

# American Culture Final Exam Review

**In God We Trust; Liberty; E Pluribus Unum.**

## Ch 1. Introduction

1. Trying to answer questions about Americans, remember 2 things: (1) the immense size of US (2) its great ethnic diversity.
2. (History)1500s: Spain, Florida, California and Southwest. France, center of North America continent. From 1600s to 1776, North Europe, majority England. It was these people who shaped the values and traditions that became the dominant, traditional culture of the United States.
3. Melting-Pot, Salad Bowl, Pizza, Mosaic.
4. (Immigrants)21c. European decrease. In the early 2000s, more than half were from Latin America(Spanish speakers).
5. Largest racial minority: African Americans(13%), largest ethnic group: Hispanic(16%).
6. Cultural pluralism: the principle that people of different races, religious, and political beliefs can live together peacefully in the same society.
7. Tocqueville came to US as a young Frenchman in 1831, wrote Democracy in America.

## Ch2. Values and Beliefs

1. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.
2. **Three pairs of values: Individual Freedom and Self-Reliance, Equality of Opportunity and Competition, Material Wealth and Hard Work. (Three represent traditional reasons why immigrants have been drawn to America and prices to be paid.)**
3. They wanted to escape the controls placed on many aspects of their lives by kings and governments, priests and churches, nobleman and aristocrats.
4. In 1776, the British settlers declared independence from England and established a new nation, the United States of America. 1787, (James Madison) wrote the Constitution, separated church and state so that there would never be a government supported church. They expressly forbade titles of nobility to ensure that an aristocratic would not develop.
5. Freedom, the desire and the right of all individuals to control their own destiny without outside interference from the government, a ruling noble class, the church, or any other organized authority.
6. Equality of opportunity: Each individual should have an equal chance for success, an equal chance to enter the race and win.
7. The phrase “going from rags to riches” became a slogan for the “American

Dream.”

8. Material possessions is still of great importance to most Americans. The Puritan work ethic associated material success with godliness.
9. Material wealth has traditionally been a widely accepted measure of social status in the United States. James Madison stated that the difference in material possessions reflected a difference in personal abilities.

Q1: Why have immigrants traditionally come to America?

Freedom; Escape religious, political persecution; Economic prosperity.

### **Ch3. Religion**

1. 90% believe in God. The majority of Americans are Christian(73%, = 48% Protestant, 22% Roman Catholic, 3% Other Christian), but all the major religious of are practiced in the United States.
2. (Protestant History) The Protestant branch broke away from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.(The Eastern Orthodox separated in 1054.)
3. Protestants substituted what they called the “priesthood of all believers.” Meant that every individual was solely responsible for his/her own relationship with God.
4. The government and the church had to remain separate, and freedom of religion was guaranteed by the first amendment.
5. Protestantism is the value of self-improvement, an outgrowth of self-reliance.
6. “God helps those who help themselves.”
7. The belief in hard work and self-discipline in pursuit of material gain and other goals is often referred to as “the Protestant work ethic” or “the Puritan work ethic.”
8. Many Americans are proud to be called “workaholics”.
9. Individuals, make themselves into better persons by contributing some of their time or money to charitable, educational, or religious causes that are designed to help others. The philosophy is sometimes called volunteerism or humanitarianism.
10. The mixture of religion and patriotism is an example of what some scholars have called the “national religion” of the United States.
11. There is growing polarization between evangelicals, or religious conservatives, and secular liberals.
12. (“None(s)”) One of the most dramatic developments in recent years is the rapid rise in the number of people who say they have no religious affiliation. “None(s)” refer themselves as being “spiritual, but not religious.” They are more liberal and more secular than Americans who are affiliated with some religious group.

### **Ch4. Frontier**

1. Native Americans = American Indians.
2. The American frontier consisted of the relatively unsettled region, usually found in the western part of the country.
3. The Native Americans were given small portions of land, called reservations.
4. Individual freedom, self-reliance, and equality of opportunity have perhaps been

the values most closely associated with the frontier heritage of America.

5. Self-reliance led to the rugged individualist.
6. In the early (before Civil War of the 1860s) frontier, the main struggle was man against the wilderness/nature. (Daniel Boone) The struggle now was man against man. (Cattlemen and cowboys fought against farmers, outlaws, Native Americans. The frontier became known as “the Wild West”. Heroes: Jesse James, Wyatt Earp.)
7. The image of the rugged individualist has been criticized for its emphasis on violence and the use of guns to solve problems.
8. The right to bear arms is even guaranteed by the Second Amendment of the Constitution.
9. The National Rifle Association (NRA) worked to prevent most gun control legislation from passing.
10. (Inventiveness and Can-Do Spirit) The need for self-reliance on the frontier encouraged a spirit of inventiveness. The willingness to experiment and invent led to another American trait, a “can-do” spirit, or a sense of optimism that every problem has a solution.
11. The feeling of equality was shared by hired helpers who refused to be called “servants” or to be treated as such.

## **Ch6. Business**

1. It is essential to become familiar with two words in order to understand the meaning of business to Americans: They are private and profit.
2. There are privately owned for-profit businesses and there are also (1) public, government-owned-and-operated institutions, and (2) nonprofit organizations...
3. “The business of America is business.” – President Coolidge.
4. Competition protects the freedom of the individual by ensuring that there is no monopoly of power.
5. A contrast is often made between business, which is competitive, and government, which is a monopoly.
6. So closely is competitive business associated with freedom in the minds of most Americans that the term free enterprise, rather than the term capitalism, is most often used to describe the American business system.
7. Competition in business is also believed to strengthen ideal of equality of opportunity, encouraging the value of hard work.
8. The Dream of Getting Rich. (One aspect of the American Dream is to rise from poverty to modest wealth to great wealth.)
9. Entrepreneurs provide examples of traditional American values in their purest form for a number of reasons. The first reason is that they succeed in building something great out of nothing.
10. The entrepreneur was seen as a rugged individualist who reinforces the values of freedom, self-reliance, and hard work.
11. Horatio Alger’s novel. The hero rises “from rags to riches” and fulfills the American Dream.

12. A final characteristic of entrepreneurs that appeals to most Americans is their strong dislike of submitting to higher authority.
13. **In order to be more competitive, some companies (1)moved their factories overseas; (2)downsized; (3) reduced the number of full-time employees and replaced them with part-time workers(so that they didn't have to pay health insurance or retirement benefits); (4) outsourcing work to other countries.**
14. The value of their homes had increased dramatically in the late 1990s and the 2000s creating a "house bubble".
15. The resilience, creativity, and acts of compassion take place all over America.
16. Second, creativity is highly valued in America society. ... Innovation in business is critical.
17. It reveals the rise of what they call the "Do-It-Yourself" American Dream and a portrayal of Americans as "resilient and adaptive."
18. The strong belief in self-reliance and individual freedom has led many Americans to redefine the American Dream for themselves.

Q:

1. How is the American dream being redefined?
  - a) The resilience, creativity and acts of compassion of Americans.
  - b) "Do-It-Yourself" (DIY) Americans who value creative innovation, now an estimated one third of the American work force.

## **Ch7. Politics**

1. "...Government even in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one." – Thomas Paine. (The bigger and stronger the gov't becomes, the more dangerous many Americans believe it is to their individual freedom.)
2. The provisions of the Constitution are more concerned with keeping the gov't from doing evil than with enabling it to do good.
3. **Three separate branches. (1) The legislative or lawmaking branch of the government is called the Congress. Congress has two houses - the Senate, with two senators from each state regardless of the size of its population, and the House of Representatives, consisting of a total of 435 representatives divided among the fifty states by population. (2) The president, or chief executive, heads the executive branch, which has responsibility to carry out the laws. (3) The Supreme Court and lower national courts make up the judicial branch. It both interprets the law and determines whether the law is constitutional - that is, whether the law is permitted under the U.S. Constitution.**
4. If any one of the three branches starts to abuse its power, the other two may join together to stop it, through a system of checks and balances.
5. In addition to dividing government powers into three branches, the Constitution includes a Bill of Rights that is designed to protect specific individual rights and freedoms from government interference.
6. The president and both houses of Congress have almost complete political independence from each other because they are all chosen in separate elections.

7. (Elections.) Members of the House of Representatives are elected for two-year terms, while senators serve six-year terms. The party in control of the House or Senate has the potential of changing every two years. (The Senate terms are staggered so that only one-third of the senators run for re-election each time the House elections are held, every two years.) Presidential elections are held every four years, on the first Tuesday in November.
8. (Electoral College) With the electoral college system, the winner of the plurality of each state's popular votes gets all of that state's electoral votes(=2 senators + representatives), in most cases.
9. (The development of the Big Government.) The Great Depression of the 1930s ... also created the need for emergency government action to help the needy....
10. President Franklin D. Roosevelt (Democratic) – “New Deal”. (First expand the gov't.)
11. President Lyndon Johnson (Democratic)– “The Great Society”. (Second expand the gov't.)
12. Some Americans fear that economic security provided by the government will weaken self-reliance, an ideal that is closely associated in the minds of Americans with individual freedom.
13. ...Most Americans believe that their national government should provide some kind of “safety net” to take care of people in certain circumstances such as ...
14. Programs such as unemployment benefits, food stamps, and Medicaid (health care for the poor), were known as “welfare”. Social Security and Medicare (health care for the retired) were seen as “entitlements,” because working Americans and their employers pay into these systems.
15. Americans with similar interests have formed special interests groups to more effectively influence the actions of government. These special interest groups are often called “lobbying groups” or “pressure groups.”
16. The unusual degree of party loyalty reflects the deep divisions in American society. A racial divide, an ideological divide over the role and size of government, and a cultural divide over values, morality, and lifestyle.
17. (Finding the way forward.) Republicans believe the country's economic difficulties are due to a spending problem, while Democrats believe it's an income problem.
18. Republicans believe that dependence on entitlements seriously weakens individual freedom and responsibility. Democrats are concerned about the widening gap between those who are very wealthy and those who are very poor.

## **Ch8. Immigrants/Races – Melting Pot or Salad Bowl**

1. Assimilation, “melting pot” or “salad bowl”. (Melting pot: various racial and ethnic groups have been combined into one culture. Salad bowl: various groups have remained somewhat distinct and different from one another. )
2. **The dominant American culture: English-speaking, western European, Protestant, and middle-class in character.**

3. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, most of the immigrants came from poverty-stricken nations of southern and eastern Europe. They spoke languages other than English, and large numbers of them were Catholics or Jews.
4. (How did they Assimilate)By offering English instruction and citizenship classes to teach them basic American beliefs. The “political bosses” expected the immigrants to keep them in power by voting for them in elections (in exchange for their help). Political bosses were frequently corrupt, they often stole money from the city gov’ts.
5. For white ethnic groups, their feeling of being part of the larger culture – American – has usually been stronger than of belonging to a separate ethnic group.
6. (What was the African-American experience?) Were brought to the U.S. against their will and sold as slaves, Southern states depended on slavery economically, the northern states made slavery against the law. Lincoln wanted to end slavery, was elected president in 1860. South tried to form a new country based on slavery. The Civil War (1861-1865) resulted in the north winning and slavery ending. Even after slavery was abolished, they were not truly assimilated, Segregation until Civil Rights laws in 1960s.
7. (What happened during the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s?)  
(1)In 1948, President Harry Truman, military be fully integrated. (2) In 1954, the Supreme Court, public schools. (3) In the 1960s, two major civil rights laws. One public facilities, the other the right to vote in elections.
8. Martin Luther King Jr: Assimilation and integration, embraced American values, nonviolent marches. Malcolm X: Separate and rejection of American values. By force, violence if necessary.
9. Many blacks and other ethnic minorities in the inner city are trapped in the cycles of poverty, unemployment, violence, and despair.
10. Mosaic—a picture made up of many tiny pieces of different colors. If one looks closely at the nation, the individuals of different colors and ethnic groups are still distinct and recognizable, but together they create a picture that is uniquely American.

Q: Is the U.S. more a melting pot or a salad bowl?

Probably somewhere between the two views. Many assimilated, yet some kept their language and traditions. They are bilingual and bi-cultural.

## **Ch9. Education**

1. Tocqueville also noted that American public education had a strong practical content that included the teaching of vocational skills and the duties of citizenship.
2. Students may also receive an associate degree for two years of study at a community college. (And then transfer to a college.)
3. Although the great majority of children attend the free public elementary and high schools, about 10 percent choose to attend private schools (often religious).
4. There are also some elite private schools that serve mainly upper-class children···children will associate with other upper-class position held by their parents.

5. They chose instead to attend community college programs for two years in their hometowns, paying much less in tuition.
6. Charter school: Schools that are operated by parents, private, companies.
7. There are a number of financial aid programs in the form of loans and scholarships available.
8. Both undergraduate and graduate degrees in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields offer high salaries.
9. An exciting new trend is the growth of MOOCs – Massive Open Online Courses.
10. Grades in high school courses and scores on pre-college tests like the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) (GRE, GMAT) are very important, but so are the students' extracurricular activities.

## **Ch11. Family**

1. What are some of the family structures in the U.S. today?
  - a) Nuclear family – father, mother, children.
  - b) Extended family is aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents live in the same house with their married children
  - c) 1950s traditional family - father breadwinner, mother homemaker
  - d) Today less than 25% of families today are traditional, with most mothers working.
  - e) DINKs – Dual income no kids -
  - f) Most families today are married couples without children, single parents and their children, or unrelated people living together.
  - g) One third preferring to live alone are 65 or older.
  - h) Men came home from WWII, married, and had many children (baby boomers).
  - i) Also people marry and have children later or have none at all.
  - j) People live longer after children are grown and often end up living alone.
  - k) Lastly, there is a high divorce rate.
2. Explain the emphasis on individual freedom related to the family.
  - a) Family - is to bring happiness to the individual. Purpose is not to advance the family name.
  - b) Equality of opportunity – children leave family
  - c) Americans want to be free from outside control which includes controls placed on them by family members.
  - d) They make independent career decisions and don't want to be told what to do by grandparents, uncles or aunts.
  - e) What is best for the family is not considered as important as what is best for the individual.
3. (Four stages) (1) Wife as Servant to Husband. (19<sup>th</sup> century. ) (2) Husband-Head, Wife-Helper. (During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Women's work opportunity increased, gained the right to vote in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.) (3) Husband-Senior Partner, Wife-Junior Partner. (By the 2000s, more than 60 percent were employed. Her power to affect the outcome of family decisions is greater than when her duties were entirely in the home.) (4) Husband-Wife Equal Partners. (Most

women still spend more time taking care of the children, cooking, and cleaning than their husbands do. Men still dominate politics and the corporate world.)

4. (Challenges.)
  - a) Sandwich Generation - Middle-age taking care of their children and aging parents.
  - b) Digital devices - children are not learning the good communication and social skills.
  - c) Traditional family values are: respecting one's parents, being responsible for one's actions, having faith in God, respecting authority, remaining married to the same person for life, leaving the world in better shape.
  - d) Five newer more expressive values include: giving emotional support to other members of the family, respecting people for themselves, developing greater skill in communicating one's feelings, respecting one's children, and living up to one's potential as an individual.
  - e) The ideal is group cooperation fulfilling each individual and shared affection to renew each member's emotional strength.

## **Qs:**

### **Ch7.**

1. The Organization of the American Government: What are the four possible things that can happen once Congress sends a bill to the president?
  - a) The president signs it into law.
  - b) The President vetoes it (but two-thirds of House and Senate may vote to overturn the veto and it becomes law).
  - c) The President takes no action (then the bill becomes law after ten days).
  - d) The President does a pocket veto (the bill is defeated if Congress adjourns within a ten-day period).
2. The Controversy over Entitlements: What are entitlements and why are they controversial?
  - a) Entitlements are government benefits such as unemployment benefits, food stamps, Medicaid, Social Security, and Medicare.
  - b) They are controversial because some people worry that relying on the government could endanger the value of self-reliance.
3. The Political Landscape in the 2000s: Red States vs. Blue States: What are the traditional beliefs of the Republican and Democratic parties?
  - a) Republicans are free enterprise, laissez-faire (hands off), limited government (conservative).
  - b) Democrats see government as solution to social problems (progressive, liberal).
  - c) Independents vote for candidates who reflect their wishes, regardless of party.
4. What are three important differences?
  - a) Racial divide – The Democratic Party have more support from non-white Americans;
  - b) Role and size of government. Republicans are against big active government;
  - c) Cultural divide – Republicans tend to be more socially conservative than Democrats.



5. Finding the Way Forward: What do the two political parties believe should happen in the future?

- a) Republicans believe government spending should be reduced and that entitlements weaken American values.
- b) Democrats worry about the widening gap between the very rich and the very poor.

Ch9.

1. What did Tocqueville observe in the establishment of public schools in America?

- a) Everyone deserves an equal opportunity to get a good education
- b) Tax money would be collected from all citizens.
- c) To reduce social class distinctions, seeking a higher status in life was in harmony, not conflict with American customs.
- d) Practical content teaching vocational skills and citizenship duties.
- e) From public elementary schools grew secondary or high schools, then colleges and universities.

2. Educational ladder in American education.

Preschool at age 3 or 4. Kindergarten starts at age 5 or earlier. Elementary school is 5-6 years, middle school is 2-3 years, high school is 4 years. Charter schools are semi-private public schools. Religious private schools paid by parents. Elite private schools exist for upper class children with high tuition costs. Vouchers used to help pay for schools of their choice. They don't mention home schooling!

3. What is meant by educating the individual?

- a) Schools put more emphasis on critical-thinking skills than acquiring quantities of facts. (BS)
- b) Students are encouraged to ask questions, think for themselves and express their own opinions in class so they can reach their maximum potential.
- c) Colleges look for "well-rounded" students, sports, student government, clubs and extracurricular activities.

4. Explain the standards movement for students in the U.S.

- a) Math, science, etc... American students did poorly compared with other countries.
- b) Traditionally local community school districts determined curricula and textbooks. Since 1990s the state and federal government has taken over.
- c) National goals for even teacher education. Annual testing of Common Core Standards in reading and mathematics in elementary schools, Standardized tests are controversial.
- d) No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
- e) Students could attend a different school if their school did poorly. Many feared that students would no longer ask questions and think for themselves, only focus on facts to be memorized for tests. Most parents who could choose a better school wanted their children to attend school in their home neighborhood.

f) After ten years, the children's scores were still not improving.

5. What are some of the inequalities in the American education system?

- a) Blacks had separate, inferior education. The Brown versus the Board of Education Supreme Court decision of 1954 ended legal segregation.
- b) Inner cities schools were mostly African American, and inferior.
- c) Busing: To try to balance the races, children were bused to others schools in different neighborhoods in the 1970s and 1980s.
- d) Programs were created to assist neediest children.
- e) Affirmative action programs
- f) The Supreme Court ruled against AA.

Ch11.

1. Discuss the issues of marriage and divorce in America.

- a) Few marriages are “arranged”.
- b) The value of marriage is how happy the husband and wife make each other. If they are not happy, it is easy in most states to get a divorce.
- c) Women especially value companionship.
- d) Divorce went up from the 1960s to the 1980s, then leveled off. One in every two marriages end in divorce.
- e) The educated upper class is more likely to stay married, the poor are often single mothers with more children.

2. How has the role of the child influenced family life?

- a) The emphasis on the individual instead of the group affects children. They may get more attention and power than they should.
- b) But with most moms working, they may get less attention, parents feel guilty and give material things instead.
- c) Since WWII, the psychological needs of the child and desires became more important than the child’s social and family responsibilities. Some believe the child centered approach was carried too far.
- d) They focused too much on the child’s needs instead of what the child needed to give back to the world, neighborhood, and family when they grew up.
- e) While today’s parents seem more concerned about teaching children responsibility and meeting community obligations, the family emphasis is still on the individual development and welfare of family members.