



The United States

Required Readings for Students of

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NATIVE AMERICANS

THE FIRST AMERICANS

Thousands of years ago, a land mass connected Asia and North America between what is now known as the Bering Strait, joining Siberia to Alaska. Animals crossed this land bridge, and hunters, probably traveling in small bands, followed them. Descendants of these hunters, the original inhabitants of the Americas, later developed into the nations and cultures of the First Americans. Some groups followed down the coast through present-day Alaska, Canada, California, and Central America, and on to the southern tip of South America. Sometime between 11,000 and 18,000 BC, both North and South America were peopled by what we now call Native Americans, or American Indians.

Eventually, many groups of First Americans tired of chasing the migrating herds of animals and settled in desirable locations throughout the American continents. They built cities, cultivated and grew crops such as beans, corn, potatoes, squash, and tobacco, and formed tribes that shared beliefs, values, and laws. In what is now the United States, diverse cultures evolved and thrived, often as a result of location, climate, and environment. Coastal people became skillful fishermen, while desert dwellers adapted to their dry environment. The natural resources of the Americas—the forests, waterways, plains, and mountains—were not only vital to the early Native Americans' existence but also greatly influenced their cultures and languages. Religious beliefs and the ceremonies that sprang from them were often derived from nature, and they played a key role in daily life.

Before European explorers arrived, in the heart of North America, near present-day St. Louis, Missouri, where the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers (both American Indian names) converge, a sophisticated urban civilization had developed with trade routes that may have reached all the way to Central America. Cahokia, as the area is known today, was the largest center of Native American urban life north of Mexico. In its zenith between 1100 and 1200 AD, this civilization contained open plazas for gatherings, agricultural fields, and 20,000 citizens living within a six-square-mile radius. The inhabitants of this first city of what is now the United States hunted, fished in the great rivers, and cultivated gardens. The people of Cahokia were also great builders. They constructed pyramid-shaped, earthen mounds for ceremonial purposes. Sometimes, like the pyramids in ancient Egypt, these mounds were used as burial tombs for important people. These ceremonial mounds can still be found up and down the Mississippi River and throughout the Midwestern United States, often in artistic animal shapes such as turtles or snakes. Monks Mound, at the center of Cahokia, is the largest prehistoric earthen mound structure in the Americas. Nearby, the site of Woodhenge, a circular sun calendar made from evenly spaced logs, was where Cahokia's inhabitants planned their ceremonies and determined the changing of the seasons. The seasons, the earth, the animals, and all creations of nature played, and still play, a crucial role in the lives of American Indians. Traditionally, Native Americans do not separate religion and the spirit world from their everyday lives. Sacred meaning is entwined with all aspects of daily life. Building a home, eating, sleeping, dreaming, creating art and music, and telling stories are part of the sacred life. Consequently, almost all activities are embedded with a component of ritual or prayer.

This concept is most apparent in the art of Native Americans. Although their art is self-expressive, it also reflects Native American values and connections to the spirit world. A unique feature of the art is that artwork is designed to be used in daily life. For example, "kachina dolls" created by the Anasazi cliff dwellers of the Southwest are used today by the Pueblo peoples in that region. These valuable works of art represent a supernatural spirit that visited the Pueblos on various occasions. Hundreds of unique kachina dolls are used for teaching Pueblo children to understand their world and culture. On the great plains and in the eastern forests, bones, deer antlers, porcupine quills, hides of deer and buffalo, feathers, and even stones were used by Native Americans to produce pipes, bowls, clothing, weapons, moccasins, and spoons. These objects were carefully decorated with images of animals or forms of nature that represent spiritual matters, visions, or personal experiences. But the objects were also utilitarian. An ornately carved pipe for smoking tobacco could double as a tool when a sharpened stone was part of its construction.

Not only their art, but their everyday activities also reflected the values of Native Americans. The practice of honoring the bones of animals they killed for sustenance was a common tradition in many Native American cultures. In the Pacific Northwest, the "First Catch" ritual honored the salmon, an important source of food, by designating a ceremonial role to the first fish caught each year and thanking it for sacrificing its life so that the people of the village could live. The "First Catch" rituals

involved returning the salmon's bones to the river so that it could be reborn and live again. On the great plains, where the buffalo was considered sacred and vital to the Plains Indians' existence, these Native Americans believed that by honoring the buffalo, even in death, it would be reborn and rise again from the earth to provide them with life. Such religious beliefs and cultural traditions ultimately clashed with those of the new European inhabitants of their lands, resulting in often tragic relations between the indigenous peoples of America and the newcomers from the east.

When the explorer Christopher Columbus arrived in the Americas at the end of the fifteenth century, he was delighted with the natives he encountered. He sent messages back to Europe praising their manners and behavior. Thinking he had reached his desired destination, India, he called the people he encountered Indios, or Indians. For half a millennium, the name has stuck. Most Indians, however, had their own names for their tribes or groups. Many of these names contain the meaning of the word people. For example, the Delaware Indians who once lived in the eastern part of North America called themselves the "original or genuine people," or Lenape in their language. Today, most groups of American Indians such as the Cherokee, the Houma, the Lakota, and the Navajo prefer to be referred to by their tribal or community identity.

The Iroquois, a confederation of tribes called the Haudenosaunee (which means "people building a long house") lived in the northeastern part of the present United States. They lived in communities, in long buildings that were used not only as homes but also for worship and community meetings. In the sixteenth century, these tribes—the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and later the Tuscarora—created a constitution and a governing council to deal with tribal matters that affected the entire confederation. Due to their efficient political and social organization, the Iroquois were studied and complimented by the founding fathers of the United States. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and John Adams invited the Iroquois chiefs to attend the meetings that led to the Declaration of Independence in 1776. Eventually some of the Iroquois confederation's original laws—designed to serve, protect, and resolve disputes within the entire confederation, while allowing each individual tribe to make local decisions—would prove to be models for the U.S. Constitution.

The arrival of Europeans and their eventual conquest of all of North America was ultimately devastating for Native Americans. The newcomers exposed them to diseases, such as smallpox and measles, to which they had no immunity. Thousands of Native Americans perished when epidemics surged through their communities. Eventually, the Iroquois and other groups were forced to move from their original lands in the east, either for reasons of survival or because they were displaced by government policies. As one group was pushed west, it came into conflict with other groups, who in turn were pushed farther west to the Mississippi River and beyond. Various tribes got caught up in the wars with the French and the English, and in the American Revolution. No matter which side they took, they eventually lost more and more territory and rights. Treaties were written and territories were promised to Native Americans, but over and over again, lands that they had once inhabited, hunted on, and farmed were taken away. Eventually, the U.S. government relocated most Indians onto reservations—contained areas—where they were dependent on the government for their livelihood. Today, the majority of American Indians, possibly 80 percent, live in urban environments, not on reservations. America's first people take part in every aspect of society in the United States. Those who remain on reservations continue to practice their native culture and traditions, as do many of the "urbanized" American Indians who have also, in many ways, assimilated into mainstream American culture. With the opening of the new National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC, the achievements, art, beliefs, and values of Native Americans can now be more fully shared and appreciated by the world to highlight the importance of this culture.

Preserving Native Cultures and Traditions

In a small town in Oklahoma, teachers of children of the Cherokee Nation address their students by their Cherokee names and teach them about the world in the Cherokee language. At one time, Native American education in native language was prohibited, but today Cherokee children are studying the culture and language that their grandparents, and their ancestors before them, knew. Throughout the United States, there is a movement to preserve the cultures and languages of American Indians. This movement is not meant to replace the use of the English language but to encourage the learning of and respect for Native Americans' heritage and their contributions to American society.

The Cherokee Indians, originally inhabitants of America's southeastern states, were forced to leave their homeland and move to the territory of Oklahoma in the late 1830s. Accompanied by U.S. Army

escorts, they traveled the “Trail of Tears” from the east coast to the region now known as the state of Oklahoma. Many of the Cherokee people died on the long and cruel march to the designated “Indian Territory.” The ancestors of those who survived and are still living on reservations today are now attempting to keep their culture alive in the tradition of Sequoyah, a half-Cherokee who, in 1823, invented a system for writing the Cherokee language. Sequoyah’s innovative system—using symbols for syllables—allowed many Cherokees to learn to read and write in their native tongue. Newspapers were eventually printed in the Cherokee language. Today Sequoyah’s writing system is still used in schools that are actively preserving the Cherokee language.

In the 19th century, the U.S. government established a policy that required areas of land to be designated as reservations for Native Americans to inhabit. Later this policy was modified to force the removal of children from their parents, stipulating that the children be educated in boarding schools, away from parental and cultural influences. In these boarding schools, Native American children were not allowed to speak their native language, could not practice their religious beliefs, and were forced to imitate the dominant European-American culture. The ultimate intention of this policy was to extinguish the Native Americans’ culture by eradicating their beliefs, traditions, languages, and religions in a single generation—in effect, to erase the Native Americans’ traditional culture. This plan proved to be a failure. American Indian cultures and languages, although fragile, broken, and endangered, continue to survive to this day. The loss of languages is a universal problem. Today there may be as many as 6,000 languages spoken in the world, but that number could possibly shrink by half as an older generation passes away and a younger one, raised on television, radio, the Internet, and mass marketing, takes over. When Spanish conquerors arrived in California in the early 16th Century, over 100 indigenous languages were spoken there, many of them as different from each other as English is from Chinese. Today the number of languages and the cultures they reflect have disappeared by half. In the United States today, nearly 200 Native American languages still exist. Almost 90 percent of them are spoken by an aging generation that has not passed on its linguistic heritage to the younger generation. The result: rich Native American traditions and customs are gradually disappearing or dying out. And because these native languages are not being preserved, they are at risk of extinction.

But a welcome movement is occurring in the Native American community, one that promotes appreciation and preservation of indigenous cultures and their languages. A generation of writers—among them Linda Hogan—is educating a new generation of readers while simultaneously preserving, giving dignity to, and enhancing their ancestors’ cultures. Hogan, for example, writes in English, and her work serves as a guide to the heritage of her Chickasaw ancestors who, like the Cherokee and other Indian nations, were forced on the “Trail of Tears” into Oklahoma in the 19th century. Hogan’s works and those of many other Native American writers and artists are taught in universities across America. In the tradition of her elders, Hogan often writes of the natural and spiritual world, giving breath and life to a world that enriches her readers.

Preservation of Native cultures is also being aided by a developing system of Tribal Colleges and Universities across the United States. At present there are 34 such schools stretching from the west coast of California and Washington to the Midwestern and Southwestern United States. These schools not only provide a quality education but also feature curricula that impart valuable tribal histories, languages, and customs to students who otherwise might not have an opportunity to learn about their native heritage. The leaders of these colleges and universities, which are usually located on or near a reservation, work with tribal elders to develop and refine their curriculum. Courses in traditional art and literature are created to preserve, give current meaning to, and teach appreciation for the ancient cultural heritage of the First Americans. Other courses are designed to meet the present needs of a particular reservation such as preserving the environment, securing clean air and water, and satisfying specific agricultural or ranching needs. Additional courses have been developed to assist Native American students in preparing for their future employment. For example, Sitting Bull College in North Dakota and the University of South Dakota are collaborating to create the first Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree program for Native Americans in the United States. Surveys show that tribal institutions of higher learning are proving to be very successful and that Native American students who attend a tribal college or university are far more likely to finish their college education than those who enter schools outside their reservations.

Stabilizing, reviving, and maintaining the cultures and languages of people who have inhabited, cherished, and enriched the earth is of value to us all. Efforts by many American Indians are

progressing toward this goal. With dedication and hope, Native Americans will continue their efforts to honor and preserve the rich cultural and linguistic heritage of their ancestors.

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1. Discuss some of the ways in which native traditions are now being preserved.
2. What was the 'Trail of Tears' and what were some of its effects.

IMMIGRATION AND US HISTORY



About 16 million immigrants entered the United States through Ellis Island in New York from 1892 to 1924. (© AP Images)

By Hasia Diner

Tens of millions of immigrants over four centuries have made the United States what it is today. They came to make new lives and livelihoods in the New World; their hard work benefited themselves and their new home country.

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Millions of women and men from around the world have decided to immigrate to the United States. That fact constitutes one of the central elements in the country's overall development, involving a process fundamental to its pre-national origins, its emergence as a new and independent nation, and its subsequent rise from being an Atlantic outpost to a world power, particularly in terms of its economic growth. Immigration has made the United States of America.

Like many other settler societies, the United States, before it achieved independence and afterward, relied on the flow of newcomers from abroad to people its relatively open and unsettled lands. It shared this historical reality with Canada, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Argentina, among other nations.

In all of these cases the imperial powers that claimed these places had access to two of the three elements essential to fulfilling their goal of extracting natural resources from the colony. They had land and capital but lacked people to do the farming, lumbering, mining, hunting, and the like. Colonial administrators tried to use native labor, with greater or lesser success, and they abetted the escalation of the African slave trade, bringing millions of migrants, against their will, to these New World outposts.

Immigration, however, played a key role not only in making America's development possible but also in shaping the basic nature of the society. Its history falls into five distinct time periods, each of which involved varying rates of migration from distinctly different places in the world. Each reflected, and also shaped, much about the basic nature of American society and economy.

Settlers of the New World

The first, and longest, era stretched from the 17th century through the early 19th century. Immigrants came from a range of places, including the German-speaking area of the Palatinate, France (Protestant Huguenots), and the Netherlands. Other immigrants were Jews, also from the Netherlands and from Poland, but most immigrants of this era tended to hail from the British Isles, with English, Scottish, Welsh, and Ulster Irish gravitating toward different colonies (later states) and regions.

These immigrants, usually referred to as settlers, opted in the main for farming, with the promise of cheap land a major draw for relatively impoverished northern and western Europeans who found themselves unable to take advantage of the modernization of their home economies. One group of immigrants deserves some special attention because their experience sheds much light on the forces impelling migration. In this era, considerable numbers of women and men came as indentured servants. They entered into contracts with employers who specified the time and conditions of labor in exchange for passage to the New World. While they endured harsh conditions during their time of service, as a result of their labors, they acquired ownership of small pieces of land that they could then work as independent yeoman farmers.

Mass Migration

The numbers who came during this era were relatively small. That changed, however, by the 1820s. This period ushered in the first era of mass migration. From that decade through the 1880s, about 15 million immigrants made their way to the United States, many choosing agriculture in the Midwest and Northeast, while others flocked to cities like New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore.

Factors in both Europe and the United States shaped this transition. The end of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe liberated young men from military service back home at the same time that industrialization and agricultural consolidation in England, Scandinavia, and much of central Europe transformed local economies and created a class of young people who could not earn a living in the new order. Demand for immigrant labor shot up with two major developments: the settlement of the American Midwest after the inauguration of the Erie Canal in 1825 and the related rise of the port of New York, and the first stirrings of industrial development in the United States, particularly in textile production, centered in New England.



A boatload of immigrants race to New York in 1922 to enter the United States under a new quota. (© Bettmann/Corbis)

Immigrants tended to cluster by group in particular neighborhoods, cities, and regions. The American Midwest, as it emerged in the middle of the 19th century as one of the world's most fertile agricultural regions, became home to tight-knit, relatively homogeneous communities of immigrants from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Bohemia, and various regions of what in 1871 would become Germany.

This era saw the first large-scale arrival of Catholic immigrants to the largely Protestant United States, and these primarily Irish women and men inspired the nation's first serious bout of nativism, which combined an antipathy to immigrants in general with a fear of Catholicism and an aversion to the Irish. Particularly in the decades just before the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865), this nativism spawned a powerful political movement and even a political party, the Know Nothings, which made anti-immigration and anti-Catholicism central to its political agenda. This period also witnessed the arrival of small numbers of Chinese men to the American West. Native-born Americans reacted intensely and negatively to their arrival, leading to the passage of the only piece of U.S. immigration legislation that specifically named a group as the focus of restrictive policy, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

A Wave Becomes a Flood

Gradually over the course of the decades after the Civil War, as the sources of immigration shifted so too did the technology of ocean travel. Whereas previous immigrants had made their way to the United States via sail power, innovations in steam transportation made it possible for larger ships to bring larger loads of immigrants to the United States. The immigrants of this era tended to come from southern and eastern Europe, regions undergoing at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries the same economic transitions that western and northern Europe had earlier experienced.

As among the immigrants of the earlier period, young people predominated among the newcomers. This wave of migration, which constituted the third episode in the history of U.S. immigration, could better be referred to as a *flood* of immigrants, as nearly 25 million Europeans made the voyage. Italians, Greeks, Hungarians, Poles, and others speaking Slavic languages constituted the bulk of this migration. Included among them were 2.5 to 3 million Jews.

Each group evinced a distinctive migration pattern in terms of the gender balance within the migratory pool, the permanence of their migration, their literacy rates, the balance between adults and children, and the like. But they shared one overarching characteristic: They flocked to urban destinations and made up the bulk of the U.S. industrial labor pool, making possible the emergence of such industries as steel, coal, automobile, textile, and garment production, and enabling the United States to leap into the front ranks of the world's economic giants.

Their urban destinations, their numbers, and perhaps a fairly basic human antipathy towards foreigners led to the emergence of a second wave of organized xenophobia. By the 1890s, many Americans, particularly from the ranks of the well-off, white, native-born, considered immigration to pose a serious danger to the nation's health and security. In 1893 a group of them formed the Immigration Restriction League, and it, along with other similarly inclined organizations, began to press Congress for severe curtailment of foreign immigration. This fear also pushed President Benjamin Harrison (1833-1901) to designate Ellis Island, located in New York Harbor near the Statue of Liberty, as a federal immigration station. More than 12 million immigrants entered the United States through Ellis Island during its years of operation from 1892 to 1954.

Legislating Immigration

Restriction proceeded piecemeal over the course of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but immediately after the end of World War I (1914-1918) and into the early 1920s, Congress did change the nation's basic policy about immigration. The National Origins Act in 1921 (and its final form in 1924) not only restricted the number of immigrants who might enter the United States but also assigned slots according to quotas based on national origins. A complicated piece of legislation, it essentially gave preference to immigrants from northern and western Europe, severely limited the numbers from eastern and southern Europe, and declared all potential immigrants from Asia to be unworthy of entry into the United States.

The legislation excluded the Western Hemisphere from the quota system, and the 1920s ushered in the penultimate era in U.S. immigration history. Immigrants could and did move quite freely from Mexico, the Caribbean (including Jamaica, Barbados, and Haiti), and other parts of Central and South America. This era, which reflected the application of the 1924 legislation, lasted until 1965. During those 40 years, the United States began to admit, case by case, limited numbers of refugees. Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany before World War II, Jewish Holocaust survivors after the war, non-Jewish displaced persons fleeing Communist rule in eastern Europe, Hungarians seeking refuge after their failed uprising in 1956, and Cubans after the 1960 revolution managed to find haven in the United States because their plight moved the conscience of Americans, but the basic immigration law remained in place.

The Hart-Celler Act

This all changed with passage of the Hart-Celler Act in 1965, a by-product of the civil rights revolution and a jewel in the crown of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs. The measure had not been intended to stimulate immigration from Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and elsewhere in the developing world. Rather, by doing away with the racially based quota system, its authors had expected that immigrants would come from the "traditional" sending societies such as Italy, Greece, and Poland, places that labored under very small quotas in the 1924 law. The law replaced the quotas with preference categories based on family relationships and job skills, giving particular preference to potential immigrants with relatives in the United States and with occupations deemed critical by the U.S. Department of Labor. But after 1970, following an initial influx from those European countries, immigrants began to hail from places like Korea, China, India, the Philippines, and Pakistan, as well as countries in Africa. By 2000 immigration to the United States had returned to its 1900 volume, and the United States once again became a nation formed and transformed by immigrants.

Now in the early 21st century, American society once again finds itself locked in a debate over immigration and the role of immigrants in American society. To some, the new immigrants have seemed unwilling or unable to assimilate into American society, too committed to maintaining their transnational connections, and too far removed from core American values. As in past eras, some critics of contemporary immigrants believe that the newcomers take jobs away from Americans and put undue burdens on the educational, welfare, and health care systems. Many participants in the debate consider a large number of illegal immigrants to pose a threat to the society's basic structure.

The immigrants, however, have supporters who point out that each new immigrant wave inspired fear, suspicion, and concern by Americans -- including the children and grandchildren of earlier immigrants -- and that Americans claimed, wrongly, that each group of newcomers would somehow not fit in and would remain wedded to their old and foreign ways. So too advocates of immigration and most historians of immigration argue that immigrants enrich the United States, in large measure because they provide valuable services to the nation.

In every era of U.S. history, from colonial times in the 17th century through the early 21st century, women and men from around the world have opted for the American experience. They arrived as foreigners, bearers of languages, cultures, and religions that at times seemed alien to America's essential core. Over time, as ideas about U.S. culture changed, the immigrants and their descendants simultaneously built ethnic communities and participated in American civic life, contributing to the nation as a whole.

Questions:

1. What were some of the reasons for immigration to the New World? Do immigrants today still come to the USA for the same reasons?
2. What legislation governs immigration to the USA? Has it always been fair?

A SHORT GUIDE TO THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM

THE CONSTITUTION

Unlike Britain but like most nation states, the American political system is clearly defined by basic documents. The Declaration of Independence of 1776 and the Constitution of 1789 form the foundations of the United States federal government. The Declaration of Independence establishes the United States as an independent political entity, while the Constitution creates the basic structure of the federal government. Both documents are on display in the National Archives and Records Administration Building in Washington, D.C.

The United States Constitution is the shortest written constitution in the world with just seven articles and 27 amendments. As well as its brevity, the US Constitution is notable for being a remarkably stable document. The first ten amendments were all carried in 1789 - the same year as the original constitution - and are collectively known as the Bill of Rights. If one accepts that these first 10 amendments were in effect part of the original constitutional settlement, there have only been 17 amendments in over 200 years (the last substantive one - reduction of the voting age to 18 - in 1971). One of the major reasons for this relative immutability is that - quite deliberately on the part of its drafters - the Constitution is a very difficult instrument to change. First, a proposed amendment has to secure a two-thirds vote of members present in both houses of Congress. Then three-quarters of the state legislatures have to ratify the proposed change (this stage may or may not be governed by a specific time limit).

At the heart of the US Constitution is the principle known as 'separation of powers', a term coined by the French political, enlightenment thinker Montesquieu. This means that power is spread between three institutions of the state - the executive, the legislature and the judiciary - and no one institution has too much power and no individual can be a member of more than one institution. This principle is also known as 'checks and balances', since each of the three branches of the state has some authority to act on its own, some authority to regulate the other two branches, and has some of its own authority, in turn, regulated by the other branches. Not only is power spread between the different branches; the members of those branches are deliberately granted by the Constitution different terms of office which is a further brake on rapid political change. So the President has a term of four years, while members of the Senate serve for six years and members of the House of Representatives serve for two years. Members of the Supreme Court effectively serve for life.

The great benefit of this system is that power is spread and counter-balanced and the 'founding fathers' - the 55 delegates who drafted the Constitution - clearly wished to create a political system which was in sharp contrast to, and much more democratic than, the monarchical system of absolute power then in force in Britain. The great weakness of the system is that it makes government slow, complicated and legalistic which is a particular disadvantage in a world - unlike that of 1776 - in which political and economic developments are fast-moving and the USA is a - indeed the - super power.

Since the Constitution is so old and so difficult to change, for it to be meaningful to contemporary society it requires interpretation by the courts and ultimately it is the Supreme Court which determines what the Constitution means. There are very different approaches to the interpretation of the Constitution with the two main strands of thought being known as *originalism* and the *Living Constitution*. Originalism is a principle of interpretation that tries to discover the original meaning or intent of the constitution. It is based on the principle that the judiciary is not supposed to create, amend or repeal laws (which is the realm of the legislative branch) but only to uphold them. This approach tends to be supported by conservatives. Living Constitution is a concept which claims that the Constitution has a dynamic meaning and that contemporary society should be taken into account when interpreting key constitutional phrases. Instead of seeking to divine the views of the drafters of the document, it claims that they deliberately wrote the Constitution in broad terms so that it would remain flexible. This approach tends to be supported by liberals.

THE PRESIDENCY

Although the 'founding fathers' wanted to avoid a political system that in any way reflected the monarchical system then prevalent in Britain and for a long time the Presidency was relatively weak, the vast expansion of the federal bureaucracy and the military in the 20th century has in current practice given a greater role and more power to the President than is the case for any single individual in most political systems.

The President is both the head of state and the head of government, as well as the military commander-in-chief and chief diplomat. He presides over the executive branch of the federal government, a vast organization numbering about 4 million people, including 1 million active-duty military personnel. Within the executive branch, the President has broad constitutional powers to manage national affairs and the workings of the federal government and he may issue executive orders to affect internal policies.

The President may sign or veto legislation passed by Congress and has the power to recommend measures to Congress. The Congress may override a presidential veto but only by a two-thirds majority in each house. The President has the power to make treaties (with the 'advice and consent' of the Senate) and the power to nominate and receive ambassadors. The President may not dissolve Congress or call special elections, but does have the power to pardon criminals convicted of offences against the federal government, enact executive orders, and (with the consent of the Senate) appoint Supreme Court justices and federal judges.

The President is elected for a fixed term of four years and may serve a maximum of two terms. Originally there was no constitutional limit on the number of terms that a President could serve in office and the first President George Washington set the precedent of serving simply two terms. Following the election of Franklin D Roosevelt to a record four terms, it was decided to limit terms to two and the relevant constitutional amendment was enacted in 1951. Elections are always held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November to coincide with Congressional elections.

The President is not elected directly by the voters but by an Electoral College representing each state on the basis of a combination of the number of members in the Senate (two for each state regardless of size) and the number of members in the House of Representatives (roughly proportional to population). The states with the largest number of votes are California (55), Texas (38) and New York (29). The states with the smallest number of votes - there are six of them - have only three votes. The District of Columbia, which has no voting representation in Congress, has three Electoral College votes. In effect, therefore, the Presidential election is not one election but 51.

The total Electoral College vote is 538. This means that, to become President, a candidate has to win at least 270 electoral votes. The voting system awards the Electoral College votes from each state to delegates committed to vote for a certain candidate in a "winner take all" system, with the exception of Maine and Nebraska (which award their Electoral College votes according to Congressional Districts rather than for the state as a whole). In practice, most states are firmly Democrat - for instance, California and New York - or firmly Republican - for instance, Texas and Tennessee. Therefore, candidates concentrate their appearances and resources on the so-called "battleground states", those that might go to either party. The three largest battleground or swing states are Florida (29 votes), Pennsylvania (20) and Ohio (18). Others are Virginia (13), Wisconsin (10), Colorado (9), Iowa (6) and Nevada (6).

This system of election means that a candidate can win the largest number of votes nationwide but fail to win the largest number of votes in the Electoral College and therefore fail to become President. Indeed, in practice, this has happened three times in US history, most recently in 2000. If this seems strange (at least to non-Americans), the explanation is that the 'founding fathers' who drafted the American Constitution did not wish to give too much power to the people and so devised a system that gives the ultimate power of electing the President to members of the Electoral College. The same Constitution, however, enables each state to determine how its members in the Electoral College are chosen and since the 1820s states have chosen their electors by a direct vote of the people. The United States is the only example in the world of an indirectly elected executive president. The President may be impeached by a majority in the House and removed from office by a two-thirds majority in the Senate for "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors". Since 1939, there has been an Executive Office of the President (EOP) which has consistently and considerably expanded in size and power. Today it consists of some 1,600 staff and costs some \$300M a year.

The position of Vice-President is elected on the same ticket as that of the President and has the same four-year term of office. The Vice-President is often described as 'a heart beat away from the Presidency' since, in the event of the death or incapacity of the President, the Vice-President assumes the office. In practice, however, a Vice-Presidential candidate is chosen (by the Presidential candidate) to 'balance the ticket' in the Presidential election (that is, represent a different geographical or gender or ethnic constituency) and, for all practical purposes, the position only carries the power accorded to it by the President - which is usually very little (a major exception has been Dick Cheney under George W Bush). The official duties of the Vice-President are to sit as a member of the "Cabinet" and as a member of the National Security Council and to act as ex-officio President of the Senate.

Although the President heads the executive branch of government, the day-to-day enforcement and administration of federal laws is in the hands of the various federal executive departments, created

by Congress to deal with specific areas of national and international affairs. The heads of the 15 departments, chosen by the President and approved with the 'advice and consent' of the Senate, form a council of advisors generally known as the President's "Cabinet". This is not a cabinet in the British political sense: it does not meet so often and does not act so collectively.

In fact, the President has powers of patronage that extend way beyond appointment of Cabinet members. In all, the President appoints roughly 3,000 individuals to positions in the federal government, of which about a third require the confirmation of the Senate. As the divisions in American politics have deepened, so the confirmation process has become more fractious and prolonged - when first elected, Barack Obama had to wait ten months before all his nominees were in their jobs.

The first United States President was George Washington, who served from 1789-1797, so that the current President Barack Obama is the 44th to hold the office. Four sitting Presidents have been assassinated: Abraham Lincoln in 1865, James A. Garfield in 1881, William McKinley in 1901, and John F. Kennedy in 1963. The President is sometimes referred to as POTUS (President of the United States) and the Presidency is often referred to by the media as variously the White House, the West Wing, and the Oval Office. Such is the respect for the Presidency that, even having left office, a President is referred to by the title for the remainder of his life.

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The House of Representatives is the lower chamber in the bicameral legislature known collectively as Congress. The founders of the United States intended the House to be the politically dominant entity in the federal system and, in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the House served as the primary forum for political debate. However, subsequently the Senate has been the dominant body.

The House consists of 435 members, each of whom represents a congressional district and serves for a two-year term. House seats are apportioned among the states by population according to each decennial census. Typically a House constituency would represent around 500,000 people. Members of the House are elected by first-past-the-post voting in every state except Louisiana and Washington, which have run-offs. Elections are always held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in even numbered years. Voting in congressional elections - especially to the House - is generally much lower than levels in other liberal democracies. In a year when there is a Presidential election, turnout is typically around 50%; in years when there is no Presidential election (known as mid-terms), it usually falls to around one third of the electorate. In the event that a member of the House of Representatives dies or resigns before the end of the two-year term, a special election is held to fill the vacancy.

The House has four non-voting delegates from American Samoa (1981), the District of Columbia (1971), Guam (1972) and the Virgin Islands (1976) and one resident commissioner for Puerto Rico (1976), bringing the total formal membership to 440. Much of the work of the House is done through 20 standing committees and around 100 sub-committees which perform both legislative and investigatory functions.

Each chamber of Congress has particular exclusive powers. The House must introduce any bills for the purpose of raising revenue. However, the consent of both chambers is required to make any law. Activity in the House of Representatives tends to be more partisan than in the Senate. The House and Senate are often referred to by the media as Capitol Hill or simply the Hill.

THE SENATE

The Senate is the upper chamber in the bicameral legislature known collectively as Congress. The original intention of the authors of the US Constitution was that the Senate should be a regulatory group, less politically dominant than the House. However, since the mid 19th century, the Senate has been the dominant chamber and indeed today it is perhaps the most powerful upper house of any legislative body in the world.

The Senate consists of 100 members, each of whom represents a state and serves for a six-year term (one third of the Senate stands for election every two years). Each state has two Senators, regardless of population, and, since there are 50 states, then there are 100 senators. This equality of Senate seats between states has the effect of producing huge variations in constituency population (the two senators from Wyoming represent less than half a million electors, while the two senators from California represent 34M people) with gross over-representation of the smaller states and serious under-representation of racial and ethnic minorities.

Members of the Senate are elected by first-past-the-post voting in every state except Louisiana and Washington, which have run-offs. Elections are always held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in even numbered years.

In the event that a member of the Senate dies or resigns before the end of the six-year term, no special election is held to fill the vacancy. Instead the Governor of the state that the Senator represented nominates someone to serve until the next set of Congressional elections when a normal election is held to fill the vacancy.

Much of the work of the Senate is done through 16 standing committees and over 40 sub-committees which perform both legislative and investigatory functions.

Each chamber of Congress has particular exclusive powers. The Senate must give 'advice and consent' to many important Presidential appointments. However, the consent of both chambers is required to make any law. Activity in the Senate tends to be less partisan and more individualistic than in the House of Representatives. Senate rules permit what is called a filibuster when a senator, or a series of senators, can speak for as long as they wish and on any topic they choose, unless a supermajority of three-fifths of the Senate (60 Senators, if all 100 seats are filled) brings debate to a close by invoking what is called cloture (taken from the French term for closure).

The Senate and House are often referred to by the media as Capitol Hill or simply the Hill.

THE SUPREME COURT

The Supreme Court consists of nine Justices: the Chief Justice of the United States and eight Associate Justices. They have equal weight when voting on a case and the Chief Justice has no casting vote or power to instruct colleagues. The Justices are nominated by the President and confirmed with the 'advice and consent' of the Senate. As federal judges, the Justices serve during "good behavior", meaning essentially that they serve for life and can be removed only by resignation or by impeachment and subsequent conviction.

The Supreme Court is the highest court in the United States. The court deals with matters pertaining to the federal government, disputes between states, and interpretation of the Constitution. It can declare legislation or executive action made at any level of the government as unconstitutional, nullifying the law and creating precedent for future law and decisions. The Supreme Court in practice has a much more 'political' role than the highest courts of European democracies. For example, the scope of abortion in the USA is effectively set by the Supreme Court whereas, in other countries, it would be set by legislation. Indeed in 2000, it made the most political decision imaginable by determining - by seven votes to two - the outcome of that year's presidential election. It decided that George W Bush had beaten Al Gore, although Gore won the most votes overall.

A recent and momentous instance of this exercise of political power was the Supreme Court decision in the case of the challenge to Barack Obama's signature piece of legislation, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, often dubbed Obamacare. No less than 26 states challenged the legality of these health reforms under a clause in the constitution governing interstate commerce. In the end, the Court ruled by five to four that, while the individual mandate provision in the Act is not itself a tax, the penalties imposed for not buying health insurance do represent taxes and therefore the entire requirement falls within the remit of Congress's right to impose taxes.

Given how difficult it is to change the US Constitution through the formal method, one has seen informal changes to the Constitution through various decisions of the Supreme Court which have given specific meanings to some of the general phrases in the Constitution. It is one of the many ironies of the American political system that an unelected and unaccountable body like the Supreme Court can in practice exercise so much political power in a system which proclaims itself as so democratic. Since the Supreme Court makes so many 'political' decisions and its members are appointed so rarely and then for life, the appointment of Justices by the President is often a very charged and controversial matter.

Below the Supreme Court, there is a system of Courts of Appeal, and, below these courts, there are District Courts. Together, these three levels of courts represent the federal judicial system. A special feature of the American political system in respect of the judiciary is that, although federal judges are appointed, nationwide 87% of all state court judges are elected and 39 states elect at least some of their judges. Outside of the United States, there are only two nations that have judicial elections and then only in limited fashion. Smaller Swiss cantons elect judges and appointed justices on the Japanese Supreme Court must sometimes face retention elections (although those elections are a formality).

POLITICAL PARTIES & ELECTIONS

To an extent quite extraordinary in democratic countries, the American political system is dominated by two political parties: the Democratic Party and the Republican Party (often known as the 'Grand Old Party' or GOP). These are very old and very stable parties - the Democrats go back to 1824 and the Republicans were founded in 1854.

In illustrations and promotional material, the Democratic Party is often represented as a donkey, while the Republican Party is featured as an elephant. The origin of these symbols is the political cartoonist Thomas Nast who came up with them in 1870 and 1874 respectively. The main reason for the dominance of these two parties is that - like most other Anglo-Saxon countries (notably Britain) - the electoral system is 'first past the post' or simple majority which, combined with the large voter size of the constituencies in the House and (even more) the Senate, ensures that effectively only two parties can play. The other key factor is the huge influence of money in the American electoral system. Since effectively a candidate can spend any amount he can raise (not allowed in many other countries) and since one can buy broadcasting time (again not allowed in many countries), the US can only 'afford' two parties or, to put it another way, candidates of any other party face a formidable financial barrier to entry.

Some people tend to view the division between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party in the United States as the same as that between Labour and Conservative in Britain or between Social Democrats and Christian Democrats in Germany. The comparison is valid in the sense that, in each country, one political party is characterised as Centre-Left and the other as Centre-Right or, to put it another way, one party is more economically interventionist and socially radical than the other. However, the analogy has many weaknesses.

The Centre in American politics is considerably to the Right of the Centre in most European states including Britain, Germany, France, Italy and (even more especially) the Scandinavian countries. So, for instance, most members of the Conservative Party in the UK would support a national health service, whereas many members of the Democratic Party in the US would not.

As a consequence of the enormous geographical size of the United States and the different histories of the different states (exemplified by the Civil War), geography is a factor in ideological positioning to a much greater extent than in other democratic countries. For instance, a Northern Republican could be more liberal than a Southern Democrat. Conversely there is a group of Democratic Congressmen that are fiscally very conservative - they are known as "blue dog" Democrats or even DINO (Democrats In Name Only).

In the United States, divisions over social matters - such as abortion, capital punishment, same-sex relationships and stem cell research - matter and follow party lines in a way which is not true of most European countries. In Britain, for instance, these sorts of issues would be regarded as matters of personal conscience and would not feature prominently in election debates between candidates and parties.

In the USA, religion is a factor in politics in a way unique in western democracies. Candidates openly proclaim their faith in a manner which would be regarded as bizarre elsewhere (even in a Catholic country like France) and religious groupings - such as the Christian Coalition of America - exert a significant political influence in a manner which would be regarded as improper in most European countries (Poland is an exception here).

In the United States, the 'whipping system' - that is the instructions to members of the House and the Senate on how to vote - is not as strict or effective as it is in most European countries. As a consequence, members of Congress are less constrained by party affiliation and freer to act individually. In the USA, political parties are much weaker institutions than they are in other democracies. Between the selection of candidates, they are less active than their counterparts in other countries and, during elections, they are less influential in campaigning, with individual politicians and their campaigns having much more influence.

The cost of elections is much greater in the US than in other democracies which has the effects of limiting the range of candidates, increasing the influence of corporate interests and pressure groups, and enhancing the position of the incumbent office holder (especially in the winning of primaries). As long ago as 1895, the Chairman of the Republican National Committee Mark Hanna stated: *"There are two things that are important in politics. The first is money, and I can't remember what the second one is."*

Whereas in other countries, voters shape the policies and select the candidates of a party by joining it, in the USA voters register as a supporter of one of the major parties and then vote in primary elections to determine who should be the party's candidate in the 'real' election. One other oddity of the American party system is that, whereas in most countries of the world the colour red is associated with the Left-wing party and the colour blue with the Right-wing party, in the United States the reverse is the case. So the 'blue states' are those traditionally won by the Democrats, while the 'red states' are those normally controlled by the Republicans.

Two interesting features of American political elections are low turnout and the importance of incumbency. Traditionally turnout in US congressional elections is much lower than in other liberal democracies especially those of Western Europe. When there is a presidential election, turnout is only

about half; when there is no presidential election, turnout is merely about one third. The exception was the elections of 2008: the excitement of the candidacy of Barack Obama led to an unusually high turnout of 63%, the highest since 1960 (the election of John F Kennedy).

While Congress as an institution is held in popular contempt, voters like *their* member of Congress, and indeed, there is a phenomenon known as 'sophomore surge' whereby incumbents tend to increase their share of the vote when they seek re-election. More generally most incumbents win re-election for several reasons: they allocate time and resources to waging a permanent re-election campaign; they can win "earmarks" which are appropriations of government spending for projects in the constituency; and they find it easier than challengers to raise money for election campaigns.

THE FEDERAL SYSTEM

Understanding the federal nature of the United States is critical to appreciating the complexities of the American political system.

Most political systems are created top-down. A national system of government is constructed and a certain amount of power is released to lower levels of government. The unique history of the United States means that, in this case, the political system was created bottom-up.

First, some two centuries or so ago, there were 13 autonomous states who, following the War of Independence against the British, created a system of government in which the various states somewhat reluctantly ceded power to the federal government. Around a century later, the respective authority of the federal government and the individual states was an issue at the heart of the Civil War when there was a bloody conflict over who had the right to determine whether slavery was or was not permissible. With the exception of Switzerland, no other Western democracy diffuses power to the same degree as America.

So today the powers of the federal government remain strictly limited by the Constitution - the critical Tenth Amendment of 1791 - which leaves a great deal of authority to the individual states.

- Each state has an executive, a legislature and a judiciary.
- The head of the executive is the Governor who is directly elected.
- The legislature consists of a Senate and a House of Representatives (the exception is the state of Nebraska which has a unicameral system).
- The judiciary consists of a state system of courts.
- The 50 states are divided into counties (parishes in Louisiana and boroughs in Alaska). Each county has its court.

Although the Constitution prescribes precisely when Presidential and Congressional elections will be held, the dates and times of state and local elections are determined by state governments. Therefore there is a plethora of elections in the United States and, at almost all times, an election is being held somewhere in the country. State and local elections, like federal elections, use the 'first past the post' system of election.

The debate about federalism in the US is far from over. There are those who argue for a stronger role for the federal government and there are advocates of locating more power at the state level. The recent rise of the electorally-successful Tea Party movement owes a good deal to the view that the federal government has become too dominant, too intrusive and too profligate.

Meanwhile many states - especially those west of the Rockies - have what has been called "the fourth arm of government": this is the ballot or referendum initiative. This enables a policy question to be put to the electorate as a result of the collection of a certain number of signatures or the decision of the state legislation. Over the last century, some 3,000 such initiatives have been conducted - in some cases (such as California) with profound results.

RECENT TRENDS

In all political systems, there is a disconnect between the *formal* arrangements as set out in the constitution and relevant laws and between the *informal* arrangements as occurs in practice. Arguably, in the United States this disconnect is sharper than in most other democratic systems because:

1. The US Constitution is an old one (late 18th century) whereas most countries have had several constitutions with the current one typically being a 20th century creation
2. The US Constitution is relatively immutable so it is very difficult to change the provisions to reflect the reforms that have come about over time from the pressure of events
3. Since the US adopted its Constitution, the US has become the pre-eminent world economic and political power which has brought about major changes in how the Presidency operates, most especially in the international sphere

What this means is that, in the last century and most especially since the end of the Second World War, the reality of how the American political system operates has changed quite fundamentally in terms which are not always evident from the terms of the Constitution (and indeed some might argue are in some respects in contravention of the Constitution). The main changes are as follows:

The balance of power between the Congress and the President has shifted significantly in favour of the President. This is evident in the domestic sphere through practices like 'impoundment' (when money is taken from the purpose intended by Congress and allocated to another purpose favoured by the President) and in the international sphere through refusal to invoke the War Powers Resolution in spite of major military invasions. Different terms for this accretion of power by the Presidency are "the unitary executive" and "the imperial presidency".

The impact of private funding of political campaigns and of lobbyists and special interest groups in political decision making have increased considerably. Candidates raise their own money for campaigns, there is effectively no limit on the money that can be spent in such campaigns (thanks to what is called super Political Action Committees), and the levels of expenditure - especially in the presidential primaries and election proper - have risen astronomically. In the presidential race of 2012, both Barack Obama and Mitt Romney spent over one billion dollars. All this has led to some observers describing the American political system as a plutocracy, since it is effectively controlled by private finance from big businesses which expect certain policies and practices to follow from the candidates they are funding.

There has been a growth of what is called "pork barrel" politics through the use of "earmarks". The term "pork barrel" refers to the appropriation of government spending for projects that are intended primarily to benefit particular constituents, such as those in marginal seats, or campaign contributors. Such appropriations are achieved through "earmarks" which can be found both in legislation (also called "hard earmarks" or "hardmarks") and in the text of Congressional committee reports (also called "soft earmarks" or "softmarks").

The nature of political debate in the United States has become markedly more partisan and bitter. The personal lifestyle as well as the political record of a candidate might well be challenged and even the patriotism or religiosity of the candidate may be called into question. Whereas the politics of most European countries has become more consensual, US domestic politics has become polarised and tribal. As a result, the political culture is often more concerned with satisfying the demands of the political 'base' rather than attempting to achieve a national consensus.

A DIVIDED DEMOCRACY

Of course, all nation states are divided, especially in terms of power and wealth, but also - to different extents - by gender, race, ethnicity, religion and other factors. Indeed the constitution and institutions of a democratic society are deliberately intended to provide for the expression and resolution of such divisions. However, it is often observed that the USA is an especially divided democracy in at least three respects:

It is divided *horizontally* through the 'separation of powers', so that the executive, the legislature and the judiciary are quite distinct in terms of both powers and personalities.

It is divided *vertically* through the federal system of government with the division of powers between the federal government and the state governments a very important issue that arguably was once the subject of a civil war.

It is divided *politically* through the sharp (and often bitter) differences of view on many economic issues like tackling the recession and reforming health care and social issues ranging from gun control to gay rights. Since 2009, such differences have been highlighted by the presence of the first black President in the White House and the rapid emergence of a Tea Party movement that is both virulently anti-Obama and anti-mainstream Republicanism.

One of the most visible and dramatic illustrations of how the divisions in American politics frustrate decision-making is the regular failure to agree a federal budget before the start of the new financial period. This results in what is known as federal 'shutdown' when most federal employees are sent home because they cannot be paid and many federal institutions therefore close down. This is not an isolated occurrence: it has happened 17 times since 1977 (the last one was in 1995-1996).

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Reading this short essay, it will be evident to many (especially non-American) readers that the United States is *different* from other democracies. This observation has given rise to the notion of "American exceptionalism". This is an ill-defined term which has been used differently at different times.

One important version of "American exceptionalism" revolves around the lack of a clear ideological or class-based division between the two major political parties. The USA has never had a credible socialist or anti-capitalist party; both the main parties are pro-capital and pro-business and speak to the 'middle class'. Other versions of the concept revolve around the alleged 'superiority' of the United States because of its history, size, wealth and global dominance plus the 'sophistication' of its constitution and power of its values such as individualism, innovation and entrepreneurship.

In perhaps its most extreme form, the concept has a religious dimension with the belief that God has especially chosen or blessed the country. Of course, it is easy to view the American political system as exceptional in negative terms such as the unusual influence of race, religion and money as compared to other liberal democracies.

In truth, for all its special features, the American political system needs to be seen as one among many models of democracy with its own strengths and weaknesses that need to be assessed in comparison to those of other democracies.

Questions:

1. Describe briefly the basic structure of the American federal government.
2. What is particular about American democracy? How is it different from the Italian government?

EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

All societies must wrestle with fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of their educational system, but the United States was the first nation to face these questions as a democracy. Early on, Americans understood that their future as a free people rested upon their own wisdom and judgment, and not that of some distant ruler. For this reason, the quality, character, and costs of education have remained among the country's central preoccupations since its founding. Educational institutions of all types and sizes, from nursery schools to advanced research institutions, populate the American landscape. Public schools have been described as the nation's most familiar government institutions. Whether communities are poor or affluent, urban or rural, public schools are a common denominator throughout the United States. From their origins two centuries ago through today, America's public and private schools have served to define the American identity.

Every national experience shaping the American character has been played out in its classrooms: race and treatment of minorities, immigration and growth of cities, westward expansion and economic growth, individual freedom and the nature of community. Fundamental questions about the purpose and methods of education have resonated in public debates in the United States from the "common school" movement of the early 19th century to debates over academic standards and testing today. Should schools emphasize basic skills — reading, writing, and mathematics — or provide a broad education in the liberal arts and sciences? How can schools provide equal access to all yet maintain high academic standards? Who should pay for schools — parents or the public? Should schools focus on practical, job-oriented skills, or give all children the academic courses necessary to succeed in college? How should teachers impart moral and spiritual values to the children of different cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds? What criteria should be used for selecting secondary school students for admission to prestigious colleges and universities? The answers to these questions are not easy, and, in fact, schools in the United States have answered them in very different ways at different times in the nation's history. Today, as in the past, education remains a topic of vigorous debate, rapid change, and enduring values. International Baccalaureate students in Washington state respond to a science question.

Structure of U.S. Education

For someone from another country, the U.S. educational system understandably appears large and varied, even chaotic. Within this complexity, however, American education reflects the history, culture, and values of the changing country itself. From a broad perspective, the American educational system can be characterized by its large size, organizational structure, marked decentralization, and increasing diversity.

Size

Schools in the United States — public and private, elementary and secondary, state universities and private colleges — can be found everywhere, and the United States continues to operate one of the largest universal education systems in the world. More than 75 million children and adults were enrolled in U.S. schools and colleges in the 2005-2006 academic year, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Another 6.8 million were employed as teachers, teaching kindergarten through college. In addition, more than a million preschool children from low-income families, usually ages three and four, attend Head Start programs designed to provide learning, social development, and nutrition programs to ensure that these preschoolers will be ready for school at age five or six. Public school enrollments grew exponentially during the post-World War II "baby boom" generation (usually defined as those born from 1946 to 1964). After a drop-off in the 1980s, enrollments have rebounded strongly, largely as a result of growing Hispanic populations, according to the latest U.S. Census Bureau reports. The U.S. educational system today comprises almost 96,000 public elementary and secondary schools, plus more than 4,200 institutions of higher learning, ranging from small, two-year community colleges to massive state universities with undergraduate and graduate programs in excess of 30,000 students. The nation's total expenditures for education stand at approximately \$878 billion a year.

K-12 Organization

School attendance is compulsory for students through age 16 in most states. Children generally begin elementary school with kindergarten (K) at age five and continue through secondary school (grade 12) to age 18. Typically, the elementary school years include kindergarten through grades five or six, and at some schools through grade eight. Secondary schools — known as high schools in the United States — generally include grades nine through 12.

Fifty years ago, elementary school students typically moved immediately to high school, or they attended junior high school for grades seven and eight or grades seven, eight, and nine. During the past 30 years, however, junior high schools have been largely replaced with middle schools configured for grades six through eight, or roughly for the same grades as junior high. Estimates are that 20 million young people, ages 10

to 15, attend middle schools today. As Minnesota principal Mark Ziebarth described the difference between the two approaches, “A junior high school program is designed to mirror a traditional high school program for students at a younger age. It has a similar schedule to the high school and classes are arranged by departments. Middle schools are designed to provide a forum to meet the special needs of adolescents.” Team teaching and flexible block scheduling, rather than set 45- or 50-minute classes, are characteristic of middle schools. These schools also place emphasis on small groups, on an interdisciplinary approach to subject matter, and on special projects that can engage 10- to 15-year-olds, who, says the National Middle School Association, “are undergoing the most rapid intellectual and developmental changes of their lives.”

The large contemporary high school, offering a broad menu of academic and elective courses for students ages 14 to 18, became a fixture in American education by the mid-20th century. High school students also can choose from a host of clubs, activities, athletics, work-study arrangements, and other extracurricular activities. Based on grades and tests, students can take advanced academic courses or more general or vocational classwork.

Through most of the 20th century, high schools were consolidated into larger units to offer wider class choices to more and more students. The rural country school almost disappeared, replaced by countywide high schools. In cities, it was not uncommon for large school campuses to hold as many as 5,000 students with both college-oriented and vocational courses that could appeal to just about everyone. More recently, concerns over the caliber of education in such large schools has led to a call for the establishment of smaller schools with lower student-teacher ratios. The contemporary American high school has long loomed large in the public culture. The popular musical *Grease*, the television series *Happy Days*, and movies like *Blackboard Jungle* depicted the light and dark sides of schools in the 1950s. Recent popular entertainments with high school settings range from films like *Mean Girls*, *Juno*, *Election*, and *High School Musical* to such hit TV shows as *Beverly Hills 90210* and *Saved by the Bell*.

Private Schools

Private schools flourish in the United States; many of these schools are run by churches and other religious organizations. Of the estimated 55.8 million children attending elementary and secondary schools during the 2007-2008 academic year, about 6 million, or 11 percent, were enrolled in private schools. More than half of the nation's private school students attend Catholic schools, the nation's oldest private school system. Other private schools reflect America's religious diversity, encompassing nearly all major Protestant denominations and the Quaker, Islamic, Jewish, and Greek Orthodox faiths. The country's oldest private schools, however, are elite boarding schools, founded in the 18th century, which have had a record of educating many of the country's intellectual and political leaders.

Another 1.1 million students are home-schooled by their parents under guidelines established by each of the 50 states, according to recent census figures.

Local Control

Perhaps the most remarkable characteristic of American education is its decentralization. Schools in the United States have been, and remain, overwhelmingly a state and local responsibility. Unlike most other nations, the United States does not operate a national education system — with only a few exceptions, notably the nation's military academies and Native American schools. Neither does the federal government approve nor minister a national curriculum. Public education constitutes the single largest expenditure

for almost every U.S. city and county, which receive the bulk of their funding from local property taxes. Local boards of education, most of which are elected, administer the nation's nearly 15,500 school districts, ranging from small rural schools in states like Kansas and Nebraska to the New York City system, which educates more than a million children annually.

State boards of education, along with a state superintendent or commissioner, oversee local education districts, set student and teacher standards, approve the classroom curriculum, and often review textbook selections. The state's chief power, however, is increasingly financial: Most states now provide substantial aid to schools to supplement local tax revenues. One consequence of local control and financing of public schools has been disparities between affluent and poor school districts.

In recent years, under pressure from state courts and public advocacy groups, many states have taken steps to ensure

more equitable funding of school districts regardless of income levels. The federal government provides research and support to ensure equal access and excellence in education, along with funding student loan programs and assistance to lower income students. Nevertheless, responsibility for education remains primarily a state and local enterprise. According to the U.S. Department of Education, about 90 percent of the annual expenditures for education at all levels comes from state, local, and private sources.

Diversity

Schools in the United States have experienced waves of immigration throughout their history, and today American schools, like the larger society they serve, are more ethnically diverse than ever. In the early 20th century, children of immigrant families — most from southern and eastern Europe — flooded public school systems in the Northeast and Midwest. Today new immigrants continue to change the ethnic composition of student populations, although the largest numbers now come from Latin America and Asia. African Americans constitute about 17 percent of the K-12 student population; Hispanics, however, are becoming the largest single minority group in public schools. It is not uncommon to find schools, especially along the East and West Coasts, where more than a dozen different languages, from Arabic to Vietnamese, are spoken at home by students of foreign-born parents.

As a result, the teaching of English as a second language remains one of education's most important responsibilities. Despite their decentralization and diversity, public schools remain remarkably cohesive in the ways they are run. A student transferring from a school in California to one in Pennsylvania or Georgia will find differences no doubt, but the mix of academic subjects will be largely familiar, despite the fact that the federal government does not mandate a national curriculum.

Rise of the Public School

Public schools were unknown in the colonial era, although several New England colonies established "subscription schools" for those who could afford to pay the fees. Harvard, the first institution of higher learning in North America, was founded in 1636 in Massachusetts and, like all early colleges, focused almost exclusively on religious scholarship and classical languages — Latin and Greek.

The "Common" School

The Northwest Ordinance of 1787, which encompassed the present-day states of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan, mandated that every new township set aside one parcel of land out of every 36 for a public — or what was then termed a "common" — school. These were often simple one-room buildings topped with a steeple, celebrated in U.S. history as the iconic "little red schoolhouse." In 1820 Congress authorized the collection of state education funds through the sale of public lands. In the first half of the 19th century, reformer Horace Mann of Massachusetts launched an influential campaign for using state taxes to improve and support free common schools for all children. According to writer Lawrence Cremin, "The fight for free schools was a bitter one, and for 25 years the outcome was uncertain."

By 1860, however, most states had adopted the idea, mollifying protests against higher taxes by giving local communities control over their schools. The principle of publicly funded free education under local control had taken root in American society.

Land for Colleges

The Morrill Land Grant Act, enacted during the U.S. Civil War in 1862, employed the same mechanism of selling public lands to establish colleges for agriculture and industry. Today these land-grant schools, constituting some of the largest and most influential state universities in the country, offer a full range of liberal arts and professional programs at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Today there are 106 land-grant colleges.

Frontier Schools

On the western frontier, settlers sought to build schools almost as soon as they established new towns. Congress, in fact, required territories to offer free public education to all before they could be considered for statehood. "Schools became important civic amenities that could draw settlers," says historian Kathryn Sklar in the book *School*.

But frontier schools faced far different challenges than urban schools, chief among them an acute lack of teachers. Catherine Beecher, sister to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* author Harriet Beecher Stowe, led a successful campaign to promote women teachers as a "civilizing force" in the West. These women faced the hardships of the frontier equipped with little more than their belief in the calling of education and a series of popular textbooks tailored

for western schools, called *McGuffey Readers*. These textbooks interspersed lessons in reading and arithmetic with "moral tales" designed to build character.

Urban Immigrants

Public schools grew with the steady influx of immigrant schoolchildren, largely from Europe, but with significant populations of Chinese and Japanese on the West Coast and Mexicans and Latin Americans in the Southwest. Each of the successive waves of immigrants challenged not only the capacity but the aims and organization of the American educational system as it coped with unprecedented numbers of new students.

The challenge of assimilating and educating children from vastly different backgrounds and languages was especially acute in the major destination cities for immigrants — whether Irish, Germans, and Scandinavians in the mid-19th century, or eastern and southern Europeans in the peak immigration years of the 1890s through the 1920s.

Urban schools could be grim and overcrowded places, but as recounted in the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) book *School*, "So powerful was the lure of education that on a day after a steamship arrived, as many as 125 children would apply to one New York school." Even so, estimates are that, with unrestricted child labor, only about 50 percent of children attended school at all, and the average period of time was five years. The growth of public schools in this period was enormous, from 7.6 million students in 1870 to 12.7 million by the end of the 19th century. The United States, according to the book *School*, "was providing more schooling to more children than any other nation on earth." As scholar and educational historian Diane Ravitch writes in *School*: "The American school system's readiness to provide social mobility to low-income students was truly remarkable; its efforts to assimilate newcomers into American society were largely successful. ... These were the enduring accomplishments of the American public school."

Education for All

By the mid-20th century, the ideal of universal education from kindergarten through high school had become a reality for substantial numbers of Americans. But certainly not for all, especially the nation's racial minorities.

Segregation

The largest exception to the growing inclusion of U.S. public education was African Americans. Before the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865), southern slaves not only had little access to education but could be punished for learning to read. With the end of slavery, black Americans in the South lived largely segregated lives. Education was no exception, despite the establishment of schools by the Freedmen's Bureau and others to meet the demand for what black educator Booker T. Washington called "an entire race trying to go to school." Segregated schools, upheld in an 1896 Supreme Court decision under the doctrine of "separate but equal," became the practice in 17 southern and border states into the 20th century. Even so, estimates are that black literacy in the decades following the Civil War jumped from 5 percent to 70 percent. Outside of the South, the principal issue was one of population and housing patterns that resulted in de facto segregation of black and white students. As urban areas became concentrated with African Americans, city school systems developed into predominantly minority enclaves surrounded by largely white suburban schools.

Brown v. Board of Education

African Americans challenged segregation throughout the nation's history with little success until school integration became central to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In 1950, after years of careful preparation, the nation's oldest civil rights organization, the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) recruited 13 black parents in Topeka, Kansas, who attempted to enroll their children in their local schools. The NAACP sued when they were turned away, and by the time the *Brown v. Board of Education* case reached the Supreme Court, it had been consolidated with similar cases from three other states and the District of Columbia.

In a unanimous 1954 decision, the Court declared, "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Kansas and other border states complied with the decision, but the South defied

the Court in a campaign called “massive resistance” that resulted in an ongoing confrontation between the state and federal governments. The integration of Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas in 1957 required the dispatch of U.S. Army soldiers, and when black student James Meredith enrolled in the University of Mississippi, it triggered widespread rioting. Southern resistance to school integration didn’t end in many parts of the South until the years following passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 under President Lyndon Johnson. Equally important to the cause of integration was the first significant infusion of federal funds into public education through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary School Act of 1965, which has since provided billions of dollars in aid to school districts with poor and disadvantaged children. Only schools that could demonstrate that they didn’t practice racial discrimination were eligible for Title I funding.

Racial imbalances persist in many public schools, however, as a result of residential patterns and the concentration of minorities in urban areas. An ongoing study by Harvard University has found that racial segregation has increased in a number of states with high minority populations, affecting many poorer Hispanic students as well as African Americans. By contrast, Asian Americans are the minority group most likely to attend racially mixed schools. The lesson is that although American education remains

committed to principles of equality, it often falls short of that goal in practice.

Bilingual Education and Assimilation

The legacy of *Brown* and its principle of equal access for all served as a model for other racial minorities, as well as for women and the disabled. Hispanics often found themselves in segregated, poor schools, and, in fact, a little-known 1947 court decision ended separate schools for Spanish-speaking students in California. The language question remained, however: whether to place students in English immersion programs or in bilingual classes where students continue to use their native language, typically Spanish, while also learning English. The question of bilingual education is an old one and reflects a continuing debate over whether the United States should be seen primarily as a melting pot, emphasizing a common identity, or as a mosaic, with clearly defined cultures and backgrounds. Bilingual proponents contend that students can keep up academically in their native language and transition to regular classes when they have learned English. Advocates for English argue that a bilingual approach only slows down mastery of English and prevents students from joining the mainstream culture. Many school districts adopted bilingual approaches in the 1960s and 1970s, but their popularity has waned along with lack of funding. In recent years, the typical pattern is to designate students as “English Language Learners” and place them in regular English classes, supported by specialists in teaching English as a second language. About 3.7 million, or 8 percent of all students, receive special English language services, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

The campaign for equal rights for women in education focused primarily on colleges and universities. The result was Title IX, a 1972 amendment to the Higher Education Act that banned discrimination on the basis of gender in higher learning. As a result, women’s enrolment in traditionally male professional programs such as medicine, law, and engineering increased markedly. The most public controversy over Title IX, however, has concerned athletes and whether the law unfairly harmed men’s collegiate sports programs. The issue has been a subject of furious debate in political and sports circles. Proponents cite the profound impact of Title IX in opening up academic as well as athletic opportunities for girls and women. Opponents argue that the law has become little more than a quota system that harms the interests of both men and women.

Mainstreaming

Advocates for disabled and “special needs” students also drew upon the model of the civil rights movement to call for fuller inclusion of these students in regular classrooms and school activities, a process termed “mainstreaming.” They argue that studies show that placing physically and mentally disabled students in regular classes for at least part of the day results in higher academic achievement, greater self-esteem, and improved social skills. A 1975 law, now known as the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, calls for all children with disabilities to receive “a free appropriate public education.” The law requires schools to prepare an individual education plan, or IEP, for each disabled child and to place the child in the least restrictive classroom setting possible. The law has enjoyed widespread support, although the costs of implementation have grown rapidly. Much of the overall increase in spending for public education in recent years can be attributed to the costs associated with providing an accessible, equitable education for children and adolescents with physical and mental disabilities. According to recent figures, U.S. public schools are educating about 6.1 million special-needs children. The most common learning disability is speech and language

impairment, but special needs can include disabilities as a result of mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or physical problems.

Native American Schools

One of the few exceptions to the direct involvement of the federal government in education is that of Native Americans. The federal administration of Indian schools reflects the special relationship between the government and the semi-sovereign tribes of American Indian and Native Alaskan peoples that is embodied in both laws and treaties.

The first exposure of American Indians to formal schooling often came through missionaries and church schools, where the emphasis was less upon academic instruction than religious conversion and becoming westernized in manner and dress. As the frontier moved west in the 19th century, many of these church-run schools were gradually replaced by those operated by the federal government's Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The policy of these schools was to assimilate Native Americans into the mainstream by forcibly stripping them of their tribal culture. Many Indians were educated in boarding schools, often far from home, where they had their hair cut and their native clothes replaced and they were forbidden to speak their own languages. The most prominent of these boarding schools was the Carlisle School in Pennsylvania. A 1928 report spotlighting failures and abuses in Indian education led to reforms and increased financial aid known as the Indian New Deal. Later, the civil rights movement sparked a parallel Indian rights movement. Over decades, the federal government reversed policy and established an educational system that seeks to provide modern skills and knowledge while preserving the traditions and culture of Native American peoples. Today the Bureau of Indian Education administers 184 elementary and secondary schools, along with 24 colleges. These schools are located on 63 reservations in 23 states across the United States, serving approximately 60,000 students who represent 238 different tribes.

Computers and Education

Computers and the Internet have now become ubiquitous in American schools from the elementary grades onward. Recent figures indicate that 100 percent of public schools have Internet access and that elementary and secondary schools possess more than 14 million personal computers, roughly one for every four students. If the digital divide has been spanned at school, it still remains a factor at home, according to the Department of Education, which found that minority and poor students often lack computer and Internet access at home. School-oriented Web sites like Blackboard.com have become a routine means for posting assignments, homework, and class schedules. Along with e-mail, these Web sites have become a favorite way for parents and teachers to stay in direct communication. As Internet capacity has increased, so has distance or online learning. Almost 3.5 million, or 20 percent of all college students, took one or more online courses during the 2006-2007 academic year — an increase of almost 10 percent over the previous year, according to Sloan Consortium, an organization working to improve online education. Roughly half of all online students are enrolled at the nation's community colleges, where the most popular courses are in such professional fields as business management, computer science, engineering, and health sciences-related programs.

Challenge of School Reform

Americans have always debated the quality and direction of their educational system, but in recent years the focus has been upon the best ways to measure and increase academic achievement. Comparisons with students in other countries have also sharpened the debate over educational methods and results, especially those showing U.S. schools lagging in science and mathematics.

Charter Schools and Competition

Many recent school reforms have sought to introduce greater competition into the public school system. Charter schools, for example, are independently operated public schools that must meet the same academic and legal requirements as traditional public schools but are free from most of the bureaucratic and regulatory constraints of their traditional counterparts. Approximately 2,000 charter schools are now operating in the United States.

Another response to concerns over academic standards and international competition has been to forge alliances between business and schools. In some cases, school districts have tried to emulate efficiencies and organization of the corporate model by establishing standards and goals that can be measured and by holding administrators and teachers accountable for results. In the push for accountability, many states have passed laws permitting the closure of low-performing or failing public schools. In such cases, which are still rare, the schools can choose to reconstitute themselves with new staff and teachers.

or convert themselves to charter-school status. Families with failing neighborhood schools are often given the opportunity to transfer their children to higher-performing schools.

School vouchers have proven to be a highly controversial innovation. A voucher program permits parents to leave failing or substandard public schools and receive public funds to cover all or part of the tuition at private schools. The amount is usually based on the per-student spending in the community. The idea is that if schools have to compete for students, they will improve. However, the controversy over using tax money to support private or religious schools has been intense, and few communities have fully implemented school vouchers.

Changing Face of Higher Education

Agreater proportion of young people receive higher education in the United States than in any other country. These students also can choose from more than 4,000 very different institutions. They can attend two-year community colleges or more specialized technical training institutes. Traditional four-year institutions range from small liberal arts colleges to massive state universities in places like California, Arizona, Ohio, and New York, each with multiple campuses and student populations exceeding 30,000. Approximately one third of U.S. colleges and universities are private and generally charge tuition costs substantially higher than state-run public institutions.

G.I. Bill

For much of their history, American institutions of higher learning remained bastions of privilege, with a predominantly white, male population. That pattern didn't change significantly until passage of the G.I. Bill in 1944, when the federal government paid for millions of World War II veterans to attend college. (G.I., which stands for "government issue," became a casual term for any Army soldier in World War II.) The G.I. Bill of Rights included subsidies for attending virtually any recognized institution of higher learning, as well as payments for vocational training and subsidies to encourage home ownership. Congress didn't expect many to take advantage of the college provision, but within two years more than 1 million veterans were enrolled at the nation's colleges and universities, doubling the number of college students. Over a seven-year period, the G.I. Bill enabled more than 2.2 million veterans to attend college.

The social impact of the G.I. Bill has been little short of revolutionary. As scholar Milton Greenberg points out, "Today, American universities are now overwhelmingly public, focused heavily on occupational, technical, and scientific education, huge, urban-oriented, and highly democratic." In subsequent decades, colleges and universities grew rapidly, as veterans were followed by their children, the so called baby boom generation that began entering college in the 1960s. Colleges and universities also began opening their doors wider to minorities and women. In recent years, more women than men have been attending colleges and universities and earning more bachelor's and master's degrees — a pattern that shows no signs of changing, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. The proportion of minority students attending college has increased as well — from 14 percent in 1981 to 27 percent in 2005. Much of the change can be attributed to growing numbers of Hispanic and Asian students. African American enrollments rose from 9 percent to 12 percent in the same period.

Costs and Competition

Higher education in the United States is an enormous enterprise, costing almost \$373 billion and consuming nearly 3 percent of the nation's gross domestic product. College costs for students can be high, especially for private institutions, which do not receive general subsidies from either state or federal governments. To ensure equal access to education for all, the United States administers an extensive financial aid program for students. Seven out of 10 students receive some form of financial aid, which typically combines grants, loans, and work opportunities to enable full-time students to meet their living costs and tuition. Recently, several of the nation's wealthiest and most prestigious universities — schools like Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Columbia, and Dartmouth, among others — announced plans to substantially increase their financial aid for low- and middle income families. Students compete for openings in the nation's better colleges and universities. At the same time, American institutions of higher learning of all types must broadly compete for the nation's top students and to admit sufficient numbers to maintain their enrollments. The most prestigious American universities — public and private — receive hundreds of applications for each opening. At the same time, it is true that most secondary school graduates with good grades and strong scores on college entrance exams receive hundreds of solicitations from institutions of higher learning. Reflecting the decentralized nature of American education, state governments may license institutions of higher

learning, but accreditation, which grants academic standing to the college or university, is accorded by nongovernmental associations, not by states or the federal government.

Community Colleges

For an American high school graduate with a modest academic record and limited funds, enrolling in a community college may be a better option than attending a four-year college or university. Two-year, associate-degree programs in such growing professional fields as health, business, and computer technology can be found at most of the nation's roughly 1,200 community colleges. Community colleges are also gateways to four-year undergraduate institutions for students who need to bolster mediocre high school grades with stronger college credits. Taking advantage of low fees and liberal admissions policies, more than 11 million American and an estimated 100,000 international students now attend community colleges.

Educating a Democracy

In the words of Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence and third president of the United States, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, it expects what never was and never will be." A democracy depends on the foundation of educated citizens who recognize the value of their hard won individual freedoms and civic responsibilities. In contrast to the passive acceptance of authoritarian societies, the object of democratic education is to produce citizens who are independent and questioning yet deeply familiar with the precepts and practices of democracy. As education scholar Chester Finn has said, "People may be born with an appetite for personal freedom, but they are not born with knowledge about the social and political arrangements that make freedom possible over time for themselves and their children. ... Such things must be acquired. They must be learned."

National Identity

America's schools may teach democratic values, but they also teach their students how to be Americans. Ever since the nation's founding, Americans have recognized that, lacking a common ethnic identity or ancient culture, their national identity would have to rest upon other foundations: shared ideas about democracy and freedom and the common experience of working to build a society with equal opportunity for all. For most Americans, the institution that most closely embodies those shared ideas and common experiences has been the nation's schools. Over time, education in America has come to represent universal free public education for all, regardless of race, social background, or gender. Education, moreover, is seen as the primary means to succeed in a society that seeks to replace the claims of inherited privilege for those of individual freedom and equal opportunity. The American classroom of the 21st century scarcely resembles that of a few decades ago, much less the oneroom schoolhouse of a past century. Yet the role of American education in binding together a growing and diverse nation endures, transmitting the lasting values of freedom and human dignity from one generation to the next.

Questions:

1. Describe the different types of schools (K-12) that can be found in the United State.
2. Discuss the ways the American school system has dealt with diversity: racial, social and intellectual.

NEWSPAPERS IN THE U.S.



by Deborah Potter

The first American newspaper was not in print for long, but it did have a lasting impact on journalism in the United States. *Publick Occurrences, Both Foreign and Domestick*, published in Boston in 1690, included general news on the state of the harvest and a smallpox outbreak, but also a controversial report that outraged the British colonial government. The newspaper's publisher, Benjamin Harris, had printed the first issue without government approval, and the British immediately shut down the newspaper. So began a tradition in the American press of strong-willed publishers supporting journalism that challenged authority and held the powerful accountable. But it took years for that tradition to take root. Before the American colonies achieved independence from Britain in 1776, most colonial newspapers heeded the lesson of *Publick Occurrences* and stayed away from controversy.

After independence, the early leaders of the United States moved to protect the press from government interference. Thomas Jefferson, for one, believed a free press was an essential guardian of liberty. "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter," he wrote. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, approved in 1791, guarantees freedom of the press.

With that protection, many newspapers that had become adjuncts of political parties criticized their opponents in the harshest of terms. Fed up with what it considered slander, the ruling Federalist Party soon passed the Sedition Act, under which anyone who criticized the government in print could be fined or imprisoned. Several opposition publishers were convicted before the law was allowed to expire.

The U.S. newspaper industry grew dramatically along with the new country. At the turn of the 19th century, fewer than 200 newspapers were published in the United States. By 1825 there were more than 800—twice as many as in Great Britain—making America "by far the greatest newspaper country in the world," according to historian David Paul Nord. Most of these newspapers were published once a week and relied on unpaid correspondents to provide the content, mostly political news and views. The newspapers were sold by subscription, so only the wealthy could afford to read them. But the newspaper industry was about to undergo a commercial and democratic revolution.

In 1833, the *New York Sun* became the first of a new breed of newspaper—inexpensive, sold on the street by newsboys, and staffed by paid reporters. Clearly setting itself apart from the elite newspapers of the day, the *Sun*'s motto was, "It Shines for ALL." Known as the "penny press" because each issue cost just one cent, the *Sun* and its imitators were wildly popular. Within two years, three "penny papers" in New York were selling twice as many copies as 11 other city papers combined. The penny press invented the modern concept of news by expanding the definition to include not just politics and international developments but sports, crime, and society doings as well. As the *Sun*'s editor, Charles Dana, put it in 1882: "When a dog bites a man, that is not news. But when a man bites a dog, that is news." The penny papers also signaled a tension between public service and profit that

became a hallmark of the American press. Publishers could sell newspapers cheaply because most of their income came from advertising. To attract advertisers and make money, the papers had to appeal to the widest possible audience, which meant giving people what they wanted to know as well as what they needed to know. Newspapers became a business, but they remained a bulwark of democracy.

One change that followed the new business model was a concerted decision to avoid partisanship for fear of alienating readers and advertisers. No longer did most American newspapers push a political agenda. *The Chicago Daily News*, established in 1875, had this motto: “No axes to grind, no friends to reward, and no enemies to punish.”

In the mid 1800s, American newspapers also invented a new way of gathering news—the interview. American journalists were the first to interview the Pope and government ministers in Germany and Britain, according to historian Michael Schudson. Reporters were no longer mere transcribers of information provided by others; they actively sought out news and became authorities in their own right. As newsgathering evolved, so did news writing. To cover the U.S. Civil War (1861–1865), newspapers sent their own reporters to the scene to file dispatches by telegraph. Because their transmissions were often interrupted, the reporters adopted a new style of writing to put the most important information in the first paragraphs. This “inverted pyramid” style, using a summary lead, remains the most common writing style in newspapers today.

At the end of the 19th century, powerful newspaper owners left their stamp on the industry. William Randolph Hearst’s *New York Journal* and Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World* competed aggressively for new readers, especially the growing immigrant population. These newspapers used big headlines, lots of illustrations, and simple language. They also featured sensational stories in a style that became known as “yellow journalism.” Hearst even used his newspaper to campaign for U.S. involvement in Cuba’s fight for independence from Spain. When his reporter in Havana cabled that he couldn’t find a story there, Hearst reportedly replied, “You furnish the pictures and I’ll furnish the war.”

At the same time, U.S. journalism was becoming more centered on facts. An American handbook for journalists published in 1894 stated, “Opinions are the peculiar province of the editorial writer. The spirit of modern journalism demands that the news and the editorials be kept distinctly separate. The one deals with facts, the other with theoretical interpretations.” Increasingly, reporters were expected to have more formal education than in the early days of newspapers, and many began to specialize in covering specific topics such as health and business. In 1904, Joseph Pulitzer endowed the first journalism school in America, at New York’s Columbia University, saying, “I wish to begin a movement that will raise journalism to the rank of a learned profession.”

This responsible journalism was what Adolph Ochs had in mind when he became publisher of the *New York Times* in 1896. Ochs believed a newspaper could succeed financially without resorting to sensationalism. Over the years, he proved to be right. Ochs’ goal was “to give the news impartially, without fear or favor, regardless of any party, sect or interest involved.” The *Times* emphasized decency and accuracy, as reflected in its slogan—“All The News That’s Fit to Print”—and it remains one of the world’s great newspapers.

The number of daily newspapers in America peaked at almost 2,600 in 1910. Not coincidentally, that was the beginning of a long period of consolidation in newspaper ownership. Edward W. Scripps established the first large chain of newspapers in 1895, controlling 34 papers in 15 states. By the early 1930s, the renamed Scripps-Howard chain and five other newspaper companies controlled more than two-thirds of the country’s daily circulation. A second revolution in ownership began in 1960, when the publisher of the *Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones, Inc., became the first newspaper company to issue publicly traded stock. Within 20 years, public ownership of newspaper companies had become the norm. With strong financial backing, the chain papers drove many of their competitors out of business, and the newspaper industry began to shrink. The most recent figures, from 2004, put the number of dailies at just under 1,500. Most of them are published in the morning, a major change since 1960 when evening papers dominated the industry. As more and more Americans turned to television for the news, they stopped reading evening papers, forcing hundreds to fold while others switched publication to mornings.

America’s diversity has always been reflected in its newspapers. In the early 1800s, German-language newspapers served immigrant communities. In 1827, the African-American press was launched in New

York with *Freedom's Journal*, one of several papers that took up the cause of abolishing slavery. Today, American newspapers are published in dozens of languages, from Vietnamese and Korean in California to Yiddish in New York. Spanish- language newspapers make up the bulk of the circulation, however, with more than 350 weekly or daily papers reaching 17 million readers, according to the Latino Print Network.

Despite the large numbers of newspapers in circulation, newspaper readership has been declining dramatically. As recently as 1994, almost 60 percent of Americans said they read a daily newspaper. Ten years later that number had dropped to just 42 percent, and most of those readers were over 50. To reach more readers, American newspapers have developed online editions. Nearly one in three Internet users, or 43 million Americans, visit newspaper sites each month, either at home or at work, according to the Newspaper Association of America. Several papers also have developed new print editions designed to appeal to younger readers. In 2002, for example, the *Chicago Tribune* launched *RedEye*, a free tabloid published five days a week, designed to appeal to younger readers. The paper says it has 200,000 daily readers, people the *Tribune* hopes will eventually pick up its flagship paper. Another bright spot in the U.S. newspaper industry has been the performance of weekly newspapers, which have grown in both numbers and circulation, up ten percent over the past eight years. "Alternative" weeklies also are on the upswing, modeled after New York's *Village Voice*, founded in 1955 on what it calls "no-holds barred reporting and criticism." These newspapers focus almost exclusively on local news, with a strong dose of opinion and extensive entertainment reviews.

The American public's view of newspapers is decidedly mixed. People generally have a favorable opinion of the press, but they don't always believe what they read. Only about half of those surveyed in 2004 by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press said they believe all or most of what they see in their daily newspapers. Despite declining readership, newspapers still play an indispensable role in keeping the American public informed. As Donald Graham, the late publisher of the *Washington Post*, said, the job of a newspaper is "the inescapably impossible task of providing every week a first rough draft of history that will never really be completed about a world we can never really understand."

Anatomy of a Newspaper

Daily newspapers in United States are usually published in separately folded sections to make it easier for readers to find the stories that interest them. Having separate sections also allows a newspaper's advertisers to reach specific types of readers. (For example, sports sections are filled with ads aimed at men because surveys show that far more men than women read the sports pages.) The basic structure of most newspapers is fairly simple, with four or five main sections that are published daily. The first section covers general news; national news and world news usually appear in this section. The general news section is followed by sections for local news, features or lighter stories, such as human interest stories, business news, and sports. Some newspapers print separate sections for classified advertising for jobs, cars, and housing. Many newspapers publish additional sections once a week, focusing on special interest topics such as food, arts and entertainment, health, or technology.

American newspapers keep news separate from opinion. The editorial page of a newspaper features editorials, which express the opinions of the newspaper's editors, and Letters to the Editor, which feature the opinions of its readers. Additional opinion pieces, usually written by individual columnists, are most often confined to what's known as the "op-ed" page, so called because it usually appears opposite the editorial page. Some newspapers expand the op-ed page into a separate section on Sundays, usually the largest edition of the week because people have more time to read it.

Famous American Newspapers

The New York Times is one of America's greatest newspapers. First published in 1851, the *Times* became a standard-setter after Adolph Ochs bought it in 1896. Although now publicly owned, it remains under the control of Ochs' descendants. In 1971, the *Times* made history by printing the *Pentagon Papers*, a top-secret assessment of American involvement in Vietnam. The U.S. Supreme Court supported the newspaper's right to publish the documents. Known as the "Gray Lady" for its sober tone, the *Times* is printed at plants across America, giving it a national circulation.

The Washington Post is nationally known for its coverage of politics and government, but it is primarily a metropolitan newspaper serving the nation's capital and the Washington, D.C., area. Founded in 1877, the newspaper was almost bankrupt when Eugene Meyer bought it in 1933. Thirty

years later, control of the now-profitable newspaper passed to Meyer's daughter, Katharine Graham. She built its reputation by supporting investigative journalism, such as the paper's reporting on the Watergate scandal in the 1970s.

The Wall Street Journal is highly regarded for its business coverage. Established in 1882 as part of the Dow Jones Company, the newspaper developed its distinct style in the 1940s under editor Barney Kilgore. He encouraged non-traditional writing styles and expanded the newspaper's circulation. Today, the Journal is considered a national newspaper, known for its conservative editorial voice and its well-written feature stories.

The Los Angeles Times is the largest circulation daily in the western United States, known for its strong national and international coverage. Founded in 1881, the newspaper was controlled by one family until the Times-Mirror Company was sold to the Tribune Company in 2000. Since then, its circulation has declined sharply but it remains a well-regarded publication.

USA Today is one of the "youngest" newspapers in America and is the most widely read, with a national daily circulation of over two million. Founded in 1982 by Al Neuharth of the Gannett Corporation, this newspaper was initially mocked for its deliberate lack of depth. Critics called it "McPaper," suggesting it served up news like McDonald's serves up fast food. But its shorter stories, accompanied by color photographs, charts, and graphs, appealed to American readers and its style began to influence other newspapers. In recent years, the paper has gained respect for its solid reporting.

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Questions:

1. Describe some of the similarities and differences between American and Italian newspapers.
2. What are the most common newspapers in the US?
3. Discuss the ways in which journalism has changed over the years in the US.

CINEMA

Movies are key cultural artifacts that offer a window into American cultural and social history. A mixture of art, business, and popular entertainment, the movies provide a host of insights into Americans' shifting ideals, fantasies, and preoccupations. Like any cultural artifact, the movies can be approached in a variety of ways. Cultural historians have treated movies as sociological documents that record the look and mood of particular historical settings; as ideological constructs that advance particular political or moral values or myths; as psychological texts that speak to individual and social anxieties and tensions; as cultural documents that present particular images of gender, ethnicity, class romance, and violence; and as visual texts that offer complex levels of meaning and seeing.

The Birth of The Movies

Beside Macy's Department Store in Herald Square New York City there is a plaque commemorating the first public showing of a motion picture on a screen in the United States. It was here, on April 23, 1896, at Koster and Bial's Music Hall in New York City, that Thomas Alva Edison presented a show included scenes of the surf breaking on a beach, a comic boxing exhibition, and two young women dancing. A review in *The New York Times* described the exhibition as "all wonderfully real and singularly exhilarating."

During film's first decade from 1896 to 1905 movies were little more than a novelty, often used to signal the end of a show in a vaudeville theater. These early films are utterly unlike anything seen today. They lasted just seven to ten minutes - too brief to tell anything more than the simplest story. They used a cast of anonymous actors for the simple reason that the camera was set back so far that it was impossible to clearly make out the actors' faces. As late as 1908, a movie actor made no more than \$8 a day and received no credit on the screen.

In 1905, hundreds of little movie theaters opened, called nickelodeons, since they sold admission nickel by nickel. By 1908, there were an estimated 8,000 to 10,000 nickelodeons. Contrary to popular belief, the nickelodeon's audience was not confined to the poor, the young, or the immigrant. From the start, theaters were situated in rural areas and middle class neighborhoods as well as working-class neighborhoods. Nevertheless, the movies attracted audiences of an unprecedented size, as a result of their low admission prices, "democratic" seating arrangements, convenient time schedules (films were shown again and again), and lack of spoken dialogue, which allowed non- English speaking immigrants to enjoy films. By 1907, narrative films had begun to increase in number. But most films still emphasized stunts and chases and real life events-like scenes of yacht races or train crashes--and were rented or sold by the foot regardless of subject matter..

This was also a period of intense artistic and technical innovation, as pioneering directors like David Wark Griffith and others created a new language of film and revolutionized screen narrative. With just six months of film experience, Griffith, a former stage actor, was hired as a director by the Biograph Company and promised \$50 a week and one-twentieth of a cent for every foot of film sold. While earlier directors had used such cinematic devices as close ups, slow motion, fade-ins and fade-outs, lighting effects, and editing before, Griffith's great contribution to the movie industry was to show how these techniques could be used to create a wholly new style of storytelling, distinct from the theater.

Griffith's approach to movie storytelling has been aptly called "photographic realism". This is not to say that he merely wished to record a story accurately; rather he sought to convey the illusion of realism. He used editing to convey simultaneous events or the passage of time. He demanded that his performers act in a more lifelike manner, avoiding the broad, exaggerated gestures and pantomiming of emotions that characterized the nineteenth century stage. He wanted his performers to take on a role rather than directly addressing the camera. Above all, he used close-ups, lighting, editing, and framing and other cinematic techniques to convey suspense and other emotions and to focus the audience's attention on individual performers. By focusing the camera on particular actors and actresses, Griffith inadvertently encouraged the development of the star system. As the star system emerged, salaries soared. In the course of just two years, the salary of actress Mary Pickford rose from less than \$400 a week in 1914 to \$10,000 a week in 1916.

Meanwhile, an influx of feature-length films from Europe, which attracted premium admission prices, led a New York nickelodeon owner named Adolph Zukor to produce four- and five-reel films featuring readily identifiable stars. During the second decade of the twentieth century, immigrants like Laemmle

and Zukor came to dominate the movie business. Unlike Edison and the other American-born, Protestant businessmen who had controlled the early film industry, these immigrant entrepreneurs had a better sense of what the public wanted to see. Virtually all of these new producers emigrated to the United States from central Europe. Not part of the Victorian ethos that still held sway in "respectable" Protestant America and less conservative than the American-born producers, they were more willing to experiment with such innovations as the star system and feature-length productions. Since many had come to the film industry from the garment and fur trades, where fashions change rapidly and the successful businessman is one who stays constantly in touch with the latest styles, they tried to give the public what it wanted. With this philosophy the outsiders wrestled control over the industry away from the American-born producers.

American Film in the Silent Era

Some film historians, like Lewis Jacobs and David Robinson, have argued that early silent films revolved around "characteristically working class settings," and expressed the interests of the poor in their struggles with the rich and powerful. Other scholars maintain that early movies drew largely upon conventions, stock characters, and routines derived from vaudeville, popular melodrama, Wild West shows, comic strips, and other forms of late nineteenth century popular entertainment. Given the fact that thousands of films were released during the silent era and relatively few have survived, it is dangerous to generalize about movie content. Nevertheless, certain statements about these films do seem warranted.

Although many Americans today think of the films of the silent era as relics of a simpler, more innocent age, in fact more serious social and political themes lurked "behind the mask of innocence." As Kevin Brownlow has demonstrated, despite their well-dressed tramps and child-like waifs, many early silent films were preoccupied with such broad issues as the sources of crime, the nature of political corruption, shifting sexual norms, and the changing role of women. The silent screen offered vivid glimpses of urban tenements and ethnic ghettos; the screen was filled with gangsters, loan sharks, drug addicts, and panderers and provided a graphic record of "how the other half lives." In addition, many early films were laced with anti-authority themes, poking fun at policemen, corrupt politicians, and intrusive upper-class reformers. Highly physical slapstick comedy offered a particularly potent vehicle of social criticism, spoofing the pretensions of the wealthy and presenting sympathetic portraits of the poor.

In the late teens and '20s, as Lary May has demonstrated, the movies began to shed their Victorian moralism, sentimentality, and reformism and increasingly expressed new themes: glamour, sophistication, exoticism, urbanity, and sex appeal. New kinds of movie stars appeared: the mysterious sex goddess, personified by Greta Garbo; the passionate, hot-blooded Latin lover, epitomized by Rudolph Valentino; and the flapper, first brought to the screen by Colleen Moore, with her bobbed hair, skimpy skirts, and incandescent vivacity. New genres also appeared: swashbuckling adventures; sophisticated sex comedies revolving around the issue of marital fidelity; romantic dramas examining the manners and morals of the well-bred and well-to-do; and tales of "flaming youth" and the new sexual freedom.

The Rise of Hollywood and the Arrival of Sound

In cinema's earliest days, the film industry was based in the nation's theatrical center, New York, and most films were made in New York or New Jersey, although a few were shot in Chicago, Florida, and elsewhere. Beginning in 1908, however, a growing number of filmmakers located in southern California, drawn by cheap land and labor, the ready accessibility of varied scenery, and a climate ideal for year-round outdoor filming.

By the early 1920s, Hollywood had become the world's film capital. It produced virtually all films shown in the United States and received 80 percent of the revenue from films shown abroad. During the '20s, Hollywood bolstered its position as world leader by recruiting many of Europe's most talented actors and actresses, like Greta Garbo and Hedy Lamarr, directors like Ernst Lubitsch and Josef von Sternberg, as well as camera operators, lighting technicians, and set designers. By the end of the decade, Hollywood claimed to be the nation's fifth largest industry, attracting 83 cents out of every dollar Americans spent on amusement.

During the 1920s, movie attendance soared. By the middle of the decade, 50 million people a week went to the movies - the equivalent of half the nation's population. In Chicago, in 1929, theaters had

enough seats for half the city's population to attend a movie each day. As attendance rose, the movie-going experience underwent a profound change. During the twentieth century's first two decades, movie-going tended to conform to class and ethnic divisions. Urban workers attended movie houses located in their own working class and ethnic neighborhoods, where admission was extremely inexpensive (averaging just 7 cents in the teens), and a movie was often accompanied by an amateur talent show or a performance by a local ethnic troupe. These working class theaters were high-spirited centers of neighborhood sociability, where mothers brought their babies and audiences cheered, jeered, shouted, whistled, and stamped their feet.

The theaters patronized by the middle class were quite different. Late in the new century's first decade, theaters in downtown or middle class neighborhoods became increasingly luxurious. At first many of these theaters were designed in the same styles as many other public buildings, but by the mid-teens movie houses began feature French Renaissance, Egyptian, Moorish, and other exotic decors. Worcester, Massachusetts's Strand Theater boasted having "red plush seats," "luxurious carpets," "rich velour curtains," "finely appointed toilet rooms," and a \$15,000 organ. Unlike the working class movie houses, which showed films continuously, these high class theaters had specific show times and well-groomed, uniformed ushers to enforce standards of decorum.

Warner Brothers, a struggling industry newcomer, turned to sound as a way to compete with its larger rivals. A prerecorded musical sound track eliminated the expense of live entertainment. In 1926, Warner Brothers released the film *Don Juan*--the first film with a synchronized film score--along with a program of talking shorts. The popularity of *The Jazz Singer*, which was released in 1927, erased any doubts about the popular appeal of sound, and within a year, 300 theaters were wired for sound. The arrival of sound produced a sharp upsurge in movie attendance, which jumped from 50 million a week in the mid-20s to 110 million in 1929. But it also produced a number of fundamental transformations in the movies themselves. As Robert Ray has shown, sound made the movies more American. The words that Al Jolson used in *The Jazz Singer* to herald the arrival of sound in the movies - "You ain't heard nothing yet" - embodied the new slangy, vernacular tone of the talkies. Distinctive American accents and inflections quickly appeared on the screen, like James Cagney's New Yorkese or Gary Cooper's Western drawl. The introduction of sound also encouraged new film genres - like the musical, the gangster film, and comedies that relied on wit rather than slapstick.

In addition, the talkies dramatically changed the movie-going experience, especially for the working class. Where many working class audiences had provided silent films with a spoken dialogue, movie-goers were now expected to remain quiet. As one film historian has observed: "The talking audience for silent pictures became a silent audience for talking pictures". Moreover, the stage shows and other forms of live entertainment that had appeared in silent movie houses increasingly disappeared, replaced by newsreels and animated shorts.

Post-War Hollywood

The film industry changed radically after World War II, and this change altered the style and content of the films made in Hollywood. After experiencing boom years from 1939 to 1946, the film industry began a long period of decline. Within just seven years, attendance and box receipts fell to half their 1946 levels.

Part of the reason was external to the industry. Many veterans returning from World War II got married, started families, attended college on the GI Bill, and bought homes in the suburbs. All these activities took a toll on box office receipts. Families with babies tended to listen to the radio rather than go to the movies; college students placed studying before seeing the latest film; and newlyweds purchasing homes, automobiles, appliances, and other commodities had less money to spend on movies. Then, too, especially after 1950, television challenged and surpassed the movies as America's most popular entertainment form. In 1940, there were just 3,785 TV sets in the United States. Two decades later, nine homes in every ten had at least one TV set. For preceding Americans, clothing styles, speech patterns, and even moral attitudes and political points of view had been shaped by the movies. For post-World War II Americans, television largely took the movies' place as a dominant cultural influence. The new medium reached audiences far larger than those attracted by motion pictures, and it projected images right into the family's living rooms.

Hollywood also suffered from Congressional probes of communist influence in the film industry. In the late 1930s, the House of Representatives established the Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)

to combat subversive right-wing and left-wing movements. Its history was less than distinguished. From the first it tended to see subversive Communists everywhere at work in American society. HUAC even announced that the Boy Scouts were Communist infiltrated. During the late 1940s and early 1950s HUAC picked up the tempo of its investigation, which it conducted in well-publicized sessions. Twice during this period HUAC traveled to Hollywood to investigate Communist infiltration in the film industry.

HUAC first went to Hollywood in 1947. Although it didn't find the Communist party line preached in the movies, it did call a group of radical screenwriters and producers into its sessions to testify. Asked if they were Communists, the "Hollywood Ten" refused to answer questions about their political beliefs. As Ring Lardner, Jr., one of the ten, said, "I could answer...but if I did, I would hate myself in the morning." They believed that the First Amendment protected them. In the politically charged late 1940s, however, their rights were not protected. Those who refused to divulge their political affiliations were tried for contempt of Congress, sent to prison for a year, and blacklisted.

HUAC went back to Hollywood in 1951. This time it called hundreds of witnesses from both the political right and the political left. Conservatives told HUAC that Hollywood was littered with "Commies." Walt Disney even recounted attempts to have Mickey Mouse follow the party line. Of the radicals, some talked but most didn't. To cooperate with HUAC entailed "naming names"--that is, informing on one's friends and political acquaintances. Again, those who refused to name names found themselves unemployed and unemployable. All told, about 250 directors, writers, and actors were black listed.

New Directions in Post-War Film

During the 1940s, a new film genre--known as film noir-- arose, which gave tangible expression to the psychic confusion of a nation that had won the largest war in history but faced even greater uncertainties in peacetime. Though film noir received its name from French film critics and was heavily influenced by German expressionist film-making techniques, it stands out as one of the most original and innovative American movie genres.

World War II had produced far-reaching changes in American life: it accelerated the mobility of population, raised living standards, and profoundly altered race relations and the roles of women. Film noir metaphorically addressed many anxieties and apprehensions: the disorientation of returning GIs, fear of nuclear weapons, paranoia generated by the early Cold War, and fears aroused by the changing role of women. Characterized by sexual insecurity, aberrant psychology, and nightmarish camera work, film noir depicted a world of threatening shadows and ambiguities--a world of obsession, alienation, corruption, deceit, blurred identity, paranoia, dementia, weak men, cold-blooded femme fatales, and inevitably murder. Its style consisted of looming close-ups, oblique camera angles, and crowded compositions that produced a sense of entrapment. The film's narratives were rarely straightforward; they contained frequent flashbacks and voice-overs.

The "New" Hollywood

As the 1960s began, few would have guessed that the decade would be one of the most socially conscious and stylistically innovative in Hollywood's history. Among the most popular films at the decade's start were Doris Day romantic comedies like *That Touch of Mink* (1962) and epic blockbusters like *The Longest Day* (1962), *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), and *Cleopatra* (1963). Yet, as the decade progressed, Hollywood radically shifted focus and began to produce an increasing number of anti-establishment films, laced with social commentary, directed at the growing youth market. By the early 1960s, an estimated 80 percent of the film-going population was between the ages of 16 and 25.

Two films released in 1967--*Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Graduate*--awoke Hollywood to the size and influence of the youth audience. *Bonnie and Clyde*, the story of two Depression-era bank robbers, was advertised with the slogan: "They're young, they're in love, they kill people." Inspired by such French New Wave pictures as *Breathless* (1960), the film aroused intense controversy for romanticizing gangsters and transforming them into social rebels. A celebration of youthful rebellion also appeared in *The Graduate*, which was the third-highest grossing film up until this time. In this film, a young college graduate rejects a hypocritical society and the traditional values of his parents--and the promise of a career in "plastics"--and finds salvation in love.

Hollywood Today

A trend toward the creation of interlocking media companies, encompassing movies, magazines, and newspapers, and books accelerated in 1985 when the Department of Justice overturned the 1948 anti-trust decree which had ended vertical integration within the film industry. As a result, many of the major studios were acquired by large media and entertainment corporations, like Sony, which purchased Columbia Pictures, Time Warner (which owns Time magazine, Simon & Schuster publishers, and Warner Brothers), and Rupert Murdoch, whose holdings include HarperCollins publishers, the Fox television network, and Twentieth Century Fox. At the same time that these large entertainment conglomerates arose, many smaller independent producers like Lorimar and De Laurentis, disappeared.

As the movie industry enters its second century, many Americans worry about Hollywood's future. A basic problem facing today's Hollywood is the rapidly rising cost of making and marketing a movie: an average of \$40 million today. The immense cost of producing movies has led the studios to seek guaranteed hits: blockbusters loaded with high-tech special effects, sequels, and remakes of earlier movies, foreign films, and even old TV shows. Hollywood has also sought to cope with rising costs by focusing ever more intently on its core audiences. Since the mid-1980s, the movie-going audience has continued to decrease in size. Ticket sales fell from 1.2 billion in 1983 to 950 million in 1992, with the biggest drop occurring among adults. With the decline in the size of the adult audience, the single largest group of movie-goers now consists of teenage boys, who are particularly attracted to thrills, violence, and crude laughs. And since over half of Hollywood's profits are earned overseas, the industry has concentrated much of its energy on crude action films easily understood by an international audience.

For a century, the movie industry has been the nation's most important purveyor of culture and entertainment to the masses, playing a critical role in the shift from Victorian to distinctively modern, consumer values; from a world of words to a visual culture; from a society rooted in islands of localities and ethnic groups to a commercialized mass culture. Whether film will continue to serve as the nation's preeminent instrument of cultural expression--reflecting and also shaping values and cultural ideals--remains to be seen.

(By Steven Mintz, Columbia University)

Questions

1. Describe American movie theatres and audiences and how they have changed over the years.
2. What was the HUAC and what effect did it have on Hollywood?
3. Discuss some of the early developments in American cinema.