

American Culture

Lecturer: David Park

Language

English

Course description and objectives

America is not the America it used to be.

There is a kind of two-sidedness to it; one side made "How I Met Your Mother" and "Big Bang Theory" and the other "Breaking Bad" and "Ozark". It is still the land of opportunity where some can become fabulously rich and famous, but it is also true that the average life expectancy in Mississippi is lower than that of Bangladesh.

The top ranked universities are still in high demand but for the most part it is the privileged that get into them. How did it become the dominant world power in the 20th Century? Now how is it coping with sharing that dominance in the 21st century where less and less of the world believes in it.

Demographically it is one of the most promising countries, but can it succeed in integrating everyone? The following words were written almost 250 years ago: "all men are created equal, (and) they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." How were they meant then? Now are every race, religion, and creed, as well as, sexual preference on equal grounds?

Black music is still cooler than ever: Raphael Saadiq, Drake, Lucky Daye, and Black Pumas. Country music has soul and funk to it now: Oliver Anthony, Beyonce, Doly Parton, and Rhiannon Giddens. What was American art like before and after Andy Warhol? What does it mean to be without medical insurance in the US?

The course looks at the country's past from its discovery, the birth of democracy, slavery, WWII, Vietnam and more while never losing sight of the country today.

Audience

The course is open to students enrolled in Bocconi degree programs (Bachelor, Master of Science, Integrated Master of Arts in in law), University Master students and PhDs.

Prerequisites

The course is meant for all students and is very helpful to students at a high B2 level.



Duration

12 hours

Teaching mode

This course will be only taught in person. Distance mode will not be provided.

Calendar

Lecture	Date	Time	Room
1	Thu 19/09/2024	18.15 - 19.45	3.1 (Sarfatti)
2	Fri 20/09/2024	14.45 - 16.15	3.1 (Sarfatti)
3	Fri 20/09/2024	16.30 - 18.00	3.1 (Sarfatti)
4	Thu 26/09/2024	18.15 - 19.45	3.1 (Sarfatti)
5	Fri 27/09/2024	14.45 - 16.15	3.1 (Sarfatti)
6	Fri 27/09/2024	16.30 - 18.00	3.1 (Sarfatti)

Syllabus of the course

Lessons are typically divided into 3 parts: 1) discussion around a series of questions 2) a lecture by the professor dealing with what experts think and 3) a class discussion where students are expected to go into further detail.

Provocative questions and key words are written in slots to give students an idea of what a lesson could cover. There is too much information here, and obviously given time limits we will not cover everything. Conversely, American Culture is so broad that suggestions for things students would like to discuss are welcome.

Lecture Topics

- Geography/Native Americans/Discovery**
 - Was it easier to start up a civilization in Europe or the Americas? Why?
 - Who were the first native Americans? When and how did they come? Are they still there?
 - What was "the Trail of Tears"?

2 Colonization/Nationhood/Immigration

- When and why did people come to the US?
- The original settlers can be divided into three groups, what are they? How readily did people mix?
- Are there still segregated areas?

3 Capitalism/Corporate America/too Big to Fail

- Amazon versus Trade Unions
- Buffett says **he's taxed at a lower rate than his secretary.**
- Does free trade really exist?
- What did Thomas Piketty say?

4 Blacks and Whites

- What happened in 1619? And in 1624?
- America **has** the highest incarceration rate in the world. What percentage of the prisoners are black?
- Spike Lee
- What did Frank Sinatra do to **help the civil rights movement?**

5 Funky Black Sound from the cotton fields to Tupac

- Motown and Tamly Records **may have been** the greatest promoters of civil rights in the 60's
- From Scot Joplin to Bruno Mars (who isn't really black) and Anderson Paak
- Duke Ellington "Take the A Train", John Coltrane, Billy Holiday, Sam Cooke, Nat King Cole, and Miles Davis.

6 The American Dream and going to a good school

- God only saves rich people. Meritocracy. How much is tuition at Harvard for a year?
- Can you really get an idea of how rich a family is by their son's or daughter's SAT **scores?**
- The Tyranny of Merit by Michael Sandel
- What is the student **debt problem?**

7 American Art and Design

- From Thomas Eakins to Jean-Michel Basquiat
 - Winslow Homer, Edward Hopper, Jasper Johns and Mark Rothko. When did New York become the art Capital of the world? Mid-Century **Modern style.**
 - Can you make some artistic/creative connections between the US and Italy? Hollywood and Italian fashion? Armani and Richard Gere?
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8 100 Years of wars: WW1, WW2, Korea, the Cold War, Cuba, Vietnam, Latin America, the first Gulf War, Afghanistan, Iraq

- The arms industry, the atomic bomb, private mercenary contractors, drones...
- Patriotism
- Nationalism

9 American Food: As American as Apple Pie

- The Diner has been the source of America's best
- McDonald's and Supersize me
- Obesity in the US
- Starbucks
- Can you eat well in the US?
- Thanksgiving Dinner

10 Religion in America

- How are people divided up?
- Puritans
- Religious fanaticism
- White Supremacism

11 Facebook, Google and the Surveillance Economy

- Should they be allowed to invade our lives the way they do?
- How much do they know?

12 LGBT, America was the first place!

Suggested bibliography

The lecturer will provide bibliography references during the course.

Available seats

This activity is limited to **110** participants. Registrations cannot be carried out once this number has been reached or after closing of the registration period.

Please remember that you can unsubscribe from Language Center supplementary activities only before the registration deadline.