arriving on time and not leaving before the lecture is over. Our class meets for 50 minutes at a time. Coming and going during lecture is distracting to others and disrespectful towards me. Please refrain from it. Do not use the classroom to catch up on sleep, consume your lunch, or complete homework for another class. Be mindful of the presence of others. It is perfectly fine for you to share a brief idea with the person sitting next to you during lecture and, of course, I always welcome questions and comments in class. However, incessant chatting with your neighbor (especially on topics that are unrelated to the class) is incredibly distracting to the rest of us, so please don’t do it.

3. **No laptops, tablets, or smartphones may be used in class.** There is, by now, a large body of research which shows that using laptops in class reduces understanding of the class material not only for those who use them, but also for surrounding students as well. Bring a paper notebook and a pen or a pencil with you every time you come to class. If you violate my no-technology rule, I will ask you to leave the classroom. If you have a documented disability that requires the use of a laptop computer, please see me as soon as possible so we can make the necessary arrangements.

4. **Be honest.** Understand and follow the Berkeley Honor Code. Cheating and other violations of academic integrity (e.g., plagiarism) will be dealt with per University policy. It is important that you understand what constitutes cheating on quizzes, papers, and the exam. You are responsible for knowing and acting in accordance with University policy (you can brush on this policy here: https://teaching.berkeley.edu/berkeley-honor-code). If you cheat in this class I will not only fail you on the assignment, but will also report you to the University. Cheating on a quiz will result in you failing the entire class participation component of your final grade.

5. **An Agreement:** By registering for this course, you acknowledge and accept that you have read this class guidebook. Everything that is in this guidebook or is presented in lectures is fair game for quizzes and/or examinations. It is your responsibility to be aware of assignments and changes to the syllabus, regardless of whether these are discussed in class or posted at our class website. Tardiness and absence are not acceptable excuses for not knowing about these.

**Class Website**

I have set up a bCourses website for this class. You can find here a copy of our syllabus, PDF files of our required readings (under “Modules”), as well as handouts and lecture notes (also under “Modules”). This is also where you will find announcements from me and it is also the place where you can keep an eye on your grades throughout the semester. Please make sure that you are familiar with our class website and please visit the site often.
Get a Study Buddy
Sometimes it is nice to have a friend in the class who can help you when you miss a lecture and/or when you do not fully understand an assignment. Please find one or two such study buddies so that you can keep up with our class material.

1
Name:
Contact information (email & mobile #):

2
Name:
Contact information (email & mobile #)
### Lecture Schedule for Sociology 180c

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>Introduction and Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1/25</td>
<td>American Exceptionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1/28</td>
<td>Habits of the Heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>Cultures and Subcultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2/01</td>
<td>What Is Individualism?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2/04</td>
<td>Comparative Evidence on Individualism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2/06</td>
<td>Are Americans Exceptionally Individualistic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2/08</td>
<td>American Dream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2/11</td>
<td>Cross-National Differences in Inequality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>The Legacy of Socialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>Why No Socialism in America?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/18</td>
<td>No Class – University Holiday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2/20</td>
<td>Populism and the Rise of Donald Trump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/22</td>
<td>FIRST PAPER DUE BY 11:59 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2/25</td>
<td>Populism in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2/27</td>
<td>The Culture of Consumerism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>3/01</td>
<td>The Downsides of Hyper Consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3/04</td>
<td>Cross-National Differences in Spending and Saving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>3/06</td>
<td>How and Why We Classify Things?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>3/08</td>
<td>On the Matter of Desserts and Wine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>3/11</td>
<td>Mondovino - Documentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>3/13</td>
<td>Mondovino - Documentary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3/15</td>
<td>SECOND PAPER DUE BY 11:59 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>3/18</td>
<td>Religion in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>3/20</td>
<td>The Secularization Debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>3/22</td>
<td>The American Puzzle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Lecture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/25</td>
<td>No Lectures – Spring Break</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/01</td>
<td>Religion in Everyday Life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/03</td>
<td>Truth, Alternative Facts, and Anti-Intellectualism – Part One</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/05</td>
<td>Truth, Alternative Facts, and Anti-Intellectualism – Part Two</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/08</td>
<td>Talk About Love</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/10</td>
<td>Marriages and Families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>THIRD PAPER DUE BY 11:59 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/15</td>
<td>Cross-National Differences in the Culture of Sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/17</td>
<td>Democracy and Civil Society</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/19</td>
<td>Political Apathy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/22</td>
<td>Political Engagement Close to Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/24</td>
<td>What is Militarism?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/26</td>
<td>Evidence of Militarism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/29</td>
<td>Consequences of Militarism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/01</td>
<td>American Exceptionalism Revisited</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/03</td>
<td>FOURTH PAPER DUE BY 11:59 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This syllabus is subject to change. Changes may be announced in class and/or posted at our class website.
Required Readings for Comparative Cultures

To obtain the greatest benefit from classroom discussions, I strongly encourage you to complete the reading assignments before our class meets and (most certainly) before our exams. **I will not normally go over the readings in class.** Lectures are intended to round out these readings and/or put these readings in their broader context, not to summarize them (as you can do this easily on your own). Rest assured, however, that you **will be required to show command over these materials** in your quizzes as well as in your papers.

**INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**

- Please read the syllabus from cover to cover

**AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM**


**HABITS OF THE HEART**


**CULTURES AND SUBCULTURES**


**WHAT IS INDIVIDUALISM?**

Comparative Evidence on Individualism


Are Americans Exceptionally Individualistic?


The American Dream


Cross-National Differences in Inequality

- Robert Reich. 2013. *Inequality for All*. Watch the entire documentary – Link and required password provided at the class website.

The Legacy of No Socialism

Why No Socialism in America?

- Thomas Frank. 2009. *What's the Matter with Kansas?* Watch the entire documentary (1 hour and 30 minutes) for free at this site: https://vimeo.com/107525994

Populism and the Rise of Donald Trump


Populism in Europe


The Culture of Consumerism


The Downsides of Hyper Consumerism

CROSS-NATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN SPENDING AND SAVING

HOW AND WHY WE CLASSIFY THINGS?

ON THE MATTER OF DESSERTS AND WINE

MONDOVINO (2 SESSIONS)
- Jonathan Nossiter. 2004. Mondovino. Watch the entire documentary (1 hour and 30 minutes) for free at this site: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RE_6cIMfMk

RELIGION IN AMERICA

THE SECULARIZATION DEBATE
THE AMERICAN PUZZLE

RELIGION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

TRUTH, ALTERNATIVE FACTS, AND ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM (TWO SESSIONS)

TALK ABOUT LOVE

MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES

CROSS NATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN THE CULTURE OF SEX

DEMOCRACY AND CIVIL SOCIETY
POLITICAL APATHY


POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT CLOSE TO HOME


WHAT IS MILITARISM?


EVIDENCE OF MILITARISM IN AMERICA


CROSS-NATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN MILITARISM

CONSEQUENCES OF MILITARISM


AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM REVISITED