

**CENTRE FOR CANADIAN, US & LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES**  
**SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**  
**JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY**  
**M.PHIL. COURSE**

Course No.	: AW 654
Course Title	: <b>The Dynamics of American Society</b>
Course Teacher	: Dr. Saumyajit Ray
Credit Allotted	: 3
Instructional Method	: Classroom Lectures
Evaluation Method	: Assignments & End Semester Examination
Semester	: Winter
Course Duration	: 1 Semester
Class hours	: 4 per week

**Course outline:**

This course attempts to explore how American society has kept changing over time, and how the federal government has helped initiate this change. This course also seeks to examine the relation between American society and American politics and how forces within American society try to influence politics to either facilitate or resist social change.

The objective of this course is to enable students to develop a sound knowledge of American society by studying it in all its dimensions. Students are required to write a term paper on an assigned topic. In recognition of the fact that popular culture generally reflects and reiterates cultural norms of any given society, students are also asked to review films chosen by the course teacher. Students must defend both term papers and film reviews during an oral examination designed for the purpose. The End Semester examination is the only written examination for the course.

# Course Content

## **Unit I: The “uniqueness” of American society**

- a. A “nation” of religious minorities
- b. Rejection of feudalism
- c. A society of Believers
- d. Freedom of choice
- e. A federal system

## **Unit II: Social stratification in America**

- a. Social stratification and the capitalist order
- b. The middle class: Prosperity and vulnerability, class interests and aspirations
- c. American labor: Labor unions (local, state, and federal), relations with the Mob and distortion of the class struggle, immigrant labor
- d. Class, race, gender, and social mobility

## **Unit III: Poverty and prosperity**

- a. The land of opportunity and the American Dream
- b. The universality of success goals
- c. The American underclass: White, Black, Hispanic, and Native American
- d. Federal programs against poverty and discrimination: New Deal, Fair Deal, New Frontier, Great Society, War on Poverty

## **Unit IV: Identity, ideology, and American democracy**

- a. Americans and ideological identification: Mainstream (conservatives, liberals, moderates), fringe (libertarians, progressive democrats, socialists, Marxists, White supremacists, Islamists)
- b. Religion, race, ethnicity, gender, and electoral democracy
- c. Politics from below
- d. The influence, impact, and importance of political dynasties

## **Unit V: Progress and social reform**

- a. Progressive legislation: The making of modern America
- b. The Church and social reform: Select issues
- c. The U.S. Supreme Court, ideology, and social progress: Select judgments
- d. The politics of social reform

## **Unit VI: Rival self-images of American society**

- a. A Christian or multi-religious America
- b. An English-speaking or bilingual/multilingual America
- c. A White or “colored” America
- d. A free market or a welfare state
- e. A Melting Pot or a Salad Bowl

# Reading List

## Unit I

1. Ahlstrom, Sydney, E. 2004. *A Religious History of the American People*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
2. Foner, Eric. 2013. *Give Me Liberty! An American History*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.
3. \_\_\_\_\_. 1998. *The Story of American Freedom*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.
4. Gerston, Larry N. 2015. *American Federalism: A Concise Introduction*. New York, NY: Routledge
5. Hamilton, Alexander, James Madison and John Jay. 2014. *The Federalist Papers*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc.
6. Johnson, Paul. 2009. *A History of the American People*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.
7. Lind, Michael. 2012. *Land of Promise: An Economic History of the United States*. New York NY: HarperCollins Publishers.
8. Walton, Gary M. and Hugh Rockoff. 2014. *History of the American Economy*. Twelfth Edition. Mason, OH: South-Western.
9. Wood, Gordon S. 2011. *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States*. New York, NY: The Penguin Press.
10. \_\_\_\_\_. 1993. *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

## Unit II

1. Green, Max. 1996. *Epitaph for American Labor: How Union Leaders Lost Touch with America*. Washington, DC: The AEI Press.
2. Korgen, Kathleen Odell (ed.). 2010. *Multiracial Americans and Social Class: The Influence of Social Class on Racial Identity*. New York, NY: Routledge.
3. Levine, Rhonda F. (ed.). 2006. *Social Class and Stratification: Classic Statements and Theoretical Debates*. Second Edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
4. Massey, Douglas S. 2007. *Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
5. McMurrer, Daniel P. and Isabel V. Sawhill. 1998. *Getting Ahead: Economic and Social Mobility in America*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.
6. Mills, C. Wright. 2002. *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*. Fiftieth Anniversary Edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
7. Rayback, Joseph G. 1966. *A History of American Labor*. Expanded and Updated. New York, NY: The Free Press.
8. Samuel, Lawrence R. 2014. *The American Middle Class: A Cultural History*. New York, NY: Routledge.

## Unit III

1. Bailey, Martha J. and Sheldon Danziger (eds.). 2013. *Legacies of the War on Poverty*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
2. Bennett, James C. and Michael J. Lotus. 2013. *America 3.0: Rebooting American Prosperity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century—Why America's Greatest days are Yet to Come*. New York, NY: Encounter Books.
3. Devine, Joel A. and James D. Wright. 1993. *The Greatest of Evils: Urban Poverty and the American Underclass*. New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.
4. Harrington, Michael. 1997. *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*. New York, NY: Touchstone.
5. Iceland, John. 2012. *Poverty in America: A Handbook*. Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
6. Massey, Douglas S. and Nancy A. Denton. 1993. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
7. Pimpire, Stephen. 2008. *A People's History of Poverty in America*. New York NY: New Press.
8. Reef, Catherine. 2007. *Poverty in America*. New York, NY: Facts on File, Inc.

#### **Unit IV**

1. Ellis, Christopher and James A. Stimson. 2012. *Ideology in America*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
2. Elteren, Mel van. 2006. *Americanism and Americanization: A Critical History of Domestic and Global Influence*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.
3. Frymer, Paul. 1999. *Uneasy Alliances: Race and Party Competition in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
4. Hess, Stephen. 2016. *America's Political Dynasties: From Adams to Clinton*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
5. Maisel, L. Sandy and Mark D. Brewer. 2012. *Parties and Elections in America: The Electoral Process*. Sixth Edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
6. Marietta, Morgan. 2012. *A Citizen's Guide to American Ideology: Conservatism and Liberalism in Contemporary Politics*. New York, NY: Routledge.
7. Polsby, Nelson et al. 2012. *Presidential Elections: Strategies and Structures of American Politics*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
8. Rollin, Roger (ed.). 1989. *The Americanization of the Global Village: Essays in Comparative Popular Culture*. Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press.
9. Schaffner, Brian F. 2012. *Politics, Parties, and Elections in America*. Seventh Edition. Boston, MA: Wadsworth.
10. Schantz, Harvey L. (ed.). 1996. *American Presidential Elections: Process, Policy, and Political Change*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

#### **Unit V**

1. Garrison, Robert. 2004. *Congress, Progressive Reform, and the New American State*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
2. Johnson, Dennis W. 2009. *The Laws that Shaped America: Fifteen Acts of Congress and their Lasting Impact*. New York, NY: Routledge.
3. Kazin, Michael et al (eds.). 2008. *In Search of Progressive America*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
4. Marsden, George M. 2006. *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. New Edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
5. Rosenberg, Gerald N. 2008. *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?* Second Edition. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
6. Tomlins, Christopher (ed.). 2005. *The United States Supreme Court: The Pursuit of Justice*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.
7. White, Jr., Ronald C. and C. Howard Hopkins. 1976. *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
8. Woolner, David B. and John M. Thompson (eds.). 2016. *Progressivism in America: Past, Present, and Future*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

#### **Unit VI**

1. Baron, Dennis E. 1990. *The English-Only Question: An Official Language for Americans?* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
2. Berlatsky, Noah. 2014. *Multiracial America*. Detroit, MI: Greenhaven Press.
3. Cornett, Daryl C. (ed.). 2011. *Christian America?: Perspectives on Our Religious Heritage*. Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group.
4. Huntington, Samuel P. 2004. *Who are We? America's Great Debate*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.
5. Kallen, Horace. 1956. *Cultural Pluralism and the American Idea*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.
6. Miller, John J. 1998. *The Unmaking of Americans: How Multiculturalism Has Undermined America's Assimilation Ethic*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
7. Murray, Charles 2011. *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010*. New York, NY: Crown Forum.
8. Prothero, Stephen (ed.). 2006. *A Nation of Religions: The Politics of Pluralism in Multireligious America*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.