

Syllabus
History and Culture of the U.S.A.
(4)

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Department of Foreign Languages _____

Meeting Minute # ___dated _____ 20__

1. Course Description

A. Pre-Requisites:

- level of proficiency in English no lower than B2+;
- successful completion of the course “History and Culture of Great Britain”;
- successful completion of the freshman courses “Practical English Course,” “Practical Grammar,” “Practical Phonetics.”

B. Abstract

The course “History and Culture of the U.S.A.” is taught to sophomores majoring in foreign languages and intercultural communication. The aim of the course is to establish the context of understanding the cultural, historic, economic, and political background of the U.S.A. as a country whose language is the target language of students’ professional scrutiny. Special attention is paid to a comparative analysis of the U.S. – Russia relations. The course features both lectures and seminars, which enables students to interiorize the “American component” of their intercultural communicative competence through involvement in discussions, presentations, and projects along with doing quizzes and writing essays.

2. Learning Objectives

The course learning objectives are as follows:

- familiarizing students with the U.S. traditions, customs, culture, politics and policies, economy, and history;
- developing skills of social and cultural analysis of historic milestones of the U.S. emergence, growth, and modern status;

- developing intercultural competence and forming a clear picture of the key types, forms, and issues of intercultural communication through the reflective analytical and synthetic perception of the native culture and the U.S. culture;
- motivating students for further professional development in the field of American Studies.

3. Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course students are expected to:

- know key concepts of the U.S. history and culture;
- be aware of distinctive features of the U.S. world, i.e. daily life, values, mentality, and national character;
- be familiar with American social and cultural context;
- be aware of the role of stereotypes and culture codes in intercultural communication;
- be able to interpret culture-specific language units denoting historic, cultural and social connotations;
- be able to analyze processes and trends in the modern U.S. social and cultural context;
- make operational use of authentic language means fostering mutual understanding within intercultural communication;
- obtain problem-solving skills applicable to intercultural communication;
- apply the knowledge and skills obtained in the course to solving tasks in foreign language teaching, translation and interpretation and intercultural communication.

4. Course Plan

Topic / Unit	Hours	Planned learning outcomes to be assessed	Assessment
	Lect.		
	Sem.		
	Self-St.		
Topic 1. Genesis of the American nation	2	The topic focuses on an introduction to America in the Pre-Columbus era and investigates roots of the continent colonization.	Discussion, answering questions, quiz, presentation
	2		
	7		
Topic 2. American fight for independence	2	The topic analyzes key stages of the 13 colonies' fight for independence and emergence of the U.S.A.	Discussion, answering questions, quiz, presentation
	2		
	7		
Topic 3. American national	2	The topic deals with	Discussion, answering

identity – key concepts in American culture	2	America’s principal values and their impact on the emergence of American mentality.	questions, quiz, presentation
	7		
Topic 4. American democracy	2	The topic focuses on the key principles of the U.S. political system. Students get a deeper understanding of American democracy and its specific features, namely voting system.	Discussion, answering questions, quiz, presentation
	2		
	7		
Topic 5. Law in the USA	2	The section covers the U.S. legislative system, i.e. role of the government in law-making, and role of law in American life. An emphasis is placed on the right to keep and bear arms.	Discussion, answering questions, quiz, presentation
	2		
	7		
Topic 6. Indigenous population of the American continent	2	The section views Native Americans, their interaction with colonists and their status in the current U.S. world.	Discussion, answering questions, quiz, presentation, module test
	2		
	7		
Topic 7. Black Lives Matter: the past and the present	2	Students are made aware of the role of African Americans in the U.S. history, i.e. fight for the abolition of slavery, emancipation, and equal rights. Students also look at the modern context, especially in terms of (no) racial discrimination.	Discussion, answering questions, quiz, presentation
	2		
	7		
Topic 8. Multiculturalism in the USA – cultural assimilation concepts	2	Students are introduced to the concept of multiculturalism in the U.S. focusing on the Melting Pot and Salad Bowl paradigms and touching on the “Mexican issue” in the U.S.	Discussion, answering questions, quiz, presentation
	2		
	7		
Topic 9. Gender in the USA	2	The topic spans the history of the Feminist and Civil Rights Movements.	Discussion, answering questions, quiz, presentation
	2		
	7		
Topic 10. The USA in the world political arena	2	Students are made aware of the U.S. role during the World Wars.	Discussion, answering questions, quiz, presentation
	2		
	7		

Topic 11. American foreign policy	2	The topic focuses on the U.S. foreign policy. Emphasis is placed on the U.S. involvement in military conflicts in the Middle East and response to the threat of international terrorism.	Discussion, answering questions, quiz, presentation
	2		
	7		
Topic 12. The USA + Russia: the past, the present, and the future	2	Students are introduced to the history, current state and prospects of Russia – U.S. relations.	Discussion, answering questions, quiz, presentation
	2		
	7		
Topic 13. Modern life in the USA	2	The section familiarizes students with America’s modern life, namely social security, healthcare, education, research, mass media, etc.	Discussion, answering questions, quiz, module test, project
	2		
	16		
Total, class type hours:	26		
	26		
	100		
Total, hours:	152		

5. Reading List

A. Required

Smith, J. D. (Ed.). (2016). Reconstruction: Interpreting American History. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com> – ProQuest Ebook Central Database.

B. Optional

#	Source
1	Dukes, P. (2001). The superpowers: A short history. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com –ProQuest Ebook Central Database
2	Foner, E. (2015). Gateway to freedom: The hidden history of America's fugitive slaves. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com – ProQuest Ebook Central Database
3	Herring, G. C. (2008). From colony to superpower: U. S. foreign relations since 1776. Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com – ProQuest Ebook Central Database
4	An outline of American history. URL: http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/history/toc/htm . Open Access.
5	Native Americans’ history. URL:

	www.teacheroz.com/Native_Americans.htm . Open Access.
6	History. URL: https://www.history.com/ . Open Access.
7	The stories of the American past. URL: www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi . Open Access.

6. Grading System

The course grade is calculated in the following manner:

$$G_{\text{course}} = 0.25 * G_{\text{class participation}} + 0.25 * G_{\text{quizzes_module tests}} + 0.1 * G_{\text{presentation}} + 0.1 * G_{\text{project}} + 0.05 * G_{\text{cultural event}} + 0.25 * G_{\text{final exam}}$$

The grading system does not feature blocking grades.

Class participation involves taking part in discussions, debates, round-table talks, case studies; independent preparation for seminars (information search; reading papers; watching videos; annotating and rendering the obtained materials); discussing presentations by classmates. **Class participation is assessed every seminar, save for the first and the last ones. Each seminar may give 3 points. The overall grade is calculated as a sum of all the grades, i.e. 33 points, which is then converted to the 10-point scale by proportion:**

student's score / 33 * 10. If necessary, the obtained grade is rounded.

E.g., a student earned 26 points for the class participation. Then his grade is calculated as follows:

$$26 / 33 * 10 = 7.8 = 8$$

Cultural event review. Students attend any cultural event linked to the U.S. history and culture, e.g. art exhibition, theater performance, workshop, etc. A film does not qualify as a cultural event. They then write a 500 – 1000-word long review of the event. Reviews can be submitted at any time, but no later than the 12th seminar.

Sample review structure: brief description of the event and its role in the U.S> history and culture; the historic, social and cultural context of the event; personal impressions the event produced on the reviewer. The maximum score is **10 points**.

Module tests 1&2. A module test comprises 5 open questions to be answered in writing. Each answer carries 2 points: 2 – the response is exhaustive and relevant; 1 – the response is incomplete and/or not fully relevant; 0 – the response is irrelevant or not given. The overall maximum score is thus **10 points**.

Quizzes. A 7-minute long quiz consists of 10 close questions, e.g. multiple choice, or True/False. Each correct answer carries 1 point, so the total score that can be earned is 10. Quizzes are administered via Google forms at each lecture except for the first and the last ones.

Presentations are given at each seminar, except for the first and the last ones, 1 presentation per seminar. The time limit is 5 – 7 minutes. The maximum score is **10 points**.

Presentation assessment rubrics

2	Slide design and formatting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no excessive text pieces; - effective visualization via graphs, images, charts and tables; - coherence: title slide with information about speakers and topic; presentation plan slide; conclusion slide; references; slide with questions.
2	Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - relevance of information presented; - handling diverse sources (literature and Internet).
2	Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 thought-provoking discussion questions about the presentation; the questions should be put on an separate slide; - leading a 5-minute discussion based on the prepared questions.
2	Oral presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interaction with audience: eye-contact, responses etc.; - prepared talk: notes are welcome, but no reading is acceptable; - language resource.
2	Handouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preparing about 10 handouts for classmate and professor; handouts reflect key points of the talk

The final projects are presented at the penultimate and antepenultimate seminars. The overarching topic of the project is “Russia and the U.S.: what’s next?”

Project preparation planning: (1) pick any aspect of the Russia – U.S. relations (sport, science, art, etc.); (2) do research into the history, current state, and further development; (3) analyze the advantages and disadvantages for both Russia and the U.S.A. in the context of the aspect analyzed; (4) present the research outcomes in the form of a research portfolio; (5) prepare a short presentation to be delivered at a seminar; (6) prepare a video on the topic to be played at the seminar; (7) get ready for a follow-up discussion.

Each group can work on and defend no more than 8 projects. The timing for both presentation and discussion is 20 minutes.

The maximum score is **15 points**, which is converted to the 10-point scale by proportion:

student’s project score / 15 * 10. If necessary, the grade is rounded.

For example, a student earned 10 points for the project. Then his grade is calculated as follows:

$$10 / 15 * 10 = 6.6 = 7$$

Research portfolio sample format:

I. A cover letter or an introductory statement that explains the form, format, and substance of the portfolio as a whole. It should say why you have chosen to shape your project (and the questions it explores) as you have, and what principles guided both (1) your research itself and (2) how or why you decided to include those particular materials that are present in the finished portfolio. In particular terms, this prefatory statement should say what to expect in the portfolio, what is the aim of your research, including why the materials you have chosen are important, both for you personally and for the ‘picture’ they help to draw of the subject you have chosen to examine.

II. Table of contents that identifies each component in the portfolio in the order in which they appear.

III. The completed set of research and study materials that represent the record of your efforts better and more fully to understand the subject you have chosen as the focus for your research paper. These materials may take many forms: essays and articles, visuals, downloaded materials, original work, designed questionnaires, etc.

IV. A summary of the results of your research work, the value of this entire research project has been to you: What have you learned? What did you discover that you might not have expected? What (if any) additional questions or areas of inquiry have emerged that you have not had time to pursue?

The final exam is given during the final exam session week of Module 2 and includes 10 questions based on the lectures and seminars. Each question carries 2 points. The maximum score is 20, which is then divided by 2 to convert the final exam grade to the 10-point scale.

Assessment rubrics

2	The student gives a complete response to the question.	The response is coherent	The student employs diverse lexical resources and accurate grammar	The student has an operational; command of the terminology.
1	The student gives an incomplete response to the question.	The response is partly incoherent.	The student employs adequate lexical resources and makes 1 or 2 grammar mistakes.	The student has a limited command of the terminology.
0	The student does not respond, or the response does not answer the question.	The response is incoherent.	The lexical resources are limited; numerous grammar mistakes are made.	The student does not use terminology.

If the mean score of all the grades before the final exam is 8 and above, then a student may be free from the final exam, **at the course professor's discretion**. At this stage we ignore the weights of each grade.

If the student disagrees with the grade, s/he can opt to take the final exam.

Exam retake procedure

If a student fails the course, only the final exam shall be retaken. The other assessed activities SHALL NOT be retaken.

The first retake is held during the official retake period by the course professor who gave the final exam. It is conducted in the same format as the final exam during the final exam week. The grades for the other assessed activities are not subject to any change. The examiner employs examination materials designed by the senior course professor in charge of the syllabus design.

The second retake during the retake period is conducted by a special exam board which consists of no fewer than 3 members. During the second retake the board uses special examination materials designed by the board under the supervision of the exam board chairperson.

Failures to meet deadlines

If a student fails to submit a paper in due time or refuses to give a required oral response, s/he gets a zero for the task.

In case a student is on an official sick-leave or there are very specific circumstances of which a course professor is informed by a student in advance, an extension of no longer than 2 weeks can be given. Each case is viewed and resolved individually. If necessary, the Study Office Manager and/or the Program Academic Supervisor get involved and make their decisions regarding the case.

Violations of academic integrity

Violations of academic integrity are penalized according to HSE's regulating documents (see the relevant materials at <https://www.hse.ru/en/our/>).

7. Examination Type

Seminar sample task (take-home and in-class):

1. Examine the following Internet sources and answer the questions: What is Puritanism? How did it appear? What are the differences between English and American Puritanism? How did Puritanism shape the states of New England?

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/what-puritanism/>

<https://www.history.com/topics/puritanism>

2. Watch the following video and make a list of the main ideas presented. Be ready to discuss them in class.

YouTube – Mystery of the lost colony of Roanoke and Jamestown revealed

3. Sample topic for a presentation:

Why is the continent called America not Columbusia?

4. Module test sample question:

Name the main reasons why the Europeans moved to the American continent.

5. Final exam sample question:

The Emancipation Proclamation having been signed, what factors caused the persistence of racial discrimination and segregation in the U.S all the way through to the XX century?

8. Methods of Instruction

The course involves the following methods and techniques of instruction:

- traditional tools: lectures and seminars;
- problem solving events and activities: problem-based lectures; workshops; case-studies; roleplays;
- interactive methods and techniques: discussion-based lectures and seminars.

9. Special Equipment and Software Support (if required)

The amphitheater and seminar classrooms need to be equipped with overhead projectors, screens and computers (desktops or laptops) along with the Wi-Fi access.

Software

#	Name	Access
1	Microsoft Windows 7 Professional RUS Microsoft Windows 10 Microsoft Windows 8.1 Professional RUS	<i>University intranet</i>

2	Microsoft Office Professional Plus 2010	<i>University intranet</i>
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Databases and other resources

#	Name	Access
1	ProQuest Ebook Central Database. URL: https://ebookcentral.proquest.com	<i>University intranet</i>