



Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
Sumy State University
Faculty of Foreign Philology
and Social Communications

I. V. Ushchapovska

Linguistic and Cultural Studies of English-Speaking Countries

Lecture notes

Sumy
Sumy State University
2024

Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
Sumy State University
Faculty of Foreign Philology
and Social Communications

Linguistic and Cultural Studies of English-Speaking Countries

Lecture notes
for the applicants
of specialty 035 “*Philology*”
full-time and part-time studies

Approved at the meeting
of the Department of Germanic Philology
as lecture notes on the discipline
“Linguistic and Cultural Studies
of English-Speaking Countries”.
Minutes № 2 of 03.09.2024.

Sumy
Sumy State University
2024

Linguistic and Cultural Studies of English-Speaking Countries: lecture notes/compiler I. V. Ushchapovska. – Sumy: Sumy State University, 2024. – 109 p.

Department of Germanic Philology
Faculty of Foreign Philology and Social Communications

CONTENT

	P.
INTRODUCTION	4
Lecture 1. History of Great Britain	5
Recommended Resources.....	22
Lecture 2. The UK, General Facts	24
Recommended Resources.....	38
Lecture 3. The UK Political System	39
Recommended Resources.....	49
Lecture 4. The UK Education System	51
Recommended Resources.....	61
Lecture 5. History of the USA	62
Recommended Resources.....	75
Lecture 6. The USA, General Facts	76
Recommended Resources.....	88
Lecture 7. The US Political System	89
Recommended Resources.....	99
Lecture 8. The US Education System	100
Recommended Resources.....	108

INTRODUCTION

Lecture notes are compiled for lecture classes in “Linguistic and Cultural Studies of English-Speaking Countries” for first-year students specializing in 035 “Philology”, full-time studies. The lecture notes contain thematic materials according to the discipline syllabus revealing basic information on the history, geography, political, and educational systems of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, as well as the United States of America.

The lecture notes are designed:

- to give basic information about two countries, homelands of two variants of the English language (British English and American English);

- to deepen the knowledge of students within the geography, history, political, and educational systems of the two countries;

- to develop the skill of language analysis due to the background knowledge of the geography, history, political, and educational systems of the two countries;

- to find historical and political threads within the cultures of the two countries as the basic aspect for further successful translation/interpretation from and into English;

- to develop the skills of foreign language comprehension and audio perceiving.

The present issue of the lecture notes may be used as additional material for the “Practical Course of English,” “Practice of Translation,” “Stylistics,” “Lexicology,” and “History of the English Language.”

Lecture 1

HISTORY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Prehistoric period

Britain has not always been an island. It became one only after the end of the last ice age. The temperature rose, and the ice cap melted, flooding the lower-lying land that is now under the North Sea and the English Channel.

The Ice Age was not just one long, equally cold period. There were warmer times when the ice cap retreated and colder periods when the ice cap reached as far south as the River Thames. Our first evidence of human life is a few stone tools dating from one of the warmer periods, about 250,000 BC.

The ice advanced again, and Britain became hardly habitable until another mild period, probably around 50,000 BC. During this time, a new type of human being, the ancestor of the modern British, seemed to have arrived. These people looked like the modern British but were probably smaller and had only about thirty years of life.

Around 10,000 BC, as the Ice Age ended, Britain was populated by small groups of hunters, gatherers, and fishers. Few had settled homes and seemed to have followed herds of deer, providing them with food and clothing. By about 5,000 BC, Britain had finally become an island and had become heavily forested. This was a disaster for the wanderer-hunter culture; the cold-loving deer and other animals on which they lived largely died out.

About 3,000 BC, Neolithic (or New Stone Age) people crossed the narrow sea from Europe. They probably came from the Iberian (Spanish) peninsula or the North African coast. They were small, dark, and long-headed people and maybe the forefathers of dark-haired inhabitants of Wales and Cornwall today.

These were the first of several waves of invaders before the first arrival of the Romans in 55 BC. After 3,000 BC, the people of the chalkland started building great circles of earth

banks and ditches.

Inside, they built wooden buildings and stone circles. These “hengese”, as they are called, were centers of religious, political, and economic power.



Stonehenge was produced by a culture that left no written records. Many aspects of Stonehenge remain the subject of debate. Several myths surround the stones. Stonehenge was built in separate stages over a period of more than a thousand years. It was almost certainly a sort of capital to which the chiefs of other groups came from all over Britain.

Around 700 BC, another group of people began to arrive. Many of them were tall and had fair or red hair and blue eyes. These were the Celts, who probably came from central Europe or further east, from southern Russia, and had moved slowly westwards in earlier centuries. The Celts were technically advanced. They knew how to work with iron and could make better weapons than the people who used bronze. It is possible that they drove many of the older inhabitants westwards into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland. The Celts began to control all the lowland areas of Britain and were joined by new arrivals from

the European mainland. They continued to arrive in one wave after another over the next seven hundred years.

The Celts are important in British history because they are the ancestors of many of the people in Highland, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and Cornwall today. The Iberian people of Wales and Cornwall took on the new Celtic culture. Celtic languages, which have been continuously used in some areas since then, are still spoken. The British today are often described as Anglo-Saxon. It would be better to call them Anglo-Celt.

The Celtic tribes were ruled over by a warrior class, of which the priests, or Druids, seem to have been particularly important members. These Druids could not read or write, but they memorized all the religious teachings, tribal laws, history, medicine, and other knowledge necessary in Celtic society. We know little of their kind of worship except that, at times, it included human sacrifice.

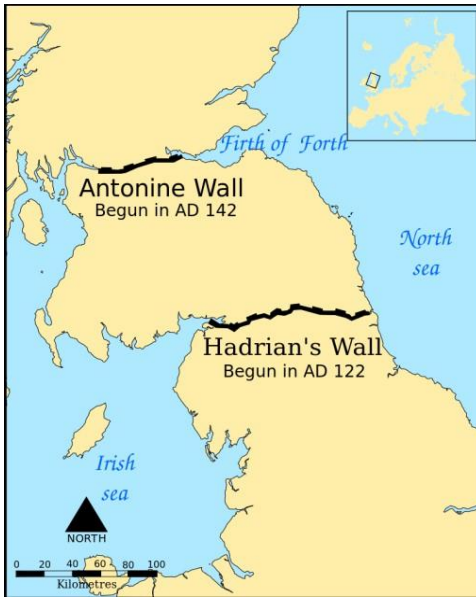
During the Celtic period, women may have had more independence than they had again for hundreds of years. When the Romans invaded Britain, two of the largest tribes were ruled by women who fought from their chariots. The most powerful Celt to stand up to the Romans was a woman, Boadicea.

Romans

The name “Britain” comes from the word “Pretani”, the Greco-Roman word for the inhabitants of Britain. The Romans mispronounced the word and called the island “Britannia”. The Roman province of Britannia covered most of the present-day England and Wales.

In 55 BC, the Roman general Julius Caesar lands in Britain with an expeditionary force, wins a battle, and leaves. It was the first “date” in popular British history. Only in 43 AD, did the Romans come to stay.

The Romans established a Romano-British culture across the southern half of Britain. Still, they could not conquer “Caledonia”, as they called Scotland, although they spent over a century trying to do so. At last, they built a strong wall along the northern border, named after Emperor Hadrian, who planned



it. At the time, Hadrian's Wall was simply intended to keep out raiders from the north. But it also marked the border between the two later countries, England and Scotland.

Hadrian's Wall, also called the Roman Wall, Picts' Wall, or Vallum Hadriani in Latin, was a defensive fortification in the Roman province of Britannia, begun in 122 AD during the reign of the emperor Hadrian. It ran from the banks of the River

Tyne near the North Sea to the Solway Firth on the Irish Sea. It had a stone base and a stone wall. There were mile castles. There was a fort about every five Roman miles. From north to south, the wall comprised a ditch, wall, military way, and vallum (another ditch with adjoining mounds). The mile castles were thought to be staffed with static garrisons, whereas the forts had fighting garrisons of infantry and cavalry. In addition to the wall's defensive military role, its gates may have been used as customs posts.

The Romans brought the skills of reading and writing to Britain. The written word was important for spreading ideas and for establishing power. While the Celtic peasantry remained illiterate and only Celtic-speaking, a number of town dwellers spoke Latin and Greek with ease, and the richer landowners in the country almost certainly used Latin. But Latin completely disappeared in its spoken and written forms when the Anglo-Saxons invaded Britain in the 5th century AD. Britain was probably more literate under the Romans than it was to be again until the fifteenth century.

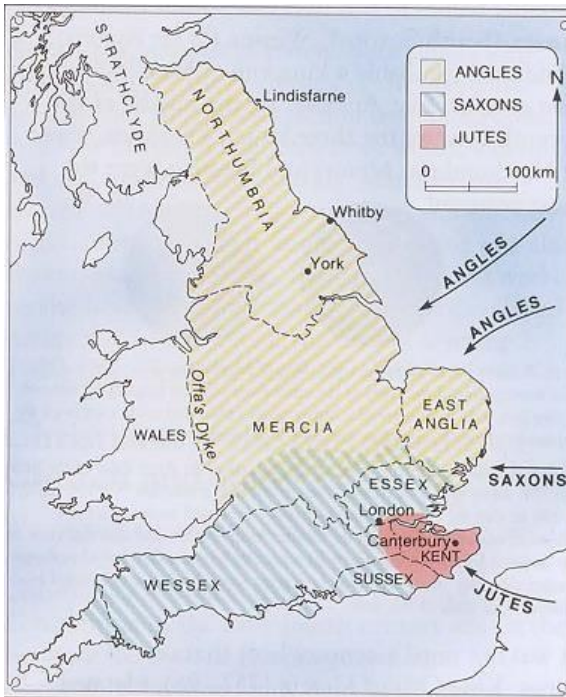
Thus, the remarkable thing about the Romans is that they left very little behind despite their long occupation of Britain. Most of their villas, baths, temples, an impressive network of roads, and cities, including Londinium (London), were soon destroyed or in disrepair. Almost the only lasting reminder of their presence are place names like Chester and Lancaster, which include variants of the Roman word “castra” (a military camp).

Roman control of Britain ended as the empire began to collapse. The first signs were the attacks by the Celts of Caledonia in AD 367. The Roman legions found it increasingly difficult to stop the raiders from crossing Hadrian’s Wall. The same was happening on the European mainland as Germanic groups, Saxons and Franks, began to raid the coast of Gaul. In AD 409, Rome pulled its last soldiers out of Britain, and the Romano-British, the Romanised Celts, were left to fight alone against the Scots, the Irish, and Saxon raiders from Germany. The following year Rome itself fell to raiders. When Britain called Rome for help against the raiders from Saxon Germany in the mid-fifth century, no answer came.

Germanic Invasions

The invaders came from three powerful Germanic tribes, the Saxons, Angles, and Jutes. The Jutes settled mainly in Kent and along the south coast and were soon considered no different from the Angles and Saxons. The Angles settled in the east and north Midlands, while the Saxons settled between the Jutes and the Angles in a band of land from the Thames Estuary westwards. The Anglo-Saxon migrations gave the larger part of Britain its new name, England, “the land of the Angles”.

The British Celts fought the raiders and settlers from Germany as well as they could (legendary King Arthur belongs to this period). Finally, most were driven into the mountains in the far west, which the Saxons called “Weallas” or “Wales”, meaning “the land of the foreigners”.



The strength of Anglo-Saxon culture is obvious even today. Days of the week were named after Germanic gods: Tig (Tuesday), Wodin (Wednesday), Thor (Thursday), Frei (Friday). New place-names appeared on the map. The ending *-ing* meant folk or family; thus, “Reading” is the place of the family of Rada, and

“Hastings” of the family of Hasta.

In 597, Pope Gregory the Great sent a monk, Augustine, to re-establish Christianity in England. He went to Canterbury, the capital of the king of Kent. He did so because the king’s wife came from Europe and was already Christian. Augustine became the first Archbishop of Canterbury in 601. He was very successful. Several ruling families in England accepted Christianity.

England had become Christian very quickly. By 660, only Sussex and the Isle of Wight had not accepted the new faith. Twenty years later, English teachers returned to the lands from which the Anglo-Saxons had come, bringing Christianity to much of Germany.

Vikings

Towards the end of the eighth century, new raiders were tempted by Britain’s wealth. These were the Vikings, a word which probably means either “pirates” or “the people of the sea

inlets”, and they came from Norway and Denmark. Like the Anglo-Saxons, they only raided at first. They burnt churches and monasteries along the east, north, and west coasts of Britain and Ireland. London was itself raided in 842.

In 865, the Vikings invaded Britain once it was clear that the quarreling Anglo-Saxon kingdoms could not keep them out. This time they came to conquer and to settle. The Vikings quickly accepted Christianity and did not disturb the local population.



Society

was based on family groupings, each owning one or more villages or farm settlements. One by one, in each group, a strong leader made himself a king. These men must have been tribal chiefs who later became overlords over neighboring family groups. Each of these kings tried to conquer the others, and the idea of a high, or senior, king developed.

As for Ireland, so it was never invaded by either the Romans or the Anglo-Saxons. It was a land of monasteries and had a flourishing Celtic culture. Christianity brought writing, which weakened the position of the Druids, who depended on memory and the spoken word. Christian monasteries grew up frequently along the coast. This period is often called Ireland’s

“golden age”. This “golden age” suddenly ended with the arrival of Viking raiders, who stole all that the monasteries had. Little was left except the stone memorials that the Vikings could not carry away.

Simultaneously, the Vikings, who traded with Constantinople (now Istanbul), Italy, and central Russia, brought fresh economic and political action into Irish life. Viking raids forced the Irish to unite. Viking trade led to the first towns and ports. These were revolutionary for the Celts, who had always lived in small settlements. Dublin, Ireland’s future capital, was founded by the Vikings.

Early Middle Ages

The successful Norman invasion of England in 1066 brought Britain into the mainstream of Western European culture. William the Conqueror organized his English kingdom according to the feudal system that had already developed in England before his arrival. The word “feudalism” comes from French. The king gave large estates to his main nobles in return for a promise to serve him in war for up to forty days. The nobles also had to give him part of the produce of the land.

English kings were ruling half of France as well they could no longer travel everywhere themselves. Instead, they sent nobles and knights from the royal household to act as sheriffs. But even this system needed people who could administer taxation and justice. At first, this “administration” was based in Winchester, but by the time of Edward I, in 1290, it had moved to Westminster. It is still there today. The king kept all his records in Westminster. In 1050 only the king (Edward the Confessor) had a seal to “sign” official papers. From 1199 the administration in Westminster kept copies of all the letters and documents sent out.

In 1066, there were fifty religious houses in England, home to perhaps 1,000 monks and nuns. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, there were probably about 900 religious houses with 17 500 members. Even though the population in the fourteenth century was three times larger than it had been in

1066, the growth of the monasteries is impressive.

The literacy growth in England was closely connected with the twelfth-century Renaissance, a cultural movement that had first started in Italy. This revolution in ideas and learning brought a new desire to test religious faith against reason. Schools of learning were established in many towns and cities. All these schools taught Latin because most books were written in this language. Church took a lead in the new intellectual movement. In England two schools of higher learning were established: the first at Oxford and the second at Cambridge. Still, few could go to the universities. Most English people spoke neither Latin, the language of the Church and education, nor French, the language of law and the Norman rulers. It was a long time before English became the ruling class's language.

In modern English, traces of the coexistence of the Norman (French) and Germanic (Middle English) languages are still visible. There are the words for the living animals (*cow, pig, sheep*), which have their origins in Anglo-Saxon, and the words for the meat from the animals (beef, pork, mutton), which have their origins in the French language that Normans brought to England.

It was during this period that Parliament began its gradual evolution into the democratic body that it is today. The word "Parliament", which comes from the French word *parler* (to speak), was first used in England in the 13th century to describe an assembly of nobles called together by the king. In 1295 the Model Parliament set the pattern for the future by including elected representatives from urban and rural areas.

Late Middle Ages

The fourteenth century was disastrous for Britain and most of Europe because of the effects of wars and plagues.

Britain and France suffered too from the damages of war. In the 1330s, England began a long struggle against the French Crown. In France, villages were raided or destroyed by passing armies. France and England were exhausted economically by the cost of maintaining armies. England had

the additional burden of fighting the Scots and maintaining control of Ireland and Wales, both of which were trying to overthrow English rule. The strength of the great barons had been greatly weakened by the Wars of the Roses and the Bubonic plague (the Black Death).

During the 15th century, the throne of England was claimed by representatives of two rival groups. The Lancastrians, whose symbol was a red rose, supported the descendants of the Duke of Lancaster, and the Yorkists, whose symbol was a white rose, supported the descendants of the Duke of York. The struggle led to the “Wars of the Roses” between 1455 and 1485.

As for the Black Death, so it killed about a third of the population in its first outbreak in England in the middle of the 14th century and continued to reappear periodically for another 300 years.

After the Black Death, the remaining workers found that they could demand more money and did so. To avoid losses, landlords returned to the twelfth-century practice of letting out their land to energetic tenant farmers who, bit by bit, added to their own land. By the mid-fifteenth century, few landlords had home farms at all. These smaller farmers who rented the manorial lands slowly became a new class known as the “yeomen”. Still, the landlords had been trying for some time to force the peasants back into serfdom because serf labour was cheaper than paid labor.

The language itself was changing. Edward III had been forbidden to speak French in his army. It was a way of making the whole army aware of its Englishness. By the end of the fourteenth century, English was a written language. But “Middle English” was very different from Anglo-Saxon partly because it had borrowed so much from Norman French.

By the end of the Middle Ages, English, as well as Latin, was being used in legal writing and in elementary schools. Education developed enormously during the fifteenth century, and powerful men founded many schools.

Tudors

The century of Tudor rule (1485–1603) is often considered the most glorious period in English history. Henry VII laid the foundations of a wealthy nation-state and a powerful monarchy. His son, Henry VIII, kept a magnificent court and made the Church in England truly English by breaking away from the Roman Catholic Church.

Discontent with the Church also grew because of the greed and cruelty of the Church to peasants and townspeople. There was another reason why the people of England disliked paying taxes to the pope – their “Englishness”, and the pope was a foreigner. To make matters worse, the pope was living in Avignon in France, which meant the pope was on the French side, and the taxes they paid to the Church were helping France against England.

There were two main reasons for Henry VIII (one of the most well-known monarchs in English history, chiefly because he took 6 wives) to dislike the power of the Catholic Church in England. This power worked against his authority, and the taxes paid to the Church reduced his income. Another reason was personal: he wanted to divorce his wife Catherine, who could not give him a son, but the pope forbade Henry’s divorce. As a result, Henry persuaded the bishops to make him head of the English Church, and then Parliament passed the *Act of Supremacy in 1534*. Then Henry VIII divorced Catherine and married his new love, Anne Boleyn. He forced Parliament to make this break legal, and England became politically a Protestant country.

Therefore, patriotism, as much as religious conviction, had caused Protestantism to become the majority religion in England by the end of the 16th century. It took a form known as Anglicanism, which was not so different from Catholicism in its organization and rituals. But in the lowlands of Scotland, it took a more idealistic form – Calvinism – with its strict insistence on simplicity and dislike of rituals and celebrations.

Tudor monarchs didn’t get rid of Parliament because

they needed money and the support of the merchants and the landowners. Power moved from the House of Lords to the House of Commons: the MPs in the Commons represented richer and more influential classes than the Lords. During the 16th century, the size of the Commons nearly doubled. Serving this class, Henry VIII, between 1536 and 1539, closed 560 monasteries and other religious houses. He did this to make money, but he also wanted to be popular with the rising classes of landowners and merchants. He, therefore, gave or sold much of the monasteries' lands to them. Many smaller landowners made their fortunes.

Henry died in 1547, leaving behind his sixth wife, Catherine Parr, and his three children. Mary, the eldest, was the daughter of Catherine of Aragon. Elizabeth was the daughter of his second wife, Anne Boleyn, whom he had executed because she was unfaithful. Nine-year-old Edward was the son of Jane Seymour, the only wife Henry had really loved but who had died giving birth to his only son.

Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry VIII, was the first of three long-reigning queens in British history (the other two were Queen Victoria and Elizabeth II). During her reign, she established stability in a firmly Protestant England. She never married but used this possibility as a diplomatic tool. She became known as "the virgin queen". The area which later became the state of Virginia in the USA was named after her by one of many English explorers of the time.

Elizabeth triumphant. The famous "Armada portrait" shows the Spanish Armada in full sail (left) and wrecked upon Ireland's shores (right). Under Elizabeth's right hand lies the world, referencing Francis Drake's successful voyage around the world, the expeditions of other explorers, and England's growing sea power. Elizabeth enjoyed glory, and her great vanity shows in this portrait.



People started to consider the London pronunciation as “correct” pronunciation. Until Tudor times, the local forms of speech had been spoken by lords and peasants alike. From Tudor times onwards, the way people spoke began to show the difference between them. Educated people began to speak “correct” English, and uneducated people continued to speak the local dialect.

Literacy increased greatly during the mid-sixteenth century, even though the religious houses, which had always provided traditional education, had closed. In fact, by the seventeenth century, about half the population could read and write. Literature, however, was England’s greatest art form. Playwrights like Christopher Marlowe, Ben Jonson, and William Shakespeare filled the theatres with exciting new plays.

Stuarts

From James I onwards, the Stuart monarchs were less

successful than the Tudors. They quarreled with Parliament, and this resulted in a civil war. The only king of England to be tried and executed was a Stuart. The republic that followed was even more unsuccessful, and by popular demand, the dead king's son was called back to the throne. Another Stuart king was driven from his throne by his own daughter and her Dutch husband, William of Orange. William became king by Parliament's election, not by right of birth.

When the last Stuart, Queen Anne, died in 1714, the monarchy was no longer powerful. It had become a "parliamentary monarchy" controlled by a constitution. These important changes did not occur simply because the Stuarts were bad rulers. They resulted from a basic change in society. During the seventeenth century, economic power moved even faster into the hands of the merchant and landowning farmer classes. The Crown could no longer raise money or govern without their cooperation. The House of Commons represented these groups. In response, for money, the Commons demanded political power. The victory of the Commons and the classes it represented was unavoidable.

The political developments of the period also resulted from basic changes in thinking in the seventeenth century. By 1700, a ruler like Henry VIII or Elizabeth I would have been unthinkable. By the time Queen Anne died, a new age of reason and science had arrived.

The seventeenth century saw the development of scientific thinking on an entirely new scale. The new mood had been established by a remarkable man, Francis Bacon, at the very beginning of the century. He became James I's Lord Chancellor, but he was better known for his work on scientific methods.

In 1628, William Harvey discovered blood circulation, which led to great advances in medicine and the study of the human body. In 1666 the Cambridge Professor of Mathematics, Sir Isaac Newton, began to study gravity, publishing his important discovery in 1684.

As a result of the rapid spread of literacy and the improvement in printing techniques, the first newspapers appeared in the seventeenth century. They were a new way of spreading all kinds of scientific, religious, and literary ideas. Many of them included advertisements. In 1660 Charles II advertised for his lost dog.

After the rapid increase in population in the Tudor century, the number of births began to fall in the Stuart age. One reason for the fewer births was that people married later than anywhere else in Europe. Most people married in their mid-twenties, and by the end of the century, the average age of first marriages was even older, at twenty-seven. This, of course, meant that women had fewer babies.

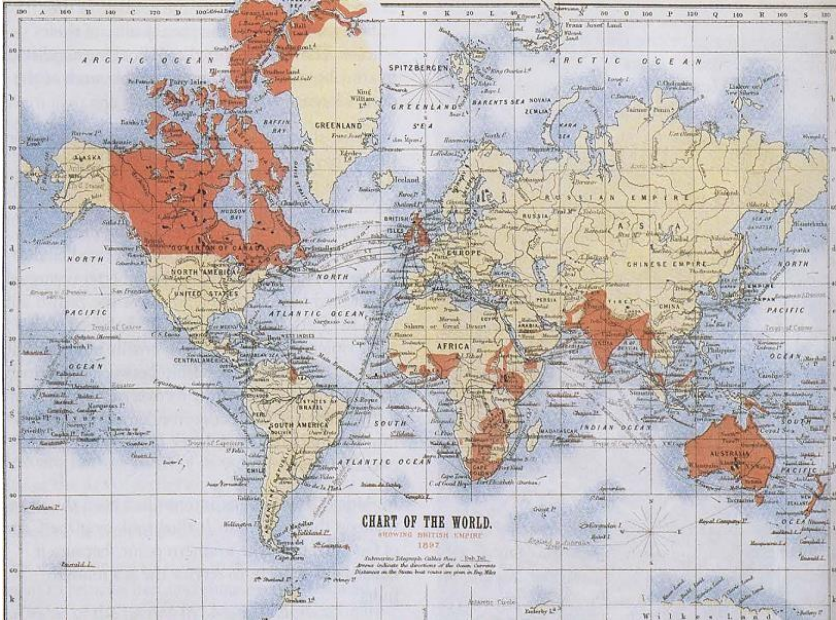
19th Century

Britain in the nineteenth century was at its most powerful and self-confident. After the industrial revolution, nineteenth-century Britain was the “workshop” of the world. Until the last quarter of the century British factories were producing more than any other country in the world.

Not long before this century began, Britain had lost its most important American colonies in the War of Independence. The country was locked in a war with France when the century began. Soon after the end of the century, Britain controlled the biggest empire the world had ever seen. One section of the empire was Ireland. Another part of the empire comprised Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, and Africa.

“Our Empire Atlas”, 1897, clearly shows Britain’s strategic control of much of the world.

Britain wanted two main things in Europe: a “balance of power,” which would prevent the single nation from becoming too strong, and a free market in which its industrial and trade superiority would give Britain a clear advantage.



Much of what we know today as the modern state was built in the 1860s and 1870s. Between 1867 and 1884, the number of voters increased from 20 % to 60 % of men in towns and 70 % in the country, including some of the working class. One immediate effect was the rapid growth in party organization, with branches in every town able to organize things locally. In 1872 voting was carried out in secret for the first time, allowing ordinary people to vote freely and without fear. This and the growth of the newspaper industry, particularly “popular” newspapers for the new half-educated population, strengthened the importance of popular opinion. Democracy proliferated.

Queen Victoria came to the throne as a young woman in 1837 and reigned until she died in 1901. She did not like the way in which power seemed to be slipping so quickly away from the monarchy and aristocracy, but like her advisers, she was unable to prevent it. Victoria married a German, Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg, but he died at forty-two in 1861. She

could not get over her sorrow at his death and, for a long time, refused to be seen in public. This was a dangerous thing to do. Newspapers began to criticize her, and some even questioned the value of the monarchy. However, the queen's advisers persuaded her to take a more public interest in the kingdom's business. She did so, and she soon became extraordinarily popular. By the time Victoria died, the monarchy was better loved among the British than ever before.

Questions for practical classes:

1. Give information about the first settlers in the present territory of Great Britain (pre-Roman period).
2. Enlarge on the Roman settlement in the territory of Great Britain.
3. Whom can you name as the pre-Norman invaders?
4. When and by whom was feudalism brought to Great Britain?
5. The status of women in different epochs in Great Britain.
6. Why is the Tudor period considered to be the most glorious?
7. What scientific discoveries were made in the Stuarts' period?
8. Enlarge on the Victorian era.
9. Deliver the report about present-day Britain.

Recommended Resources

1. Morris, M. *The Anglo-Saxons: A History of the Beginnings of England: 400–1066*. Pegasus Group, 2021. 452 p.
2. Oakland, J. *British civilization: an introduction*. Ninth edition. London, New York, NY: Routledge / Taylor & Francis Group, 2020. 416 p.
3. Black, J. *A brief history of the British Monarchy – from the Iron Age to King Charles III*. Little, Brown Book Group, 2022. 256 p.

4. History of England. URL:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_England.

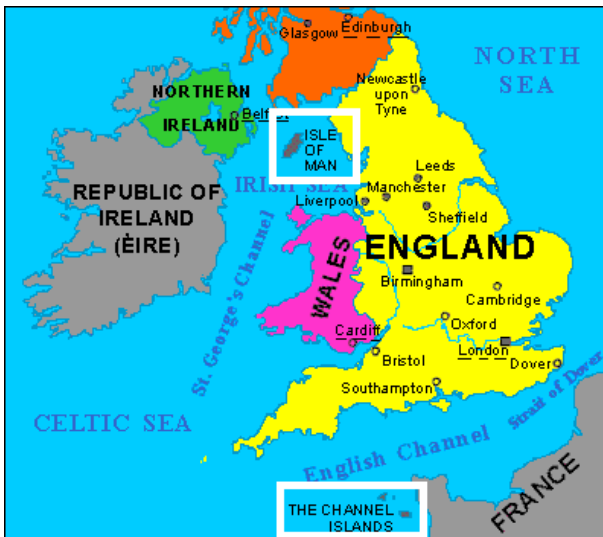
5. United Kingdom. Wikipedia. URL:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom.

Lecture 2

THE UNITED KINGDOM, GENERAL FACTS

Geography

Lying off the northwest coast of Europe, there are two large islands and several much smaller ones (some 5000 isles). Collectively, they are known as The British Isles. The largest island is called Great Britain. The other large one is called Ireland. The total area of the country is 94,217 miles² or 244,02 km². The UK is a small country. It's twice smaller than France or Spain. The UK is situated on the northwest coast of Europe between the Atlantic Ocean in the north and the North Sea in the east. It is separated from the European continent by the English Channel (La Manche) and the Strait of Dover (Pas de Calais). It doesn't usually get very cold in winter or very hot in summer; it has no active volcanoes or earthquakes.



In the British Isles, there are two states. One of these governs most of the island of Ireland. This state is usually called the Republic of Ireland. The other state has authority over the rest of the

British Isles (the whole of Great Britain, the northeastern area of Ireland, and most of the smaller islands). Its official name is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Political unification was a gradual process that took

several hundred years. It was completed in 1800 when the Irish Parliament joined the Parliament for England, Scotland, and Wales in Westminster. The British Isles became a single state – the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. However, in 1922, most of Ireland became a separate state.

With a total area of 244 02 km², Britain is just under 1000 km long and some 500 km across in the widest part. London is the capital.

Other major cities are Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast.

The United Kingdom is densely populated, and its natural environment and quality of life are paying the price.

With no end to population growth in sight, pressure on wildlife, housing, public services, and resources will continue to grow while meeting our climate change targets becomes more difficult.

UK population facts:

- In 1950, the UK population size was 50 million.
- The UK population is now more than 67 million, an increase of 34 percent.
- It is predicted that the population will reach 70 million in 2026 and 73 million in 2036.
- The UK is on track to be the largest nation in Europe by the second half of this century.
- The UK is considered the world’s most “nature-depleted” country, with more than one in seven species at risk of extinction and more than half in decline.



Britain has mountains, but none are very high; it also has flat land, but you cannot travel far without encountering hills; it has no big rivers. Geographically the island of GB is subdivided into two main regions: Lowland and Highland. Highland consists of Scotland, most of Wales, the Pennines, and the Lake District. Mountain regions include the Scottish Highlands – Ben Nevis 1343 m; the Lake District – Scafell 978 m; North Wales – Snowdon 1085 m; the Pennines – a limestone “backbone” in Northern England; the Jurassic limestone escarpments, especially the Cotswolds; the chalk escarpments, especially the Chilterns, the North and South Downs.

The longest rivers in the UK are the Severn (3,54 km), flowing along the border between England and Wales, tributaries of which include the Avon, famed by Shakespeare, and the Thames, which flows East-West to the port of London.



The south and east of the country are comparatively low-lying, consisting of either flat plains or gently rolling hills. Mountainous areas are found only in the north and west, although these regions also have fiat areas.

Britain has more grassland than any European country except the Republic of Ireland. One distinctive human influence, especially common in southern England, is the enclosure of fields with hedgerows.

England consists of 4 parts which make up the UK. England occupies a territory of 131,000 km²; it is the most industrial and densely populated part of the UK. Its population is over 47 mln people. The capital of England is London.

England is a highly developed industrial part of the country. Historically, England is divided into several economic regions: the South is both an industrial and agricultural region, Central England or Midlands, Yorkshire and Northern England.

Heavy machinery, electronics, and shipbuilding are developed in London, Nottingham, Bristol, Manchester, New

Castle, and others. The wool industry is centered in Leeds and Bradford. Food processing is developed in Liverpool. Midlands make farming lands.

Wales lies to the west of the English Lowland. This part of the UK is rather small; its territory is 26,760 km². The capital of Wales is Cardiff. The population of Wales is over 3 mln people.

Scotland is the northernmost part of GB. Its total area is 78,800 km². The Cheviot Hills marks the border between England and Scotland. Scotland takes up 1/3 of the territory of the British Isles. Its population is not very big – a little over 6 mln people. Edinburgh is the capital.

Scotland is a country of hills, lakes, and rivers. Ben Nevis is the highest mountain pick. There are many rivers, but they are not long. The Clyde is the longest and the most important river.

Scottish lakes are called “lochs” because they are long and narrow. The Lomond is the longest and the most beautiful river. The most famous Scottish loch is Loch Ness.

Shipbuilding is one of the most important industries. The others are iron steel, heavy and light engineering, and coal mining.

The main urban centers are Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Dundee.

Northern Ireland is the smallest component of the UK – 14,121 km². It occupies the North-East of Ireland. The population is 1,5 mln people. Belfast is the capital. The Shannon is the largest river. The climate is oceanic. The economy has three main industries: agriculture, textiles, and shipbuilding.

There are 14 British Overseas Territories, mostly with considerable self-government, a legislature, and a civil service. Britain is responsible for their defense, internal security, and foreign relations. British policy is to give independence to those overseas territories that want it and not to force it on those that

do not.

The territories are Anguilla; Bermuda; British Antarctic Territory; British Indian Ocean Territory; British Virgin Islands; Cayman Islands; Falkland Islands; Gibraltar; Montserrat; Pitcairn Islands (Ducie, Henderson, and Oeno); South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands; St. Helena; St. Helena Dependencies (Ascension and Tristan da Cunha); and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Symbols

Albion is a word used in poetic or rhetorical contexts to refer to England. It was the original Roman name for Britain. It may come from the Latin word *albus* meaning “white”. The White Chalk Cliffs of Dover on the southeast are the first part of England to be seen when crossing the sea from the European mainland.



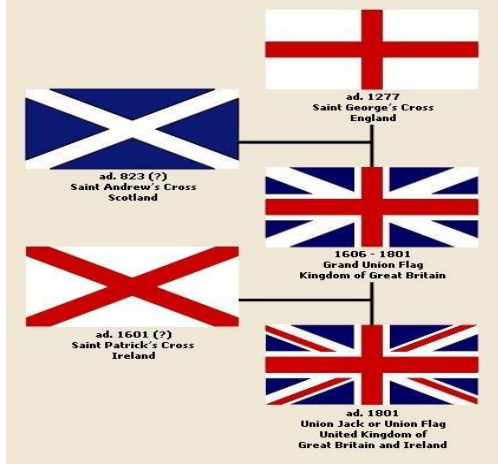
Britannia is the name the Romans gave to their southern British province (the territory of present-day England). It is also the name given to the female embodiment of Britain, always shown wearing a helmet and holding a trident (the symbol of power over the sea). The figure of Britannia has been on the reverse side of many

British coins for more than 300 years.

The Union Jack is the UK’s national flag. It is a combination of 3 flags: the red cross of St. George, the blue and white saltire of St. Andrew, and the red and white saltire of St. Patrick. Its final version, with a small revision, was set up

in 1801 after the last of the three Acts of Union.

Wales is not represented in the Union Flag because when the first version of the flag appeared, Wales was already united with England. The national flag of Wales, a red dragon on a field of white and green, dates from the 15th century and is widely used throughout the Principality.



The Union Flag should be flown with the broader diagonal band of white uppermost in the hoist (near the pole) and the narrower diagonal band of white uppermost in the fly (furthest from the pole).

Flower Symbols. The national flower of England is the rose. The flower has been adopted as England's emblem since the time of the Wars of the Roses – civil wars (1455 – 1485) between the Royal House of Lancaster (whose emblem was a red rose) and the Royal House of York (whose emblem was a white rose). The Yorkist regime ended with the defeat of King Richard III by the future Henry VII at Bosworth on 22 August 1485, and the two roses were united into the Tudor rose (a red rose with a white center) by Henry VII when he married Elizabeth of York.











The national flower of Northern Ireland is the shamrock, a three-leaved plant like clover which is said to have been used by St. Patrick to illustrate the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

The Scottish national flower is the thistle, a prickly-leaved purple flower first used in the 15th century as a symbol of defense.

The three flowers – rose, thistle, and shamrock – are often displayed beneath the Royal Coat of Arms shield.

The national flower of Wales is usually considered the daffodil, traditionally worn on St. David’s Day. However, the humble leek is also considered a traditional emblem of Wales, possibly because its colours, white over green, echo the ancient Welsh standard.

The oak tree is a symbol of England, representing strength and endurance. The term Royal Oak denotes King Charles II’s escape from the parliamentarians’ grasp after his father’s execution; he hid in an oak tree to avoid detection before safely exiting. **Oak Apple Day or Royal Oak Day** was a holiday celebrated in England on 29 May to commemorate the restoration of the English monarchy in May 1660. In some parts of the country, the day was known as Shick-Shack Day or Arbour Day.

	England	Wales	Scotland	Ireland
Flag	 St George's Cross	 Dragon of Cadwallader	 St Andrew's Cross	 St Patrick's Cross
			 Lion rampant	 Republic of Ireland
Plant	 Rose	 Leek/Daffodil ¹	 Thistle	 Shamrock

Climate

The climate of Britain is the same as that of the northwestern part of the European mainland. The popular belief that it always rains in Britain is simply not true. The image of a wet, foggy land was created two thousand years ago by the invading Romans and has been perpetuated in modern times by Hollywood. In fact, London gets no more rain in a year than most other major European cities and less than some.

The climate is naturally changeable through the seasonal cycle. Generally, the winter months from December to February are the coldest, with the shortest daylight hours. The temperature rises through the spring months of March to May and is highest throughout the summer months from June to August. Temperatures rarely exceed +32°C (90°F) or fall below -10°C (14°F). London is the hottest place. Britain's lowest air temperature, -27°C, was recorded at Braemar in Scotland in February 1895, whilst the highest, +37.1°C, was registered at Cheltenham, Southwest England, in August 1990.

Why is the climate so mild, even though the British Isles are situated as far north as, for example, Labrador? One reason is the Gulf Stream and the prevailing westerly winds (or south-westerly) from the Atlantic; another is that Britain is an island. The average annual rainfall is more than 1,600 mm (over 60 inches) in the west and north highland areas but less than 800 mm (30 inches) over the more fertile lowlands of the south and east.

It was in Britain that the word "smog" was first used (to describe a mixture of smoke and fog). As the world's first industrialized country, its cities were the first to suffer from this atmospheric condition. Water pollution was also a problem. During the 1960s and 1970s, laws were passed which forbade the heating of homes with open coal fires in city areas and which stopped much of the pollution from factories. However, as in the rest of Western Europe, the great increase in the use of motor cars in the last quarter of the twentieth century caused a

rise in a new kind of air pollution.

National and Class Identity

Britain absorbed many foreign cultures and traditions during the early centuries – Roman, Viking, and Norman among them. More recently, people from overseas have continued settling in Britain, either to escape political or religious persecution or to search for economic opportunities. Ethnic minorities now comprise about 5.5 % of the population.

The largest ethnic minorities in Britain are those of Caribbean or African descent (875,000 people). The next largest ethnic groups are Indians (840,255 people), and Pakistanis and Bangladeshis (639,390 people). Overall, ethnic minority groups represent just under 6 % of the population of Great Britain. The ethnic population has evolved from the substantial immigration of people from former British colonies in the Caribbean and South Asian subcontinent during the 1950s and 1960s. In addition, in the 1970s, Britain admitted some 28,000 Asians expelled from Uganda and some 22,000 refugees from Southeast Asia. Considerable numbers of Chinese, Italians, Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Poles, Australians, New Zealanders, and people from the United States and Canada also reside in Britain. Still, all citizens enjoy the same rights and privileges. Racial discrimination is unlawful under the Race Relations Act 1976.

Historians say that Britain's class system has survived because of its flexibility. It has always been possible to buy or marry or even work your way up so that your children (and their children) belong to a higher social class than you do. As a result, the class system has never been swept away by a revolution, and an awareness of class forms a major part of most people's sense of identity. People in modern Britain are very conscious of class differences. They regard it as difficult to befriend somebody from a different class. This feeling has little to do with conscious loyalty and nothing to do with a positive belief in the class system itself. Most people say they disapprove of class

divisions. Nor does it have very much to do with political or religious affiliations. It results from the fact that the different classes have different sets of attitudes and daily habits. Typically, they tend to eat different food at different times of day; they like to talk about different topics, using different styles and accents of English; they enjoy different pastimes and sports; they have different values about what things in life are most important and different ideas about the correct way to behave.

Language Differences

At one time, the four nations were distinct from each other in almost every aspect of life. In the first place, they were different racially. The people in Ireland, Wales, and highland Scotland belonged to the Celtic race; those in England and lowland Scotland were mainly of Germanic origin. This difference was reflected in the languages they spoke. People in the Celtic areas spoke Celtic languages: Irish Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic, and Welsh. People in the Germanic areas spoke Germanic dialects. The nations also tended to have different economic, social, and legal systems.

Today these differences have become blurred. But they have not completely disappeared.

English is spoken in all the 4 parts of the UK. Wales, however, is bilingual – Welsh is the first language of most of the population in most western parts of the country. The Gaelic language still exists as Gaelic in Scotland and Ireland. In Scotland, some one hundred thousand people, mainly in the Highland and Western regions, can speak the Scottish form of Gaelic. A few families in Northern Ireland speak the Irish form of Gaelic.

French is the official language of Jersey (Channel Islands) and of Isle of Man. It's used for ceremonial and official procedures. Both English and French are used in courts.

An interesting feature of the class structure in Britain is that it is not just, or even mainly, relative wealth or appearance that determines someone's class. The most obvious and

immediate sign comes when a person opens his or her mouth, giving the listener clues to the speaker's attitudes and interests, both indicative of class.

However, even more indicative of *what* the speaker says is how he or she says it. The English grammar and vocabulary used in public speaking, radio and television news broadcasts, books, and newspapers are known as "standard British English." Most working-class people, however, use many words and grammatical forms in their everyday speech regarded as "non-standard".

Nevertheless, nearly everybody in the country can use standard English (or something very close to it) when they judge that the situation demands it. They are taught to do so at school. Therefore, the clearest indication of a person's class is often his or her accent. Most people cannot change this convincingly to suit the situation.

Stereotypes

There are many examples of supposedly typical British habits which are simply not typical anymore. For example, the stereotyped image of the London "city gent" includes wearing a bowler hat. In fact, this type of hat has not been commonly worn for a long time. Food and drink provide other examples. The traditional "British" (or "English") breakfast is a large "fry-up" preceded by cereal with milk and followed by toast, butter, and marmalade; all washed down with lots of tea. In fact, only 10 % of the people in Britain have this sort of breakfast. Two-thirds have cut out the fry-up and just have the cereal, tea, and toast. The rest have even less. What most British people have in the mornings is, therefore, much closer to what they call a "continental" (i.e., European) breakfast than it is to a "British" one. The image of the British as a nation of tea drinkers is another somewhat outdated stereotype. It is true that it is still prepared in a distinctive way (strong and with milk), but more coffee than tea is now bought in the country's shops. As for the tradition of afternoon tea with biscuits, scones, sandwiches, or

cake is a minority activity, largely confined to retired people and the leisured upper-middle class (although preserved in tea shops in tourist resorts).

Even when a British habit conforms to the stereotype, the wrong conclusions can sometimes be drawn. The supposed British love of queuing is an example. Yes, British people form queues when waiting for something, but this does not mean they enjoy it. In 2012, a survey found that the average wait to pay in a British supermarket was three minutes and twenty-three seconds, and the average wait to be served in a bank was two minutes and thirty-three seconds. You might think that these times sound very reasonable. But *The Sunday Times* newspaper did not believe so. It referred to these figures as a “problem”. Some banks now promise to serve their customers “within two minutes”. It would, therefore, be wrong to conclude that their habit of queuing shows that the British are a patient people. Apparently, the British hate having to wait and have less patience than people in many other countries.

Moreover, a look at children’s reading habits suggested that this attitude will not change. Publishers try hard to make their books for children up to date. But perhaps they needn’t try so hard. In 2012, the two most popular children’s writers were noticeably unmodern (they were both, in fact, dead). The most popular of all was Roald Dahl, whose fantasy stories are set in a rather old-fashioned world. The second most popular writer was Enid Blyton, whose stories occurred in a comfortable white middle-class world before the 1960s. They contain no references to other races or classes and mention nothing more modern than a radio. In other words, they are mostly irrelevant to modern life.

The British can be particularly and stubbornly conservative about anything that is perceived as a token of Britishness. In these matters, their conservatism can combine with their individualism; they are rather proud of being different. It is, for example, very difficult to imagine that they

will ever agree to change from driving on the left-hand side of the road to driving on the right. It doesn't matter that nobody can think of any intrinsic advantage in driving on the left. Why should they change just to be like everyone else? Indeed, as far as they are concerned, not being like everyone else is a good reason not to change.

Developments at the European Union (EU) level, which might cause a change in some everyday aspects of British life, are usually greeted with suspicion and hostility. The case of double-decker buses is an example. Whenever an EU committee recommends standardizing the size and shape, it provokes warnings from British bus builders about "the end of the double-decker bus as we know it". The British public is always ready to listen to such predictions of doom.

Systems of measurement are another example. The British government has been trying for years and years to promote the metric system and get British people to use the same scales used nearly everywhere else in the world. But it has had only limited success. British manufacturers must give the weight of their tins and packets in kilos and grams. But everybody in Britain still shops in pounds and ounces. The weather forecasters on television use the Celsius scale of temperature. But nearly everybody still thinks in Fahrenheit. British people continue to measure distances, amounts of liquid and themselves using measurement scales not used elsewhere in Europe. Even the use of the 24-hour clock is comparatively restricted.

Questions for practical classes:

1. Give general information about the geographical location of the UK.
2. Enlarge on the most characteristics of England.
3. Enlarge on the most characteristics of Wales.
4. Enlarge on the most characteristics of Scotland.

5. Enlarge on the most characteristics of Northern Ireland.
6. What are the national symbols of the four major components of the UK?
7. What can you say about the language differences between the four countries comprising the UK?

Recommended Resources

1. McCormick, J. Contemporary Britain. Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. 248 p.
2. Morris, I. Geography is destiny: Britain and the world, a 10,000-year history. Profile Books Ltd, 2023. 576 p.
3. UK population 1950-2024. URL: <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/GBR/united-kingdom/population>.
4. Oakland, J. British civilization: an introduction. Ninth edition. London, New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2020. 416 p.
5. United Kingdom. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom>.
6. United Kingdom. Wikipedia. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom.

Lecture 3 THE UK POLITICAL SYSTEM

Political Life in the UK

The UK is a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy. That means it is a country governed by a king or queen who accepts the advice of a parliament. It is a country whose government is controlled by a parliament that has been elected by the people. Strangely enough, the Constitution does not exist as one written document. Of all the democratic countries in the world, only Israel is comparable to Britain in having no single document codifying how its political institutions function and setting out the basic rights and duties of its citizens. It is a centuries-old accumulation of statutes, common law, and “traditional rights”. Changes to the constitution may come about formally through new acts of parliament, informally through the acceptance of new practices and usage, or by judicial precedents. They have been built up, bit by bit, over the centuries. Some of them have never been written down at all.

Interesting to know: No written law in Britain says anything about who can be the Prime Minister or what the powers of the Prime Minister are. There is no single written document that asserts people’s rights. Nevertheless, it is understood that these latter rights are also part of the constitution.

In 1928, Prime Minister H. H. Asquith described this characteristic of the British constitution in his memoirs:

“In this country, we live ... under an unwritten Constitution. We indeed have on the Statute-book great instruments like the Magna Carta, the Petition of Right, and the Bill of Rights, which define and secure many of our rights and privileges, but the great bulk of our constitutional liberties and ... our constitutional practices do not derive their validity and sanction from any Bill which has received the formal assent of

the King, Lords, and Commons. They rest on usage, custom, and convention, often of slow growth in their early stages, not always uniform, but which received universal observance and respect in the course of time”.

The organs of government in the United Kingdom are:

1) the legislature, which consists of the Queen in Parliament, and is the supreme authority of the realm;

2) the executive, which consists of:

a) the Cabinet and other ministers of the Crown,

b) government departments,

c) local authorities,

d) statutory boards;

3) the judiciary, which determines common law and interprets statutes.

The head of state is the hereditary monarch – since 2022, after the death of Queen Elizabeth II, it’s King Charles III. The position of the monarch illustrates the contradictory nature of the constitution. The King has the formidable right to form the government – to appoint the Prime Minister and all the ministers. He also appears to have great power over Parliament. Similarly, it is the King who embodies the law in the court (it is the Crown who makes the accusation). There are also His Majesty’s prisons. There are no citizens in Britain. People are legally described as subjects.

However, the British sovereign “reigns, but does not rule”. The King cannot choose any person to be the Prime Minister. It should be someone who has the support of the majority of MPs in the House of Parliament. The Prime Minister decides about the personality of other ministers (officially, the PM only advises the monarch who to choose). The King’s power is limited, mostly to ceremonial functions, such as opening the Parliament’s sessions, granting awards, visiting foreign countries, etc. The Monarch is largely the symbol of Great Britain in the eyes of British citizens and foreigners.

Sovereignty rests in Parliament, which consists of the

House of Commons, the House of Lords, and the crown. During its life, a Parliament may make or unmake any law; its supremacy is absolute. The Life of Parliament: five years maximum. It begins after a general election and ends with a dissolution (proclaimed by the sovereign on the Prime Minister's advice). On average, the Parliament has 160 sitting days each year, beginning with the Opening of Parliament (October – November).

Effective power resides in the Commons, whose 650 members are elected from single-member constituencies. Elections must be held at least once in five years, but within that period the prime minister may at any time request the crown to dissolve Parliament and call for new elections. Most legislation originates in the Commons.

The speaker is chosen from the members (after consultation between the two main parties) but, once elected, is no longer considered a party man; his role is to chair the debates, authority, and prestige (Symbol of the House).

Functions of the House: 1) Legislation; 2) Finance; 3) Criticism and contra of the government in office (practically exercised during the Question Time when MPs may ask questions on any aspects of the government's activities).

The House of Lords presiding officer is the Lord Chancellor, a Cabinet member. The so-called Woolsack is the Lord Chancellor's seat in the House of Lords.

The House of Lords is the upper house of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Like the House of Commons, it meets in the Palace of Westminster.

Unlike the elected House of Commons, most members of the House of Lords are appointed. The membership of the House of Lords is made up of Lords Spiritual and Lords Temporal. The Lords Spiritual are 26 bishops in the established Church of England. Of the Lords Temporal, the majority are life peers who are appointed by the monarch on the advice of the Prime Minister or on the advice of the House of Lords Appointments

Commission.

While the House of Commons has a defined 650-seat membership, the number of members in the House of Lords is not fixed. There are currently 820 sitting Lords.

Traditionally, the hereditary and life peers of the realm, high officials of the Church of England, and the Lords of Appeal (who exercise judicial functions) had the right to sit in the House of Lords. In 1999 both houses voted to strip most hereditary peers of their right to sit and vote in the chamber. The House of Lords may shape legislation, but it cannot permanently block a bill passed by the Commons, and it has no authority over money bills. The Lords of Appeal constitute the highest court in Great Britain.

Functions of the House: 1) Discussion of bills coming from the Commons, veto is hardly ever used; 2) introduction of bills; 3) supreme court of appeal.

Executive Power

The executive – the Cabinet ministers headed by the Prime Minister – is usually drawn from the party holding the most seats in the Commons; the monarch usually asks the majority party's leader to be Prime Minister. The current Prime Minister is appointed by the King. He is the head of government and leader of the parliamentary majority.

The office is not established by any constitution or law but exists only by long-established convention, which stipulates that the monarch must appoint as Prime Minister the person most likely to command the confidence of the House of Commons; this individual is typically the leader of the political party or coalition of parties that holds the largest number of seats in that chamber. The position of Prime Minister was not created; it evolved slowly and erratically over three hundred years due to numerous acts of Parliament, political developments, and accidents of history.

British governments (or Ministries) are generally formed by one party. The Prime Minister and Cabinet are usually all

members of the same political party, almost always the one that has a majority of seats in the House of Commons. Coalition governments (a ministry that consists of representatives from two or more parties) and minority governments (a one-party ministry formed by a party that does not command a majority in the Commons) are relatively rare. “One-party government”, as this system is sometimes called, has been the general rule for almost three hundred years.

Despite the “one party” convention, Prime Ministers may still be called upon to lead either minority or coalition governments. A minority government may be formed as a result of a “hung parliament“ in which no single party commands a majority in the House of Commons after a general election or the death, resignation, or defection of existing members.

When the general election of 2010 produced a hung parliament, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties agreed to form the first Cameron ministry, the first coalition in seventy years. Conservative Prime Minister Winston Churchill led the previous coalition in the UK before 2010 during most of the Second World War from May 1940 to May 1945. After the general election of 2015, the nation returned to a one-party government after the Tories won an outright majority.

The Cabinet meets once a week subjects to make decisions about new policies, the implementation of existing policies, and the running of the various government departments; to help run the complicated machinery of a modern government, there is an organization called the Cabinet Office. It runs a busy communication works, keeping ministers in touch with each other, and drawing up the agendas for Cabinet meetings.

Political Parties

Before the mid-19th century, the Whigs and the Tories dominated politics in the United Kingdom. These were not political parties in the modern sense but somewhat loose alliances of interests and individuals. The Whigs included many

of the leading aristocratic dynasties committed to the Protestant succession and later drew support from elements of the emerging industrial interests and wealthy merchants. At the same time, the Tories were associated with the landed gentry, the Church of England, and the Church of Scotland.

By the mid-19th century, the Tories had evolved into the Conservative Party, and the Whigs had evolved into the Liberal Party. The Liberals and Conservatives dominated the political scene until the 1920s when the Liberal Party declined in popularity and suffered long resignations. The newly emerging Labor Party replaced it as the main anti-Tory opposition party which represented an alliance between the labor movement, organized trade unions, and various Socialist societies. Since then, the Conservative and Labour Parties have dominated British politics and have alternated in government ever since.

However, the UK is not quite a two-party system as other parties have significant support. The Liberal Democrats had been the third-largest party until the 2015 general election, when it was overtaken by the Scottish National Party in terms of seats and by UKIP in terms of votes.

Elections

General elections are held after Parliament has been “dissolved”, either by a royal proclamation or because the maximum term between elections – five years – has expired. The Prime Minister makes the decision on when to hold a general election.

For electoral purposes, Britain is divided into constituencies, each of which returns one MP to the House of Commons. All British citizens, together with citizens of other Commonwealth countries and citizens of the Irish Republic resident in Britain, may vote, provided they are aged 18 or over and not legally barred from voting. People not entitled to vote include those serving prison sentences, peers and peeresses who are members of the House of Lords, and those kept in hospital under mental health legislation.

Voting is by secret ballot. The elector selects just one candidate on the ballot paper and marks an “X” by the candidate’s name. Voting in elections is voluntary. On average, about 75 % of the electorate votes.

Any person aged 21 or over who is a British citizen or a citizen of another Commonwealth country or the Irish Republic may stand for election to Parliament, provided they are not disqualified. People disqualified include those who are bankrupt, those sentenced to more than one year’s imprisonment, members of the clergy, members of the House of Lords, and a range of public servants and officials. Approved candidates are usually selected by their political party organisations in their constituency, although candidates do not have to have party backing.

The leader of the political party which wins most seats (although not necessarily most votes) at a general election or who has the support of a majority of members in the House of Commons is by convention invited by the Sovereign to form the new government.

Devolution to Scotland and Wales

The Government is committed to giving the people of Scotland and Wales more control over their own affairs by setting up a Scottish Parliament and a Welsh Assembly. These plans were supported by the Scottish and Welsh people in referenda held in September 1997.

The Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh was opened in 1999 following the election of its 129 members – 73 directly elected on a constituency basis, plus 56 elected by proportional representation. It can make laws and raise or lower the basic income tax rate by up to three percent. Scotland will continue to elect MPs to Westminster to represent Scottish interests.

The Welsh Assembly, which opened in May 1999 in Cardiff, has 60 members, directly elected every four years. It debates issues of concern in Wales and is responsible for a substantial budget, but the Principality will continue to share the

same legal system as England.

Judicial System

A feature common to all the systems of law in the UK is that there is no complete code. The sources of law include legislation

(e.g., some 3,000 Acts of Parliament) and unwritten or “common law”.

The criminal courts in England and Wales include:

1. Magistrates’ Courts. About 98 % of all criminal cases are disposed of by the magistrates (2 to 7) known as Justices of the Peace. These courts try the less serious offenses (they hear and determine charges against people accused of summary offenses that are not serious enough to go before higher courts). The second function of the Magistrates’ Courts is to conduct a preliminary hearing. Thirdly, they hear cases involving children (Juvenile Courts). The magistrates license public houses, restaurants, betting shops, and other public places. About 27 250 lay magistrates are sitting in nearly 700 different courts.

2. Crown Courts. The Crown Court deals with trials of the more serious cases, the sentencing of offenders committed for sentence by Magistrates’ Courts and appeals from Magistrates’ Courts. It sits in about 90 centers and is presided over by High Court judges, full-time “circuit judges,” and part-time recorders. All contested trials take place before a jury. The jury consists of 12 persons and tries indictable, that is, more serious criminal offenses (10 out of 12 must agree on their verdict).

The civil courts include:

1. County Courts (300, presided over by a paid judge). Their jurisdiction covers adoption cases, bankruptcy, divorce cases, and actions concerning land, trusts, and mortgages. Cases outside this limit are heard before High Court Judges, either in the Crown Courts or the High Court itself.

2. The High Court of Justice is divided into the Chancery Division (mortgages, bankruptcies, partnership,

estates), the Family Division, and the Queen's Bench Division (Common Law actions, commercial disputes). It covers virtually all civil cases. The Family Division of the High Court now deals with all jurisdictions affecting the family: divorce, wardship, guardianship, and probate (the ratification of wills).

Judicial Personnel

a) Judges: appointed by the Queen, on the advice of the Lord Chancellor; hold office for life; are selected among senior barristers, especially Q.C.s (Queen's Counsels); 200 approximately.

b) Barristers: lawyers who have passed the examination of the Bar Council ("called to the bar"); there are 2,000 approximately organised as a very powerful and closed corporation (Inns of Court). These are the Inner Temple, the Middle Temple, Lincoln's Inn, and Gray's Inn. The four societies together form what is known as "The Bar". The Bar as a whole is responsible for the education of would-be barristers. The successful candidate is rewarded by being called to the Bar. The duty of barristers is to further their clients' cases in courts and speak in law courts. As "counsel for the prosecution," a barrister will try to prove the accused person's guilt. As "counsel for the defense," he will defend the accused.

c) Solicitors: members of the Law Society, prepare all the judicial work (briefs, enquiries, witnesses): 25,000 approximately. Their main function is to keep a client out of the courts by advising him and drafting his contracts, wills, leases, and other documents.

d) Justices of the Peace (JPs): unpaid and non-professional magistrates for inferior courts; assisted by professionals (clerks).

Police

There are about 60 police forces in Britain, each employed and paid by the local authorities. They get half their money from the local rates and half from the Treasury. The forces are completely independent of one another. Each force

has its C.I.D. – Criminal Investigation Department. The London Police Force, called the Metropolitan Police, is not controlled by the local authority. It is responsible to the Home Secretary, and the Government appoints its chief officers. “Scotland Yard”, the C.I.D. of the Metropolitan Police, is so called because the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police are in New Scotland Yard, near Whitehall.

Interesting to know: If you’re in trouble or have witnessed a crime, go to the nearest telephone and dial 999. You’ll be put through immediately to the Post Office, who will ask which service you want – Police, Fire Brigade or Ambulance.

Traffic Wardens

Traffic wardens were first introduced in 1960. Now there are about 20,000 traffic wardens in England and Wales. They deal with minor traffic offenses, like parking in the wrong place or without lights; they report car owners without licenses; they supervise school children crossing roads.

Interesting to know: The death penalty for murder was abolished in 1965.

Administrative Division

The United Kingdom has a complex administrative division. England is divided into 47 boroughs, 36 counties, 29 London boroughs, 12 cities and boroughs, 10 districts, 12 cities, and 3 royal boroughs. Northern Ireland has 24 districts and 2 cities (Belfast and Derry). Scotland is divided into 32 council areas and Wales – into 11 county boroughs, 9 counties, and 2 cities and counties.

As for Scotland, one can’t forget such a historically important event – the referendum. The **Scottish independence referendum** was on the independence in Scotland on 18 September 2014.

The independence referendum question, which voters answered with “Yes” or “No”, was “Should Scotland be an independent country?” The “No” side won, with 2 001,926

(55,3 %) voting against independence and 1 617,989 (44,7 %) voting in favour. The turnout of 84,6 % was the highest recorded for an election or referendum in the United Kingdom since the introduction of universal suffrage.

The U.K. also retains several dependent areas, most of which lie overseas. They are Anguilla, Bermuda, British Indian Ocean Territory, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Guernsey, Jersey, Isle of Man, Montserrat, Pitcairn Islands, Saint Helena, South Georgia, and the South Sandwich Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands. After the British Empire's complete demise following World War II, these territories continued their political links with London. They are United Kingdom Overseas Territories.

Questions for practical classes:

1. Give the main principles of the work of legislative power in the UK.
2. Give the main principles of the work of executive power in the UK.
3. Give the main principles of the work of judicial power in the UK.
4. Enlarge on the meaning of the terms “hung parliament” and “one-party government”.
5. What political parties can you name in the UK, and what are their principles?
6. How do they organize the elections in the UK?
7. Features of criminal court in the UK.
8. Specify the duties of the judicial personnel.
9. Enlarge on the administrative division of the UK.

Recommended Resources

1. McCormick, J. Contemporary Britain. Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. 248 p.
2. Morris, I. Geography is destiny: Britain and the world, a 10,000-year history. Profile Books Ltd, 2023. 576 p.

3. Oakland, J. British civilization: an introduction. Ninth edition. London, New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2020. 416 p.

4. Black, J. A brief history of the British Monarchy – from the Iron Age to King Charles III. Little, Brown Book Group, 2022. 256 p.

5. United Kingdom. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom>.

6. United Kingdom. Wikipedia. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom.

Lecture 4

THE UK EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Essence of Education in Great Britain

The British government attached little importance to education until the end of the 19th century (public schools – character-building and team spirit; boarding schools – future position in the army’s higher ranks, in business and politics). Today education is one of the country’s most frequent subjects for public debate.

The central government does not prescribe a detailed learning program or determine what books and materials should be used. Nor does it dictate the exact hours of the school day, the dates of holidays, or the age at which a child must start full-time education. This is because the public school tradition has influenced the system that a school is its own community. Universities, although financed by the government, have more autonomy. Each has complete control over what to teach, how to teach it, who it accepts as students, and how to test these students.

Today much of the public debate about educational policy focuses on how:

1. it has influenced the general teaching style, prioritizing developing understanding rather than acquiring factual knowledge and learning to apply it to specific tasks.
2. academic ability rather than practical ability can be achieved (high-quality education for the intelligent and academically inclined with comparatively little attention given to the educational needs of the rest).

The basic features of the British educational system are the same as they are anywhere in Europe: full-time education is compulsory up to the middle teenage years; the academic year begins at the end of summer; compulsory education is free of charge, but parents may spend money on educating their children privately if they want to. There are three recognized

stages: children move from the first stage (primary) to the second stage (secondary) at around the age of eleven or twelve; the third stage is “further” education at university or college.

Public or Private Education

Terminology to do with the school system in Britain can be confusing. Schools funded by the government, either directly or via local education authorities, are called “state schools,” and education provided in this way is known as “state education.” This distinguishes it from “private education,” which comprises “independent schools.” Some “independent schools” are known as “public schools”.

The possibility of confusion is especially great because in the USA, schools organized by the government are called “public schools,” and education provided by the government is called the “public school system.”

In Britain today, about 8 % of children are educated outside the state system. There are 3 levels of private schools – primary schools (ages 4 to 8) and preparatory schools (8 to 13). At the age of 13, children take an examination. If they pass, they go on to public school, where they usually remain until they are 18. Many preps and most public schools are boarding schools – the children live there during the school terms.

Pre-School Education

Pre-school education is early childhood education that focuses on children between the ages of infancy and six. The system of preschool education varies widely, with different approaches, theories, and practices within different school jurisdictions. It is not compulsory. The term “preschool education” includes such programs as nursery school, daycare, or kindergarten, which are occasionally used interchangeably yet are distinct entities. While pedagogies differ, there is the general agreement that preschools are responsible for providing education before commencing statutory education.

Daycare or child care is the care of a child during the day by someone other than the child’s parents or legal guardians,

typically someone outside the child's immediate family. The service is known as "child care" in the United Kingdom and Australia and "daycare" in America. Childcare or daycare is provided in nurseries or creches or by childminders caring for children in their own homes. Childcare or daycare is ongoing care during specific periods, such as the parents' time at work. Childcare can also take on a more formal structure, with education, child development, and discipline falling into the fold of services.

Day nurseries take children from 2 months to five years and are run by the Local Health Authority (LHA). Day nurseries remain open all year round. You pay according to your income for day nurseries.

A *nursery school* is a school for children between the ages of three and five, staffed by qualified teachers and other professionals who encourage and supervise educational play rather than simply providing childcare. In the UK, preschool education in nursery classes or schools is fully funded by the government, run by the Local Education Authority (LEA), and generally available to children over three. Nursery schools work during school hours (9 a.m. – 4 p.m.) and observe school holidays.

Kindergarten (German, literally means "children's garden") is a form of education for young children that serves as a transition from home to the commencement of more formal schooling. Children are taught to develop basic skills through creative play and social interaction. The term "kindergarten" is now used in English only in certain private schools; it often refers to foreign countries.

Pre-school education can be provided by childcare centers, playgroups, nursery schools, and nursery classes within primary schools. Private nursery education is also available throughout the UK and varies between structured pre-school education and a service offering child-minding facilities.

In Scotland, children are entitled to a place in a nursery

class when they reach their third birthday. This gives parents the option of

two years of funded preschool education before beginning primary one, the first year of compulsory education. Nursery children three years old are referred to as ante-pre-school, whilst children four years old are termed pre-school. Pre-school education in Scotland is planned around the document “A curriculum framework for children from 3 to 5”, which identifies learning intentions around the following five areas of development:

- Emotional, Personal, and Social Development.
- Communication and Language.
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World.
- Expressive and Aesthetic Development.
- Physical Development and Movement.

Primary Education

In the UK, primary education schools are now known as primary schools. They generally cater for children aged from four to eleven. Primary schools are often subdivided into infant schools for children from 4 to 7 and junior schools for ages 7 to 11.

Many children do not begin full-time attendance at school until they are about five and start primary school. Nearly all schools work a five-day week, with no half-day, and are closed on Saturdays. Methods of teaching vary, but there is most commonly a balance between formal lessons, with the teacher at the front of the classroom, and activities in which children work in small groups around the table with the teacher supervising.

In the private sector, fee-paying schools that provide primary education are known as preparatory schools, and they often cater to children up to the age of thirteen. Preparatory schools are designed to prepare pupils for entrance examinations for fee-paying independent schools.

In England, children start school at five depending upon the policy of the Local Education Authority. All state schools are

obliged to follow a centralised National Curriculum. All state primary schools are under the jurisdiction of the Department for Children,

Schools and Families. The Independent Schools Inspectorate inspects private schools.

In Scotland, children typically spend seven years at primary school.

Children in Wales spend 7 years at primary school between the ages of 4 and 11.

Comprehensive vs. Selective Schooling

More than 90 % of children who attend state schools go to schools of the comprehensive school system introduced in the 1960s. Children go to primary school at the age of 5. Depending on the policy, they may go straight to the upper school, usually called comprehensive, at 11. Alternatively, they may attend the middle school for 3–4 years before attending the upper school. The comprehensive schooling is non-selective. This means that all children go from one school to another without exams or being selected according to their abilities.

In some areas of Britain, you may find an older and different system of education – the selective system (introduced in 1944).

Children are selected for certain schools according to their abilities. All children go to the primary school until the age of 11. Then they take an examination called 11-plus. Successful students go to a grammar school, where they receive academic education. Those who fail the exam go to a modern secondary school, where they receive an education that is less academic and more intended to train them for a job when they leave at 16.

age	School Education				age
16	Comprehensive School	Grammar School	Secondary Modern School	Public Schools	16
15					15
14					14
13					13
12	Middle School	Primary Schools		Preparatory Schools	12
11					11
10					10
9					9
8					8
7				Primary Schools	7
6	Nursery Schools				6
5					5
4					4
State Sector (over 90 %)				Independent	

Secondary Education

A *comprehensive school* is a state school that does not select its intake based on academic achievement or aptitude. This contrasts with the selective school system, where admission is restricted based on selection criteria. The term is commonly used in relation to England and Wales, where comprehensive schools were introduced on an experimental basis in the 1940s and became more widespread in 1965. About 90 % of British secondary school pupils now attend comprehensive schools. They correspond broadly to the schools in the United States and Canada. Comprehensive schools are primarily about providing an entitlement curriculum to all children, without selection, whether due to financial considerations or attainment. A consequence is a wide-ranging curriculum, including practical subjects such as design and technology and vocational learning, which were less common or nonexistent in grammar schools.

A *grammar school* is one of several different types of schools in the history of education in the United Kingdom and other English-speaking countries, originally a school teaching

classical languages but more recently an academically oriented secondary school.

The original purpose of medieval grammar schools was the teaching of Latin. Over time, the curriculum was broadened: first, to include Ancient Greek, and later – English and other European languages, natural sciences, mathematics, history, geography, and other subjects. In the late Victorian era, grammar schools were reorganised to provide secondary education throughout England and Wales; Scotland had developed a different system. Grammar schools

of those types were also established in British territories overseas, where they have evolved in different ways.

Grammar schools became the selective tier of the Tripartite System of state-funded secondary education, operating in England and Wales from the mid-1940s to the late 1960s and continuing to operate in Northern Ireland. With the move to non-selective comprehensive schools in the 1960s and 1970s, some grammar schools became fully independent and charged fees. In contrast, most others were abolished or became comprehensive (or sometimes merged with a secondary modern to form a new comprehensive school). In both cases, many schools kept “grammar school” in their names. More recently, a number of state grammar schools are still retaining their selective intake and have gained academy status, meaning that they are independent of the Local Education Authority. Some parts of England retain forms of the Tripartite System, and a few grammar schools survive in otherwise comprehensive areas.

A secondary modern school is a type of secondary school that existed throughout England, Wales, and Northern Ireland from 1944 until the early 1970s under the Tripartite System and was designed for the majority of pupils – those who do not achieve scores in the top 25 % of the eleven plus examination. They were replaced in most of the UK by the Comprehensive School system and now remain in place mainly in Northern Ireland (where they are usually referred to simply as secondary

schools) and in some parts of England, such as Buckinghamshire Lincolnshire, Wirral and Kent (where they remain and are referred to as community schools).

The public examinations British schoolchildren take are GCSEs (the General Certificate of Secondary Education). Pupils usually take their GCSEs at 16 (“O”-level exam = ordinary). Some children take 3–4 exams; others take as many as 10– 11 exams. Pupils who passed their GCSEs may remain at school for another 2 years and take their “A”-level exam (advanced). All grammar and most comprehensive schools have a sixth form (lasting 2 years), where pupils study for their “A”-level. Any student who wants to attend university must pass at least 2–3 “A”-levels.

Further Education in Great Britain

At the age of sixteen people are free to leave school if they want to. Far fewer sixteen-year-olds go straight out and look for a job than used to. Most do not find employment immediately, and many take part in training schemes that involve on-the-job training combined with part-time college courses. About half of those who stay in full-time education will have to leave their school, either because it does not have a sixth form and go to a Sixth-form College, or College of Further Education.

The academic year in Britain’s universities, Polytechnics, and Colleges of Education is divided into three terms, which usually run from the beginning of October to the middle of December, from the middle of January to the end of March, and from the middle of April to the end of June or the beginning of July.

There are about one hundred universities in Britain. The oldest and best-known universities are Oxford, Cambridge, London, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh, Southampton, Cardiff, Bristol and Birmingham.

Good A-level results in at least two subjects are necessary to get a place at a university. However, good exam

passes alone are not enough. Universities choose their students after interviews. For all British citizens, a place at a university brings with it a grant from their local education authority.

After three years of study, a university graduate will leave with a Bachelor of Arts, Science, Engineering, Medicine, etc. Later he/she may continue to take a Master's degree and then a Doctor's degree. Research is an important feature of university work.

English universities greatly differ from each other. They differ in date of foundation, size, history, tradition, general organization, methods of instruction, and way of student life.

Several universities in the United Kingdom are composed of colleges. These can be divided into broad categories. A group of universities established or expanded in the UK during the mid-twentieth century, such as Lancaster, York, and Kent, etc., are called "Plate glass universities". The Russell Group is an association of 24 British public research universities. It is headquartered in London and was established in 1994 to represent its members' interests, principally to government and parliament. Russell Group members receive approximately two-thirds of all university research grants and contract income in the United Kingdom.

Education in Scotland

Scotland has a long history of universal provision of public education, and the Scottish education system is distinctly different from those in the other countries of the United Kingdom. The Scotland Act 1998 gives the Scottish Parliament legislative control over all education matters, and the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 is the principal legislation governing education in Scotland. Political responsibility for education at all levels is vested in the Scottish Parliament and the Learning Directorate.

After seven years of primary education and four years of compulsory secondary education, students aged 15–16 may take Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) – Standard Grade

courses. These courses lead to the Standard Grade exams. The Standard Grade courses and exams correspond to the GCSEs in England and Wales.

After taking Standard Grade examinations, students can leave or continue in secondary education for one year to take another level of SCE courses called Higher Grades (Highers) in 4–6 subjects. At the end of these courses, students take Higher Grade examinations. Highers are graded on a scale of A–D, where an ‘A’ indicates a 70 % or more mark. A 70 % is approximately equal to an American score of 90 %.

Many universities suggest that Scottish students go on to a sixth year in which “further Highers” or the Certificate of Sixth Year Studies (CSYS) can be taken. The CSYS can only be taken by students in their final year of secondary schooling and possess a pass in the Higher Grade in the subject area concerned. CSYS is not required to enter a University in the UK but tends to offer more specialized study and is therefore recommended. CSYS are graded on an A–E scale, with A being the top grade.

State schools are owned and operated by the local authorities acting as Education Authorities, and the compulsory phase is divided into primary and secondary schools (often called high schools).

There are also private schools across the country, although the distribution is uneven, with such schools in 22 of the 32 Local Authority areas.

In 2024, research by the Office for National Statistics found that Scotland was the most highly educated country in Europe and among the most well-educated in the world in terms of tertiary education attainment, above countries like Finland, Ireland, and Luxembourg, with roughly 40 % of Scots aged 16–64 educated to NVQ level 4 and above.

Interesting to know: National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are work-based awards in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland that are achieved through assessment and

training. In Scotland, they are known as Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ).

To achieve an NVQ, candidates must prove they have the ability (competence) to perform their job to the required standard. NVQs are based on National Occupational Standards describing the 'competencies' expected in any job. Typically, candidates will work towards an NVQ that reflects their role in a paid or voluntary position. For example, someone in an admin office may take an NVQ in Business and Administration.

Questions for practical classes:

1. What is public education in the UK?
2. Pre-school education in the UK.
3. Principles of primary and secondary education in the UK.
4. Exams in the life of British school children.
5. Higher education and institutions in the UK.
6. What is the difference between the comprehensive and selective education systems?
7. Peculiarities of the education system in the four main administrative components of the UK.

Recommended Resources

1. McCormick, J. Contemporary Britain. Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. 248 p.
2. Morris, I. Geography is destiny: Britain and the world, a 10,000-year history. Profile Books Ltd, 2023. 576 p.
3. Oakland, J. British civilization: an introduction. Ninth edition. London, New York, NY: Routledge / Taylor & Francis Group, 2020. 416 p.
4. United Kingdom. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-Kingdom>.
5. United Kingdom. Wikipedia. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom.

Lecture 5 HISTORY OF THE USA

The date of the start of the history of the United States is a subject of constant debate among historians. Older textbooks start with the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492 and emphasize the European background, or they start around 1600 and emphasize the American frontier. In recent decades, American schools and universities typically have shifted back in time to include more on the colonial period and much more on the prehistory of the Native peoples.

Native Americans

Based on anthropological and genetic evidence, scientists generally agree that most Native Americans descend from people who migrated from Siberia across the Bering Strait at least 12,000 years ago.



The earliest peoples of the Americas came from Eurasia over a land bridge that connected the two continents across what

is now the Bering Strait during a period of glaciation when the seawater level was lower. The number and nature of these migrations are uncertain, but the land bridge is believed to have existed only until about 12,000 years ago when the land bridge was flooded. Three major migrations occurred, as traced by linguistic and genetic data; the early Paleoamericans soon spread throughout the Americas, diversifying into hundreds of culturally distinct nations and tribes. By 8000 BC, the North American climate was like today's.

The society began building at this site about 950 AD and reached its peak population in 1250 AD, of 20,000–30,000 people, which was not equaled by any city in the present-day United States until after 1800. Sophisticated pre-Columbian sedentary societies evolved in North America. The rise of the complex cultures was based on the people's adoption of maize agriculture, the development of greater population densities, and chiefdom-level complex social organization from 1200 AD to 1650 AD. The introduction of maize from Mesoamerica allowed the accumulation of crop surpluses to support a higher population density and led to the development of specialized skills.

The European colonization of the Americas forever changed the lives and cultures of the Native Americans. In the 15th to 19th centuries, their populations were ravaged by the results of displacement, disease, and, in many cases, by wars with the European groups and enslavement by them.

Europeans brought diseases against which the Native Americans had no immunity. Some historians estimate that up to 80 % of Native populations may have died due to European diseases. There are several documented cases where diseases were deliberately spread among Native Americans as a form of biological warfare. The most well-known example occurred in 1763, when Sir Jeffrey Amherst, Commander-in-Chief of the Forces of the British Army, wrote praising the use of smallpox-infected blankets to "extirpate" the Indian race.

Interesting to know: In recent years it has become popular to assert that Native Americans learned scalping from Europeans. Historical evidence suggests that scalping by Native Americans had not been practiced before contact with the Europeans.

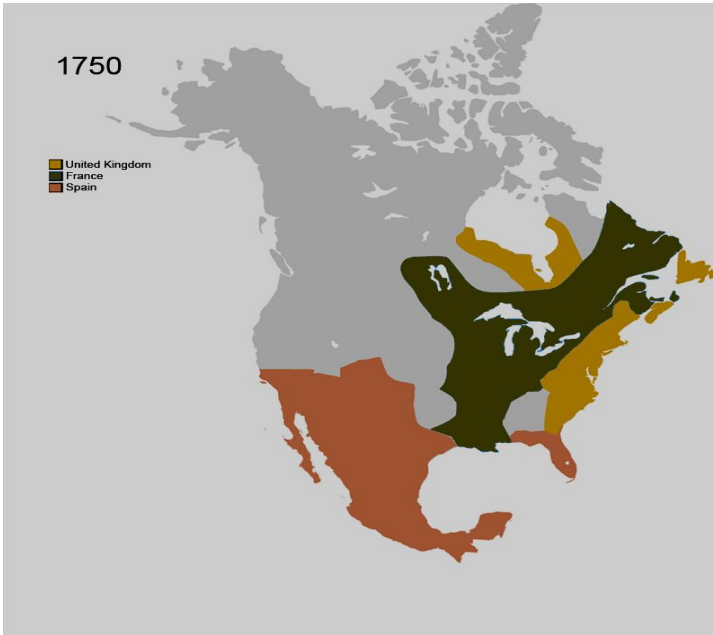
US Colonization

The first Europeans to reach North America were Icelandic Vikings, led by Leif Ericson, in about the year 1000. In 1492, the Italian navigator Christopher Columbus, acting on behalf of the Spanish crown, sailed west from Europe and landed on one of the Bahama Islands. Columbus never saw the mainland United States, but the first explorations of the continental United States were launched from the Spanish possessions that he helped establish. Within 40 years, Spanish adventurers had carved out a huge empire in Central and South America. In 1513, a group of men under Juan Ponce de Leon landed on the Florida coast near the present city of St. Augustine.

To many Europeans, the New World offered opportunities for wealth and power. Having concentrated on central and South America, where they found gold in huge quantities during the 1500s, Spaniards moved into what is now the Southeastern and Western United States. The English and French began exploring eastern North America in about 1500. At first, both nations sent only explorers, but in 1600, they began permanent settlement there.

The first English colony was founded at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. Early settlements developed in New England, in the Middle Colonies, and in the Southern Colonies. In 1620, the Pilgrims arrived on the Mayflower and founded Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts. In 1681, William Penn, a wealthy Quaker, received a large tract of land, which became known as Pennsylvania. To help populate it, Penn actively recruited immigrants, including many religious dissenters, e.g., Quakers, Mennonites, Amish, Moravians, and Baptists. The first German

community was established in Pennsylvania in 1683. By 1733, thirteen English colonies had been established along the Atlantic Coast.



The southern settlements were predominantly rural. In Virginia and Maryland, the planters supported by slave labor held most of the political power and the best land. At the same time, yeoman farmers, who worked smaller tracts of land, sat in popular assemblies and found their way into political office. Charleston, South Carolina, became the South's leading port and trading center. Whereas Virginia was bound to a single crop – tobacco – North and South Carolina also exported rice and indigo.

Interesting to know: Although Queen Elizabeth I introduced the notion of punishing criminals by sending them to another country as early as 1619, when the first cargo of convicts was sent to the New World, the term transportation seems to have come into vogue around 1680 during Charles

II's reign. It was intended to be an alternative to execution, and it became a formal concept in 1717 with George III's "Transportation Act".

One of the most striking characteristics of the mainland colonies in the 18th century was their rapid growth. In 1700, only 250 000 people resided in the colonies; by 1775, it had become 2,5 million. Immigration accounted for a considerable share of growth. European immigration flooded England's mainland colonies.

When 18th-century immigrants came to the New World, they were at the bottom of the social scale. By the time they arrived, American society was already dominated by wealthy, native-born families. Unlike their 17th-century predecessors, the new non-English immigrants had little opportunity to improve their circumstances.

The slave trade was then also firmly established that by the 1750s, there were 250 000 black slaves brought from Africa, supporting a white population of over 700 000.

Revolution (1775 – 1783)

In 1763, the end of the Seven Years' War and the French and Indian Wars left England in control of Canada and all of North America east of the Mississippi. The colonies long accustomed to a large measure of independence, were now demanding more freedom. They had grown vastly in economic strength and cultural attainment, and virtually all had long years of self-government behind them.

The British government, which needed more money to support its growing empire, started a new financial policy. King George III and the British Parliament believed that the time had come for the colonists to begin obeying trade regulations and paying their share of the cost of maintaining the British Empire. A succession of Acts of Parliament was enacted and repealed. Still, none were accepted by the colonists, who were not represented in Parliament, so they argued that Britain had no right to tax them. On April 19, 1775, the American Revolution

broke out between the Americans and the British. The conflict escalated, and King George III issued a proclamation on August 23, 1775, declaring the colonies in a state of rebellion.

On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress adopted a Declaration of Independence. Armed conflict between America and England lasted until 1783. Known as the Treaty of Paris, the peace settlement acknowledged the independence, freedom, and sovereignty of the 13 former colonies, now states, to which Great Britain granted the territory west to the Mississippi River, north to Canada, and south to Florida, which was returned to Spain.

In May 1787, a convention met in Philadelphia to draft a new Constitution. The men who wrote it included some of American history's most famous and important figures. George Washington, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and Benjamin Franklin were among them. They are the Founding Fathers of the United States.

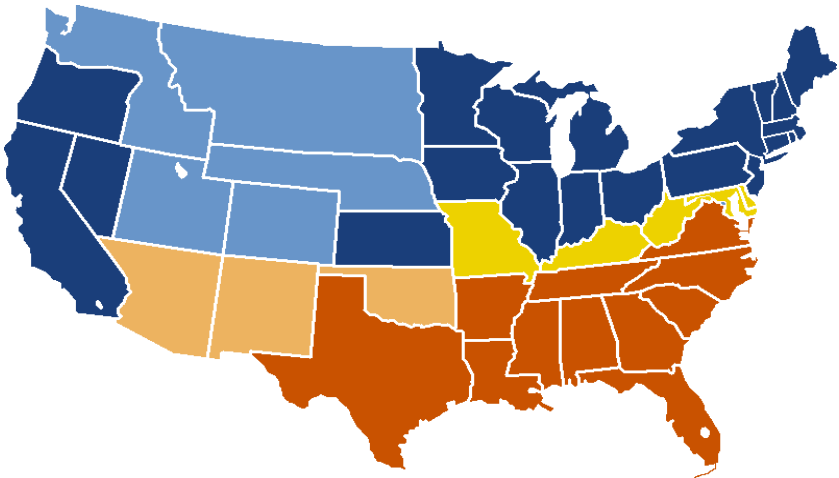
George Washington – a renowned hero of the American Revolutionary War, commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, and president of the Constitutional Convention – became the first President of the United States under the new Constitution in 1789. The national capital moved from New York to Philadelphia and finally settled in Washington, DC, in 1800.

Slavery

In the early 19th century, slavery began to assume greater importance as a national issue. In the early years of the republic, many leaders had supposed that slavery would die out. As late as 1808, when the international slave trade was abolished, many thought that slavery would soon end. But during the next generation, the South became solidly united behind the institution of slavery as new economic factors made slavery far more profitable than it had been before 1790. Chief among these was the rise of a great cotton-growing industry. Sugarcane and tobacco, two labor-intensive crops, also

contributed to slavery's extension.

The country was divided into states permitting slavery (Southerners) and states prohibiting it (Northerners). After Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860, eleven states left the Union. They proclaimed themselves an independent nation, the Confederate States of America: South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina. The American Civil War began on April 12, 1861.



Union states: dark gray (free) and light gray (slave).
Confederacy states: southern (slave) U.S. territories: lighter shades of gray. During the American Civil War, the Union was the term used to refer to the United States of America and specifically to the national government and the 23 free states and five border slave states that supported it. The Union was opposed by 11 southern slave states that formed the Confederate States of America, or “the Confederacy”.

Four years later, the Confederates surrendered. No other war in history has taken so many American lives. The Civil War put an end to slavery; it also made clear that the country was not a collection of semi-independent states but an indivisible

whole. In December 1865, Congress ratified the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which abolished slavery. The 14th Amendment (1868) confirmed the citizenship of blacks, and the 15th Amendment (1870) made it illegal to deny the right to vote based on race.

Growth of the USA

Interesting to know: Uncle Sam symbolizes the U.S. government. He is a tall, thin man with white hair and a white beard. He wears a tall hat, a bow tie, and the stars and stripes of the American flag. During the War of 1812 (with Britain), the U.S. government hired meat packers to provide meat to the army. One of these meat packers was Samuel Wilson. He stamped the boxes of meat for the army with a large “U.S.” – for the United States. A government inspector came to look over Sam’s company. He asked the worker about “U.S.” on the boxes. As a joke, the worker answered that these letters stood for the name of his boss, Uncle Sam. Thus, “Uncle Sam” became a nickname for the U.S. government.

In the first quarter of the 19th century, the frontier was pushed beyond the Mississippi River. In 1803, President Jefferson negotiated the purchase of Louisiana with the French. France – then ruled by Napoleon Bonaparte – was powerful and aggressive. Jefferson viewed French control of Louisiana as a danger to the United States. So, in 1803, he arranged the purchase of the area from France.

From 1816 to 1821, six new states were created – Indiana, Illinois, Maine, Mississippi, Alabama, and Missouri. Western expansion led to increasing conflicts with the Indians of the West.

Between the Civil War and the First World War, the United States of America was transformed from a rural republic to an urban state. The country became a leading industrial power. Great factories and steel mills, flourishing cities, and vast agricultural holdings marked the land. The first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, and by 1900,

the United States had more rail mileage than all of Europe. The petroleum, steel, and textile industries prospered. The electrical industry flourished as Americans made use of a series of inventions: the telephone, the light bulb, and the phonograph.

The South, however, remained even thirty years after the Civil War largely poor, overwhelmingly agrarian, and economically dependent. Its society enforced a rigid social segregation of blacks from whites and tolerated recurrent racial violence.

The struggle over the Mexican territory began in Texas in 1835 when the American settlers here revolted against Mexican rule. In 1836, the settlers proclaimed Texas an independent republic but also requested U.S. statehood. 9 years later, the U.S. annexed Texas and made it a state. In 1853, with the Gadsden Purchase, America bought from Mexico the strip of the land that makes up the southern edge of Arizona and New Mexico. The United States then owned all the territory of its present states except Alaska and Hawaii.



The last decades of the 19th century were a period of imperial expansion for the United States, as it extended its influence, and at times its domain, over widely scattered areas in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and into Central America. In 1867, America purchased Alaska from Russia. Within a few years after the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898, the United States was exercising control or influence over islands in the Caribbean Sea, the mid-Pacific, and close to the Asian mainland. When the Hawaiian royal government announced its intention to end foreign influence in 1893, American businessmen joined with influential Hawaiians to install a new government, and in July 1898 the islands were annexed.

Progressive Era

The Progressive Era lasted from about 1890 to the outbreak of World War I. In response to the excesses of 19th-century capitalism and political corruption, a reform movement arose called “progressivism”. Almost all the notable figures of the period were connected, at least in part, with the reform movement. The goals of the Progressives were greater democracy and social justice, honest government, more effective regulation of business, and a revived commitment to public service. The years 1902 to 1908 marked the era of the greatest reform activity. Many states enacted laws to improve the conditions under which people lived and worked. Child labor laws were strengthened, and new ones were adopted, raising age limits, shortening work hours, restricting night work, and requiring school attendance.

When World War I erupted in Europe in 1914, President Woodrow Wilson urged a policy of strict American neutrality. In January 1917, Germany declared unrestricted submarine warfare against all ships bound for Allied ports. After five American vessels had been sunk, Congress declared war on Germany in April 1917. An armistice ending World War I was declared on November 11, 1918.

The changes wrought in the 1920s were far-reaching.

The work week dropped from 60 to 48 hours. For the first time, play was as important as work. It was a wonderful decade for the arts and literature in America. Technology grew, and automobiles, radios, and movies became hugely popular. With profits soaring and interest rates low, plenty of money was available for investment.

World War II

As Germany, Italy, and Japan continued their aggression, the United States announced that no country involved in the conflict could look to it for aid. Neutrality legislation, enacted from 1935 to 1937, prohibited trade with or credit to any of the warring nations. Neutrality was also the initial American response to the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed the U.S. Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. On December 8, Congress declared a state of war with Japan; three days later its allies Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. The nation rapidly geared itself for the mobilization of its people and its entire industrial capacity. All the nation's activities – farming, manufacturing, mining, trade, labor, investment, communications, even education and cultural undertakings – were in some fashion brought under new and enlarged controls. By the end of 1943, approximately 65 million men and women were in uniform or in war-related occupations.

The Western Allies decided that their essential military effort was to be concentrated in Europe, where the core of enemy power lay, while the Pacific theater was to be secondary. On D-Day, June 6, 1944, Allied forces landed in Normandy. On August 25, Paris was liberated. By February and March 1945, troops advanced into Germany. On May 7, Germany surrendered. The war in the Pacific continued after Germany's surrender. On August 6, an atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima, and on August 8, an atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. On August 14, Japan agreed to terms set at Potsdam on July 26, and on September 2, 1945, Japan

formally surrendered.

Decades of Changes

Following World War II, the United States emerged as one of the two dominant superpowers, the USSR being the other. The U.S. Senate, on a bipartisan vote, approved U.S. participation in the United Nations (UN), which marked a turn away from the traditional isolationism of the U.S. and toward increased international involvement. In the decades after World War II, the United States became a global influence in economic, political, military, cultural, and technological affairs. Beginning in the 1950s, middle-class culture became obsessed with consumer goods.

In 1960, John F. Kennedy was elected president. At 43, he was the youngest man ever to win the presidency. Kennedy wanted to exert strong leadership to extend economic benefits to all citizens.

In October 1962, Kennedy was faced with what turned out to be the most drastic crisis of the Cold War: The Cuban Missile Crisis. When the Soviet Union installed nuclear missiles in Cuba, Kennedy decided on a quarantine to prevent Soviet ships from bringing additional missiles to Cuba, and he demanded publicly that the Soviets remove the weapons. After several days of tension, the Soviets backed down. Space was another arena for competition after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957. In April 1961, they capped a series of triumphs in space by sending the first man into orbit around the Earth. President Kennedy responded with a promise that Americans would walk on the moon before the decade was over, and in July of 1969, Neil Armstrong stepped onto the moon's surface.

The 1965 reform in immigration policy shifted the focus away from Western Europe, and the number of new arrivals from Asia and Latin America increased.

After 26 consecutive years of Democratic control, the Republicans gained a majority in the Senate in 1980, and Republican Ronald Reagan was elected president.

The central theme of Reagan's domestic policy was that the federal government had become too big and federal taxes too high. President Reagan sought a more assertive role for the nation in foreign policy. In relations with the Soviet Union, President Reagan's declared policy was one of peace through strength. During his first term, the administration increased spending on defense expenditures. After the reelection in 1984, Reagan softened his rigid position on arms control. A recession marked the early years of Reagan's presidency. Still, conditions improved in 1983 as the United States entered one of the longest periods of sustained economic growth since World War II.

In 1988, Reagan's vice president during all eight years of his presidency, George Bush was elected the 41st president of the United States. Bush faced a dramatically changing world, as the Cold War ended after 40 bitter years, the Communist empire broke up, and the Berlin Wall fell.

The long-term effects of events and trends occurring at the beginning of the 21st century have yet to be fully understood. In the past, the United States has thrived on such challenges. From its origins as a set of obscure colonies hugging the Atlantic coast, the United States has undergone a remarkable transformation into what political analyst Ben Wattenberg has called "the first universal nation", a population of almost 300 million people representing virtually every nationality and ethnic group on the globe. It is also a nation where the pace and extent of change – economic, technological, cultural, demographic, and social – is unceasing.

Questions for practical classes:

1. What is considered the date of the start of the history of the United States?
2. Enlarge on the first colonization of the USA.
3. What do you know about the Boston Tea Party?

4. What were the reasons and results of the Revolution (1775-1783)?
5. By whom and under what circumstances was the Constitution of the USA adopted?
6. Give the history of Washington DC as the USA capital becoming.
7. What were the reasons for the Civil War in America in the 19th century?
8. Give the history of the American states adding.
9. Talk about the present-day USA.

Recommended Resources

1. Sjurson, D. A. A true history of the United States. Steerforth Press, 2021. 688 p.
2. Serocold, C. A history of the United States for newcomers. History in a heartbeat, 2023. 542 p.
3. United States: History, Map, Flag, & Population. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States>.
4. U.S. History Primary Source Timeline. URL: <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/>.
5. History of the United States. URL: <http://usa.usembassy.de/history.htm>.
6. United States. Wikipedia. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States.

Lecture 6

THE USA, GENERAL FACTS

Geography

The United States is a country that consists of forty-eight contiguous states in North America, Alaska, and Hawaii. Those which border one another on the continent are grouped into seven regions: New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont), Middle Atlantic States (New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania), Southern States (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia), Midwestern States (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin), Rocky Mountain States (Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming), Southwestern States (Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas), and Pacific Coast States (California, Oregon, Washington).

The term “United States“, when used in the geographical sense, is the contiguous United States, the state of Alaska, the island state of Hawaii, the five insular territories of Puerto Rico, Northern Mariana Islands, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa, and minor outlying possessions. The country shares land borders with Canada and Mexico and maritime (water) borders with Russia, Cuba, and the Bahamas in addition to Canada and Mexico.

Without Hawaii and Alaska, the continental U.S. measures 4 505 kilometers from its Atlantic to Pacific coasts and 2 574 kilometers from Canada to Mexico; it covers 9 372,614 square kilometers. In the area, it is the fourth largest nation in the world (behind Russia, Canada, and China).

The sparsely settled far-northern state of Alaska is the largest of America’s 50 states, with a land mass of 1,477,887 square kilometers. Alaska is nearly 400 times the size of Rhode

Island, which is the smallest state, but Alaska, with 521,000 people, has half the population of Rhode Island.

The current population of the United States is 345,815,485 (as of 2024), according to the latest United Nations data projections.

Unlike China and India, the United States population is expected to continue to grow throughout the century with no foreseeable decline. By 2067, the U.S. population is expected to surpass 400 million people.

The population growth in the United States is mainly attributed to high rates of immigration, which have decreased since 2016, and the natural increase (the difference between births and deaths).

The United States population grows on average about 0.9% every year. The population grew 0.60% in 2019, the lowest rate the U.S. has had in a century. This is because of a decrease in the number of total births over the year. Additionally, more post-World War II baby boomers are reaching old age, increasing the number of deaths.

Despite a decrease in the population growth rate in recent years, the population is still expected to grow continuously.

The United States is a land of bountiful rivers and lakes. Great lakes: Ontario, Huron, Superior, Erie and Michigan. Rivers: Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, Colorado, Columbia and Rio Grande.

For example, the northern state of Minnesota is known as the land of 10,000 lakes. The broad Mississippi River system, of great historical and economic importance to the U.S., runs 5-969 kilometers from Canada into the Gulf of Mexico – the world’s third longest river after the Nile and the Amazon. A canal south of Chicago joins one of the tributaries of the Mississippi to the five Great Lakes – making it the world’s largest inland water transportation route and the world’s biggest body of fresh water. The St. Lawrence Seaway, which the U.S. shares with Canada, connects the Great Lakes with the Atlantic Ocean, allowing seagoing vessels to travel 3 861 kilometers inland, as far as Duluth, Minnesota, during the spring, summer, and fall shipping

season. The Great Lakes are the largest group of freshwater lakes on the earth.

The geography of the United States varies across its immense area. Within the continental U.S., eight distinct physiographic divisions exist. These major divisions are:

Laurentian Upland – part of the Canadian Shield that extends into the northern United States Great Lakes area.

Atlantic Plain – the coastal regions of the eastern and southern parts that include the continental shelf, the Atlantic Coast, and the Gulf Coast.

Appalachian Highlands – lying on the eastern side of the United States, the region includes the Appalachian Mountains, the Watchung Mountains, the Adirondacks, and the New England province originally containing the Great Eastern Forest.

Interior Plains – part of the interior continental United States; it includes much of what is called the Great Plains.

Interior Highlands – also part of the interior continental United States; this division includes the Ozark Plateau.

Rocky Mountain System – one branch of the Cordilleran system lying far inland in the western states.

Intermontane Plateaus – also divided into the Columbia Plateau, the Colorado Plateau, and the Basin and Range Province; it is a system of plateaus, basins, ranges, and gorges between the Rocky and Pacific Mountain Systems. It is the setting for the Grand Canyon, the Great Basin, and Death Valley.

Pacific Mountain System – the coastal mountain ranges and features on the west coast of the United States.

The Atlantic coast of the United States is, with minor exceptions, low. The Pacific coast is mountainous (Appalachian, Cordilleran, Rocky Mountain, and Pacific Mountain System). Elevation extremes are the following:

– the lowest point: Death Valley, Inyo County, California

- 282 ft (-86 m) below sea level
- the highest point: Mount McKinley, Denali Borough, Alaska +20,320 ft (6,194 m) above sea level.

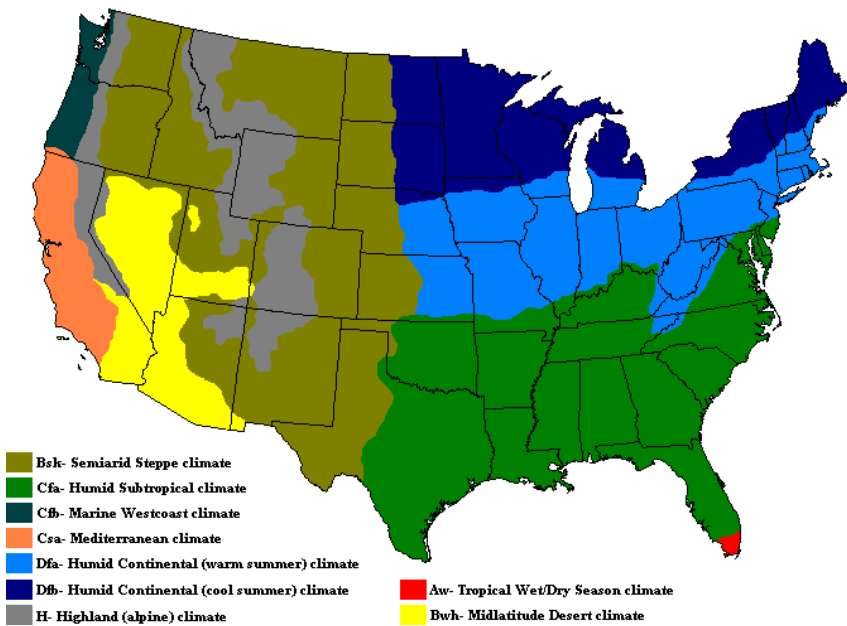
The capital city, Washington, District of Columbia, is a federal district located on land donated by the state of Maryland.

Climate

Due to its large size and wide range of geographic features, the United States contains examples of nearly every global climate. The climate is temperate in most areas, subtropical in the Deep South, tropical in Hawaii and southern Florida, polar in Alaska, semiarid in the Great Plains west of the 100th meridian, Mediterranean in coastal California, and arid in the Great Basin.

Most of the United States is in the temperate zone, with four distinct seasons and varying numbers of hot and cold days each season, while the northern tier of states and Alaska have extremely cold winters. In northern Alaska, tundra and arctic conditions predominate, and the temperature has fallen as low as - 80 °F (-62.2 °C). On the other end of the spectrum, Death Valley, California, once reached 134 °F (56,7 °C), the second-highest temperature ever recorded on Earth.

Climate Zones of the Continental United States



The United States is affected by a variety of natural disasters yearly. In central portions of the U.S., tornadoes are more common than anywhere else on Earth and touch down most commonly in the spring and summer. Deadly and destructive hurricanes occur annually along the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. The Appalachian region and the Midwest experience the worst floods, though virtually no area in the U.S. is immune to flooding. The West is affected by large wildfires each year.

Due to the contrasting air masses, the Great Plains and Midwest see frequent severe thunderstorms and tornado outbreaks during spring and summer, with around 1,000 tornadoes occurring each year. The strip of land from north Texas north to Kansas and east into Tennessee is known as Tornado Alley, where many houses have tornado shelters, and many towns have tornado sirens.

Another natural disaster that frequents the country is hurricanes, which can hit anywhere along the Gulf Coast or the Atlantic Coast, as well as Hawaii in the Pacific Ocean. Particularly at risk are the central and southern Texas coasts, the area from southeastern Louisiana east to the Florida Panhandle, the east coast of Florida, and the Outer Banks of North Carolina. However, any portion of the coast could be struck. Hurricane season runs from June 1 to November 30, peaking from mid-August through early October. Some of the more devastating hurricanes have included the Galveston Hurricane of 1900, Hurricane Andrew in 1992, and Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The remnants of tropical cyclones from the Eastern Pacific also occasionally impact the western United States, bringing moderate to heavy rainfall.

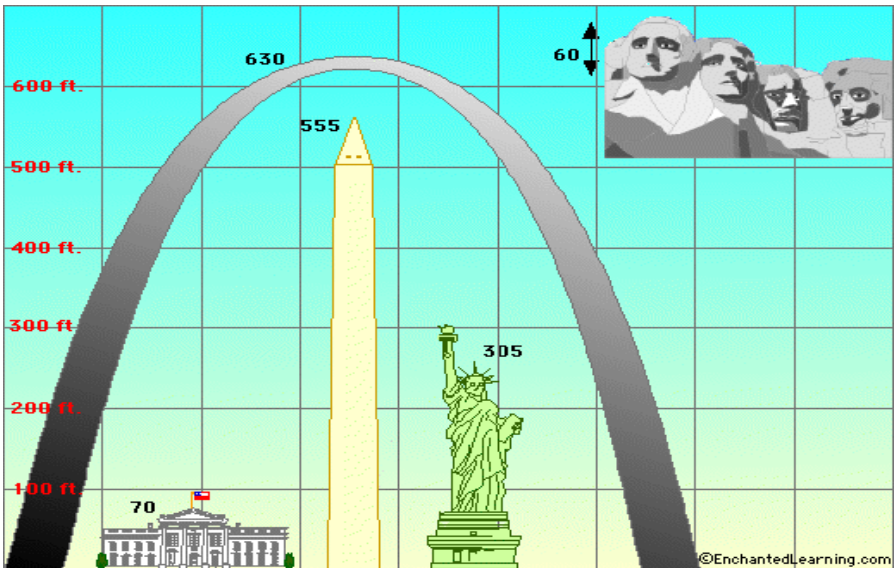
The West Coast of the continental United States and areas of Alaska (including the Aleutian Islands, the Alaskan Peninsula, and the southern Alaskan coast) make up part of the Pacific Ring of Fire, an area of heavy tectonic and volcanic activity that is the source of 90 % of the world's earthquakes.

The American Northwest sees the highest concentration of active volcanoes in the United States, in Washington, Oregon, and northern California along the Cascade Mountains. There are several active volcanoes located in the islands of Hawaii.

Symbols

There are many symbols that represent the United States of America. Some of the most popular ones are the Stars and Stripes (the U.S. flag), the Great Seal of the USA, the bald eagle (the national bird), the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, the

U.S. Capitol, the White House, Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, the Statue of Liberty (a gift from France), the Gateway Arch (in St. Louis, Missouri), Mount Rushmore (carved on a mountain in South Dakota), the Alamo, the Star-Spangled Banner (the national anthem of the USA), the Pledge of Allegiance, Yankee Doodle, Uncle Sam (a cartoon figure designed by Thomas Nast), the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial, Gettysburg, Monticello, Mount Vernon, the Golden Gate Bridge, the World War 2 Memorial, and many others.



The flag of the United States of America, often referred to as the American flag, is the national flag of the United States. It consists of thirteen equal horizontal stripes of red (top and bottom) alternating with white, with a blue rectangle in the canton (referred to specifically as the “union”) bearing fifty small, white, five-pointed stars arranged in nine offset horizontal rows of six stars (top and bottom) alternating with rows of five stars. The 50 stars on the flag represent the 50 states of the United States of America, and the 13 stripes represent the thirteen British colonies that declared independence from the Kingdom of Great Britain and became the first states in the Union. Nicknames for the flag include *the Stars and Stripes*, *Old Glory*, and *the Star-Spangled Banner*.

The modern meaning of the flag was forged in December 1860 when Major Robert Anderson moved the U.S. garrison from Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. Author Adam Goodheart argues this was the opening move of the American Civil War, and the flag was used throughout northern states to symbolize American nationalism and rejection of secessionism.



The first seal of the President of the United States of America was designed by Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson at the request of the Continental Congress. The design was approved on June 20, 1782. The design on the obverse (or front) of the seal is the coat of

arms of the United States, although the U.S. has never adopted any national coat of arms.

The seal pictures an American bald eagle holding a ribbon in its beak; the ribbon has the motto of the USA, “E PLURIBUS UNUM,” meaning “Out of many, one”. The eagle is clutching an olive branch (with 13 olives and 13 leaves) in one foot (symbolizing peace) and 13 arrows in the other (the 13 stands for the original 13 colonies, and the arrows symbolize the acceptance of the need to go to war to protect the country).

A shield is in front of the eagle; it has 13 red and white stripes (representing the original 13 colonies) with a blue bar above it (it symbolizes the uniting of the 13 colonies and represents Congress). Above the eagle are rays, a circle of clouds, and 13 white stars.

“In God We Trust” is the official motto of the United States. It was adopted as the nation’s motto in 1956 as an alternative or replacement to the unofficial motto of “E pluribus unum“, which was adopted when the Great Seal of the United States was created and adopted in 1782. “In God we trust” first appeared on U.S. coins in 1864 and has appeared on paper currency since 1957. A law passed in a Joint Resolution by the 84th Congress and approved by President Dwight Eisenhower on July 30, 1956, declared IN GOD WE TRUST must appear on currency. This phrase was first used on paper money in 1957 when it appeared on the one-dollar silver certificate. The first paper currency bearing the phrase entered circulation on October 1, 1957.

The bald eagle is a magnificent bird of prey that is native to North America. This majestic eagle is not really bald; white feathers cover its head. The name “bald” is derived



from an obsolete English word that means white. The bald eagle has been the national symbol of the USA since 1782.

The bald eagle was chosen for its majestic beauty, great strength, long life, and because it's native to North America.

In 1986 President Ronald Reagan signed legislation to make the rose the floral emblem of the United States. Legislatures have adopted state flowers and trees in the United States as symbols.

“The Star-Spangled Banner” is the national anthem of the United States of America. The lyrics come from “Defense of Fort McHenry”, a poem written on September 13, 1814, by the 35-year-old lawyer and amateur poet Francis Scott Key after witnessing the bombardment of Fort McHenry by British ships of the Royal Navy in Baltimore Harbor during the Battle of Fort McHenry in the War of 1812. “The Star-Spangled Banner” was recognized for official use by the United States Navy in 1889 and by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson in 1916 and was made the national anthem by a congressional resolution on March 3, 1931, which was signed by President Herbert Hoover.

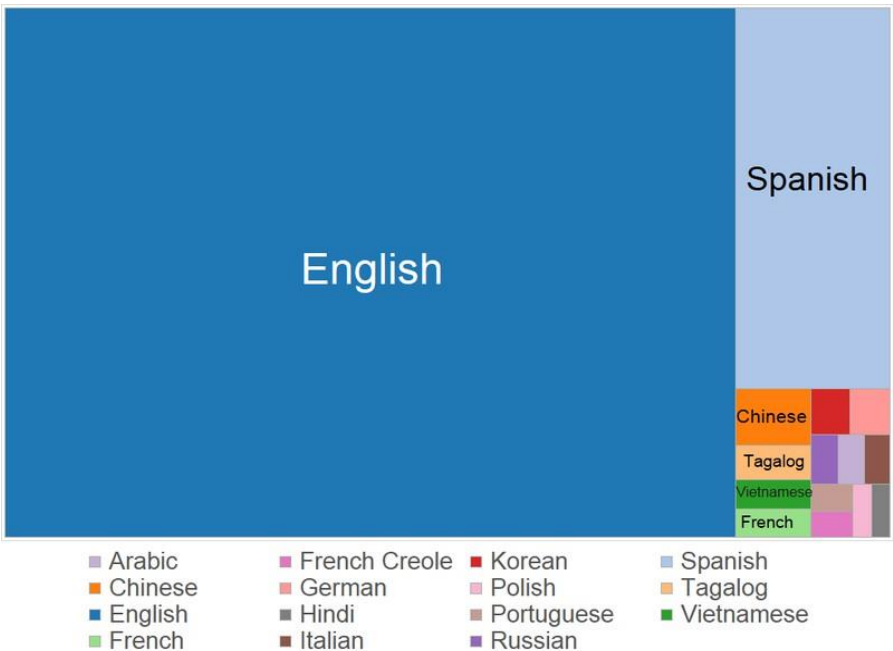
Language

Many languages are used or historically have been used in the United States. The most used language is English. There are also many languages indigenous to North America or to U.S. states or holdings in the Pacific region. Approximately 337 languages are spoken or signed by the population, of which 176 are indigenous to the area.

The most common language in the United States is known as American English. However, no official language exists at the federal level. English was inherited from British colonization, and it is spoken by most of the population. It serves as the de facto official language, the language in which government business is carried out. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 80 % spoke only English at home, and all but approximately 13 600,000 U.S. residents aged 5 and over speak English “well” or “very well”.

American English is different from British English in terms of spelling (one example being the dropped “u” in words such as color/colour), grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and slang usage. The differences are not usually a barrier to effective communication between an American English and a British English speaker, but there are certainly enough differences to cause occasional misunderstandings, usually surrounding slang or regional dialect differences.

Since the 1965 Immigration Act, Spanish is the second most common language in the country and is spoken by approximately 35 million people. The United States holds the world’s fifth-largest Spanish-speaking population, outnumbered only by Mexico, Spain, Colombia, and Argentina.



Stereotypes

- **Materialism, overconsumption, and extreme capitalism:** “Popular stereotype of Americans is that of economic. They may be seen as caring about nothing but money, judging everything by its economic value, and scorning those of lower socioeconomic status”.

- **Obesity**

Among the most popular stereotypes is that Americans eat an excess amount of fast food and are obese. With 33,8 % of the population obese, of all the countries of the developed world, the United States has the highest rate of obesity. This is well reflected by the popular “fat American” stereotype.

This is possibly the most common stereotype. Are American people really fat? Is it true, or is it just a false reputation? Hold on, the facts: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2014–2015, 33,8 % of U.S. adults and 16,9 % of U.S. children and adolescents were obese. So, the truth is that 1 out of 3 of the United States population is obese, which is a scary percentage. But come on, look at the bright side; this means that the other two-thirds of the population is fit.

- **Gun-loving, violent culture**

Americans have a long historical fondness for guns, and this is often portrayed by American media. A considerable percentage of Americans own firearms. The United States has one of the highest death rates caused by firearms in the developed world. The international media often reports American mass shootings, making these incidents well-known internationally.

- **Arrogance and boastfulness**

Many people see Americans as arrogant people. Americans may be seen by people of other countries as arrogant and egomaniacal. American boys may be stereotyped as vain.

- **Generosity**

A positive stereotype of Americans is that they are very

generous. The United States sends aid and supplies to many countries, and Americans may be seen as charitable or volunteer.

- Volunteerism

De Tocqueville first noted, in 1835, the American attitude towards helping others in need. A 2010 Charities Aid Foundation study found that Americans were the fifth most willing to donate time and money in the world at 55 %.



Questions for practical classes:

1. Describe the geographical location of the USA.
2. Give the water resources of the USA.
3. What are the chief mountains of the USA?
4. What are the economic and physiographic divisions of the USA?
5. What are the chief climate characteristics of the USA?
6. What are the natural disasters famous in the USA?
7. Describe the symbols of the USA.
8. What are the language specifics in the USA?
9. What stereotypes about the USA are the most spread?

Recommended Resources

1. Sjurson, D. A. A true history of the United States. Steerforth Press, 2021. 688 p.
2. Serocold, C. A history of the United States for newcomers. History in a heartbeat, 2023. 542 p.
3. World population review. URL: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/united-states>.
4. United States: History, Map, Flag, & Population. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States>.
5. U. S. History Primary Source Timeline. URL: <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/>.
6. History of the United States. URL: <http://usa.usembassy.de/history.htm>.
7. United States. Wikipedia. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States.

Lecture 7

THE US POLITICAL SYSTEM

Political Life in the USA

Washington, in the District of Columbia along the Potomac River, is the capital of a federal union of 50 states. When the United States declared its independence from Great Britain on July 4, 1776 (now celebrated as a national holiday), there were 13 original states – each one sovereign, each wanting to control its own affairs. The states tried to keep their sovereignty and independence within a loose confederation. Therefore, in 1789, they adopted a new Constitution establishing a federal union under a strong central government.

Under the Constitution, the states delegated many of their sovereign powers to this central government in Washington. But they kept many important powers for themselves. Each of the 50 states, for example, retains the right to run its own public school system, to decide on the qualifications of its voters, to license its doctors and other professionals, to provide police protection for its citizens, and to maintain its roads.

Under the Constitution, the federal government is divided into three branches, each chosen in a different manner, each able to check and balance the others. Thus, the United States is a federal constitutional republic, in which the President of the United States (the head of state and head of government), Congress, and judiciary share powers reserved to the national government, and the federal government shares sovereignty with the state governments.

Executive Power

The Executive Branch is headed by the President, who, together with the Vice President, is chosen in nationwide elections every four years (in every year divisible by four). The Presidency in the USA is the highest governmental office. President in the USA is the head of the state and the

government, and the commander-in-chief of the US Armed Forces.

The elective process for a U.S. President is unique. Americans vote for slates of presidential electors equal to the number of Senators and Representatives each state has in Congress (a total of 535 persons). The candidate with the highest number of votes in each state wins all that state's electoral votes. The presidential candidate needs 270 electoral votes to be elected; if no candidate has a majority, the House of Representatives makes the decision. Any natural-born American who is 35 years old or older and has been a resident of the USA for at least 14 years may be elected to this office.

The President proposes bills to Congress, enforces federal laws, serves as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, and, with the approval of the Senate, makes treaties and appoints federal judges, ambassadors, and other members of the Executive Departments (the Departments of State, Defense, Commerce, Justice, etc.). Each Cabinet head holds the title of Secretary, and together, they form a council called the Cabinet.

A Cabinet of 12 members assists the US President. Cabinet secretaries correspond to European ministers. They are heads of different departments and are responsible to the President. Today, these 13 departments are State, Treasury, Defense, Justice, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Labour, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Energy, and Education.

The Vice President, elected from the same political party as the President, acts as chairman of the Senate and, in the event of the death or disability of the President, assumes the Presidency for the balance of his term.

Executive Branch

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - President suggests legislation to Congress - Issues executive orders, rules, and regulations with the force of legislation - May veto legislation passed by Congress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - President appoints federal judges - May grant pardons from punishment for offenses against the United States
--	---

Legislative Power

The Legislative Branch comprises the Senate (the upper house) and the House of Representatives (the lower house). The 435 seats in the House of Representatives are allocated based on the state’s population, although every state has at least one representative. Democrats sit on the Speaker’s right, republicans – on his left. The Speaker presides over the House and conducts debates. The Speaker, like Vice-president, may vote. Most of the Congressmen are lawyers, businessmen, and bankers. Each state elects two members of the 100-member Senate; a Senator’s term of office is six years.

The makeup of the Congress

	House of Representatives	Senate
Total membership...	435	100
Number of members for each state...	According to population	2
Elected by...	Voters of Congressional District For Representatives at Large, voters of the entire state	Voters of the entire state
Term of office...	2 years	6 years
Vacancy...	Filled by special election or at next general election	Special election or temporary appointment by State Governor until special or regular election
Presiding Officer...	Speaker	Vice President of the United States
Exclusive powers of each house...	(1) Originates revenue bills (2) Impeaches civil officers (3) Elects a President if no candidate has a majority of the electoral vote	(1) Approves or rejects treaties (2) Tries impeached officers (3) Confirms or rejects appointments made by the President (4) Elects a Vice President if no candidate has a majority of the electoral vote

A new Congress session begins on the 3rd of January each odd number year and continues for two years. A Congressman must work long and hard. But most of their work is done in committee meetings. Here bills are studied, experts are consulted, and recommendations are made to the House of Senate. During a two-year term of Congress, as many as 20,000 bills are introduced. There are 16 “standing” or permanent committees in the Senate and 22 in the House. They accept and improve some bills but reject most of them. Before a bill becomes a law, it must be read, studied in committees, commented on, and amended in the Senate or House chamber in which it was introduced. It is then voted upon. If it passes, it is sent to the other house, where a similar procedure occurs. If the chambers have passed different versions of the same bill, members of both houses work together in “conference committees”. Groups that try to persuade Congressmen to vote for or against a bill are known as “lobbies.”

When both houses of Congress pass a bill on which they agree, it is sent to the president for his signature. If the President disapproves, he vetoes a bill by refusing to sign it and sends it back to Congress. President’s objections are read and debated. The bill must get a two-thirds majority in each chamber to overcome the President’s veto.

Congress must pass the proposed amendment by a two-thirds majority vote in each house to amend the Constitution, and three-fourths of the states must concur. In more than 195 years, the Constitution has been amended 26 times. The first 10 Amendments – the Bill of Rights – were added in a group in 1791 and guarantee individual liberties: freedom of speech, religion and assembly, the right to a fair trial, and the security of one’s home.

Legislative Branch

<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Appropriates for Executive– May create or abolish Executive Departments– May impeach and try members of the Executive Branch– May override a Presidential veto– The Senate must approve Presidential appointments and treaties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Appropriates funds for the Judiciary– May create or abolish lower federal courts– May impeach and try members of the judiciary– Decides how many justices may sit on the Supreme Court
--	---

Political Parties

The US began as a one-party political system. But gradually, a two-party system has appeared. The present-day Democratic Party was founded in 1828, representing southern states. It united slave owners. The Republican Party was founded in 1854 and united people from the Northeast against slavery. The emblem of the Democratic Party is a donkey. The emblem of the Republican Party is an elephant. The main task of the parties is to win elections. One of the reasons for the stability of the two-party system is the family tradition of inheriting their father's politics.

These two parties have won every United States presidential election since 1852 and have controlled the United States Congress since 1856. The Democratic Party generally positions itself as left-of-center in American politics and supports a modern American liberal platform, while the Republican Party generally positions itself as right-of-center and supports a modern American conservative platform.

There are also smaller parties like the Libertarian Party, the Green Party, and the Constitution Party.

American political parties are more loosely organized than those in other countries. The two major parties, in particular, have no formal organization at the national level that

controls membership, activities, or policy positions, though some state affiliates do. Thus, for an American to say that he or she is a member of the Democratic or Republican party is quite different from a Briton stating that he or she is a Conservative or Labour party member. In the United States, one can often become a “member” of a party merely by stating that fact. In some U.S. states, a voter can register as a member of one or another party and/or vote in the primary election for one or another party. Such participation does not restrict one’s choices in any way.

Judicial System

The Judicial Branch comprises 91 Federal District Courts (at least one in every state), 11 Federal Courts of Appeals, and, at the top, the Supreme Court, the only court specifically created by the Constitution. The President appoints the members of the Supreme Court of the USA with the approval of the Senate; to minimize political influences, their appointments are for life and can only be removed from office through impeachment and trial in Congress.

Federal Courts have the power to rule on both civil and criminal cases. Criminal action under federal jurisdiction includes such cases as treason, destruction of government property, hijacking, and narcotics violations. Civil cases include violating other people’s rights, such as damaging property and violating a contract. If found guilty, a person may be required to pay a certain amount of money, called damages, but he/she is never sent to prison. A convicted criminal, on the other hand, can be imprisoned.

The Bill of Rights guarantees a trial by jury in all criminal cases. A jury is a group of citizens, usually 12 persons, who make the decision on a case.

Federal courts decide cases involving federal law, conflicts between states, or between citizens of different states. An American who feels he has been convicted under an unjust law may appeal his case all the way to the Supreme Court,

which may rule that the law is unconstitutional. The law then becomes void. The Supreme Court today consists of a chief justice and eight associate justices.

The lowest federal court is the district court. Each state has at least one district court. Cases from such a court may be reviewed by the next higher court and the U.S. Court of Appeal. Most state judges are elected for limited terms.

The USA joined separate sovereign bodies with their own Constitutions, having unlimited power to make laws covering anything not already decided by the federal Constitution. Thus, unlike the rest of the country, the law in Louisiana is based on the Napoleonic Code, inherited from its time as a French colony. However, its criminal law has been necessarily modified by common law and the supremacy of the federal Constitution.

Judicial Branch

– May declare Congressional legislation unconstitutional	– May declare any Presidential or Executive action unconstitutional
--	---

Local Government

There are 89,500 local governments, including 3,033 counties, 19,492 municipalities, 16,500 townships, 13,000 school districts, and 37,000 other special districts dealing with fire protection issues. Local governments directly serve the needs of the people, providing everything from police and fire protection to sanitary codes, health regulations, education, public transportation, and housing.

About 28 % of the people live in cities with a population of 100,000 or more. Types of city governments vary widely across the nation. However, almost all have a central council, elected by the voters, and an executive officer, assisted by various department heads, to manage the city's affairs. Cities in the West and South usually have nonpartisan local politics.

There are three general types of city government: the

mayor-council, the commission, and the council-manager. These are the pure forms; many cities have developed a combination of two or three.

Mayor-Council – this is the oldest form of city government in the United States and, until the beginning of the 20th century, was used by nearly all American cities. Its structure is like that of the state and national governments, with an elected mayor as chief of the executive branch and an elected council representing the various neighborhoods forming the legislative branch. The mayor appoints heads of city departments and other officials, sometimes with the council's approval.

The Commission combines legislative and executive functions in one group of officials, usually three or more in number, elected city-wide. Each commissioner supervises the work of one or more city departments. Commissioners also set policies and rules by which the city is operated. Council-Manager – the city manager responds to the increasing complexity of urban problems that need management ability not often possessed by elected public officials. The answer has been to entrust most of the executive powers, including law enforcement and provision of services, to a highly trained and experienced professional city manager.

County government – the county is a subdivision of the state, sometimes (but not always) containing two or more townships and several villages. New York City is so large that it is divided into five boroughs, each a county. On the other hand, Arlington County, Virginia, the United States' smallest county, located just across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C., is both an urbanized and suburban area governed by a unitary county administration. City and county governments have merged in other cities, creating a consolidated city-county government.

In most U.S. counties, one town or city is designated as the county seat, where the government offices are located and

where the board of commissioners or supervisors meets. In small counties, boards are chosen by the county; in the larger ones, supervisors represent separate districts or townships. The board collects taxes for state and local governments; borrows and appropriates money; fixes the salaries of county employees; supervises elections; builds and maintains highways and bridges; and administers national, state, and county welfare programs.

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement in the United States is one of three major components of the criminal justice system of the United States, along with courts and corrections. Law enforcement agencies are also involved in providing first response to emergencies and other threats to public safety, the protection of certain public facilities and infrastructure, the maintenance of public order, and protecting public officials.

At the federal level, there exist both federal police, who possess full federal authority as given to them under the United States Code (U.S.C.), and federal law enforcement agencies, who are authorized to enforce various laws at the federal level. Both police and law enforcement agencies operate at the highest level and are endowed with police roles. The agencies have nationwide jurisdiction for the enforcement of federal law. All federal agencies are limited by the U.S. Code to investigate only matters that are explicitly within the power of the federal government.

Most states operate statewide government agencies that provide law enforcement duties, including investigations and state patrols. They may be called state police or highway patrol and are normally part of the Department of Public Safety.

County police tend to exist only in metropolitan counties and have countywide jurisdiction. In some areas, there is a sheriff's department that only handles minor issues such as the service of papers and security for the local courthouse. In other areas, there are no county police, and the local sheriff is the

exclusive law enforcement agency and acts as both sheriff and county police, which is more common than there being a separate county police force.

Municipal police range from one-officer agencies (sometimes still called the town marshal) to the 40,000 person-strong of the New York City Police Department. Many individual cities and towns will have their own police department, with larger communities.

Foreign Relations

The United States has an established structure of foreign relations. It is a permanent United Nations Security Council member, and New York City is home to the United Nations Headquarters. It is a member of the G7, G20, and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Almost all countries have embassies in Washington, D.C.; many have consulates nationwide. Likewise, nearly all nations host American diplomatic missions. However, Iran, North Korea, Bhutan, and the Republic of China (Taiwan) do not have formal diplomatic relations with the United States (although the U.S. still maintains ties with Taiwan and supplies it with military equipment).

The United States has a “special relationship“ with the United Kingdom and strong ties with Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, Israel, and several European Union countries, including France, Italy, Germany, and Spain. It works closely with fellow NATO members on military and security issues and with its neighbors through the Organization of American States and free trade agreements such as the trilateral North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico. In 2008, the United States spent a net \$ 25.4 billion on official development assistance, the world’s highest. As a share of America’s large gross national income (GNI), however, the U.S. contribution of 0.18 % ranked last among 22 donor states. By contrast, private overseas giving by Americans is relatively generous.

Questions for practical classes:

1. Principles of political organization of the USA.
2. Describe the main principles of the work of legislative power in the USA.
3. Describe the main principles of the work of executive power in the USA.
4. Describe the main principles of the work of judicial power in the USA.
5. What are the peculiarities of elections organized in the USA?
6. What political parties are quite popular in the USA?
7. What are the main features of the foreign policy of the USA?

Recommended Resources

1. Conrad, J. What You Should Know about Politics... But Don't, Fourth Edition. Arcade Publishing, 2020. 408 p.
2. Sjursen, D. A. A true history of the United States. Steerforth Press, 2021. 688 p.
3. United States: History, Map, Flag, & Population. URL: <https://www.britannica.com/place/United-States>.
4. U. S. History Primary Source Timeline. URL: <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/>.
5. History of the United States. URL: <https://usa.usembassy.de/history.htm>.
6. United States. Wikipedia. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States.

Lecture 8

THE US SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

Education as It Is in the USA

The public sector mainly provides education in the United States, with control and funding from three levels: federal, state, and local. Child education is compulsory. Public education is universally available. School curricula, funding, teaching, employment, and other policies are set through locally elected school boards with jurisdiction over school districts with many directives from state legislatures. School districts are usually separate from other local jurisdictions, with independent officials and budgets. Educational standards and standardized testing decisions are usually made by state governments.

According to government data, one-tenth of students are enrolled in private schools. Approximately 85 % of students enter public schools, largely because they are tax-subsidized (tax burdens by school districts vary from area to area), about 10 % attend private schools, and roughly 3 % are home-schooled.

There are more than 14,000 school districts in the country. Over \$ 500 billion is spent yearly on primary and secondary education. Transporting students to and from school is a major concern for most school districts. School buses provide the largest mass transit program in the country: 8.8 billion trips per year. Non-school transit buses give 5.2 billion trips annually. 440,000 yellow school buses carry over 24 million students to and from school.

The ages for compulsory education vary by state. It begins from ages five to eight and ends from ages fourteen to eighteen. Public (free) education is typically from kindergarten to grade 12 and is thus referred to as K–12 (short for K through twelve).

There are no mandatory public prekindergarten or crèche programs in the United States. The federal government funds the Head Start preschool program for children of low-income

families, but most families are responsible for finding preschool or childcare. In the large cities, there are sometimes preschools catering to the children of the wealthy. Because some wealthy families see these schools as the first step toward the Ivy League, there are even counselors who specialize in assisting parents and their toddlers through the preschool admissions process.

Compulsory education requirements can generally be satisfied by educating children in public schools, state-certified private schools, or an approved home school program. In most public and private schools, education is divided into three levels: elementary school, middle school (sometimes called junior high school), and high school (sometimes called secondary education). In almost all schools at these levels, children are divided by age groups into grades, ranging from kindergarten (followed by first grade) for the youngest children in elementary school to twelfth grade, the final year of high school. The exact age range of students in these grade levels varies slightly from area to area. Post-secondary education, better known as “college,” in the United States, is generally governed separately from the elementary and high school system.

School Grades

Most children enter the public education system around five or six. The American school year traditionally begins in August or September, after the traditional summer recess. The typical American student spends six hours a day, five days a week, 180 days a year in school. Children in the United States start preschool or nursery school at age four or under. Most children start kindergarten at five years of age.

Children are assigned into year groups known as grades, beginning with preschool, followed by kindergarten, and culminating in twelfth grade. Children customarily advance together from one grade to the next as a single cohort or “class” upon reaching the end of each school year in May or June. However, developmentally disabled children may be held back a

grade, and gifted children may skip ahead early to the next grade.

The American educational system comprises 12 grades of study over 12 calendar years of primary and secondary education before graduating and becoming eligible for college admission. Students attend elementary schools (grades one through six) and middle or junior high (grades seven through nine). Secondary, or high schools, are usually 10th through 12th grades (ages 15 through 18).

Elementary School teachers are trained with an emphasis on human cognitive and psychological development and the principles of curriculum development and instruction. Teachers typically earn either a Bachelors or Master's degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education. Teaching social studies and science is often underdeveloped in elementary school programs. Some attribute this to the fact that elementary school teachers are trained as generalists; however, teachers attribute this to the priority placed on developing reading, writing, and math proficiency in the elementary grades and the time needed.

Generally, at the high school level, students take various classes without special emphasis on any subject. Curricula vary widely in quality and rigidity; for example, some states consider 65 (on a 100-point scale) a passing grade, while others consider it as low as 60 or as high as 75. Students must take a certain minimum number of mandatory subjects but may choose additional subjects ("electives") to fill out their required hours of learning. The following minimum courses of study in mandatory subjects are required in nearly all U.S. high schools:

- Science (usually three years minimum, normally biology, chemistry, and physics).
- Mathematics (usually four years minimum, normally including algebra, geometry, pre-calculus, statistics, and even calculus).
- English (usually four years minimum, including literature, humanities, composition, oral languages, etc.).

- Social sciences (usually three years minimum, including various history, government/economics courses).
- Physical education (at least two years).

Many states require a “health” course in which students learn about anatomy, nutrition, first aid, sexuality, drug awareness, and birth control. Anti-drug use programs are also usually part of health courses. In many cases, however, options are provided for students to “test out” this requirement or complete independent study to meet it. Foreign language and some form of art education are also a mandatory part of the curriculum in some schools.

The U.S. uses ordinal numbers for naming grades, unlike Canada and Australia, where cardinal numbers are preferred. Thus, Americans are likelier to say “First Grade” rather than “Grade One”. Students may attend either public schools or private schools. Typical ages and grade groupings in public and private schools may be found through the U.S. Department of Education. Many different variations exist across the country.

A			B			C			D			F, E, I, N or U
+		-	+		-	+		-	+		-	
100	96-	92-	89-	86-	82-	79-	76-	72-	69-	66-	62-	Below
-	93	90	87	83	80	77	73	70	67	63	60	60
97												

Although grading scales usually differ from school to school, the most common grade scale is letter grades – “A” through “F” – derived from a scale of 0 – 100 or a percentile. For example, in some areas, Texas or Virginia, a “D” grade (or between 70 and 60) is considered a failing grade. In other jurisdictions, such as Hawaii, a “D” grade is considered passing in certain classes and failing in others.

About 83 % of Americans graduate from secondary schools and 60 % continue their studies and receive some form of post-high school education. Approximately 20.3 % graduate

from four-year colleges and universities.

School attendance is required in all 50 states. In 32 states, students must attend school until they are 16 years old. In nine other states, the minimum age for leaving school is 17. Eight states require schooling until the age of 18, while one state allows students to leave school at 14.

Testing

Under the No Child Left Behind Act, all American states must test students in public schools statewide to ensure that they are achieving the desired level of minimum education, such as on the Regents Examinations in New York, or the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), and the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS); students being educated at home or in private schools are omitted. The act also requires that students and schools show “adequate yearly progress”. This means they must show some improvement each year. When a student fails to make adequate yearly progress, No Child Left Behind mandates that remediation through summer school and/or tutoring be available to a student needing extra help.

During high school, students (usually in 11th grade) may take one or more standardized tests depending on their postsecondary education preferences and local graduation requirements. In theory, these tests evaluate the student’s overall level of knowledge and learning aptitude. The SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) and ACT (American College Testing) are the most common standardized tests students take when applying to college. A student may take the SAT, ACT, or both depending upon the post-secondary institutions the student plans to apply to for admission.

Most competitive schools also require two or three SAT Subject Tests (formerly known as SAT IIs), shorter exams that focus strictly on a particular subject matter. However, all these tests serve little to no purpose for students who do not move on to post-secondary education, so they can usually be skipped

without affecting one's ability to graduate.

Graduate Study in the USA

Students completing high school may apply to attend an undergraduate school. This may be a community college (one that offers two-year degrees, usually to prepare students to transfer to state universities), a liberal arts college (one that concentrates on undergraduate education), or part of a larger research university. There are 4,352 colleges, universities, and junior colleges in the country.

Schools differ in their competitiveness and reputation; generally, the most prestigious schools are private, rather than public. Admissions criteria involve the rigor and grades earned in high school courses taken, the student's GPA, class ranking, and standardized test scores (such as the SAT or ACT tests). Most colleges also consider more subjective factors such as a commitment to extracurricular activities, a personal essay, and an interview.

While colleges rarely list that they require a certain standardized test score, class ranking, or GPA for admission, each college usually has a rough threshold below which admission is unlikely.

Graduate work leading to a master's degree requires at least one year's study beyond the bachelor's degree, although in fields such as engineering and business administration, a two-year program is common. The typical requirements for this degree include successful completion of a specified number of graduate courses, maintenance of a minimum average of grade B, and preparation of a thesis.

The most common method consists of four years of study leading to a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), a Bachelor of Science (B.S.), or sometimes another bachelor's degree such as a Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.), a Bachelor of Social Work (B.S.W.), a Bachelor of Engineering (B.Eng.) or a Bachelor of Philosophy (B.Phil.) Five- Year Professional Architecture programs offer the Bachelor of Architecture Degree (B.Arch.).

Advanced studies leading to a master's degree emphasize either research or preparation for professional practice. Again, the M.A. (Master of Arts) and M.S. (Master of Science) are the traditional degrees. Still, professional degrees at this level include the M.B.A. (Master of Business Administration) and M.S.W. (Master of Social Work), among others.

The Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) degree requires a minimum of two years of full-time study beyond the master's degree, but in most fields, considerably more is necessary. For example, completing the requirements for a doctorate in one of the natural sciences usually takes four to five years of study beyond the Master's. In some institutions, highly qualified students may bypass the master's and enter a doctoral program with only a bachelor's degree, but this does not necessarily shorten the period required.

Some students choose to attend a community college for two years before further study at another college or university. In most states, community colleges are operated either by a state university division or by local special districts subject to guidance from a state agency. Community colleges may award an Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degree after two years. Those seeking to continue their education may transfer to a four-year college or university (after applying through a similar admissions process as those applying directly to the four-year institution, see articulation). Some community colleges have automatic enrollment agreements with a local four-year college, where the community college provides the first two years of study and the university provides the remaining years of study, sometimes all on one campus. The community college awards the associate's degree, and the university awards the bachelor's and master's degrees.

Academic Year

The academic year ranges from 32 to 36 weeks in length. It usually begins in August or September and ends in early or

late May. the academic year is divided into two terms of about 15 to 18 weeks each, called semesters. Other schools divide the year into 12 weeks each, called Quarters. Students must be present during the three quarters between August/September and May/June; the fourth quarter is the summer vacation. Still, other institutions divide the academic year into three equal trimesters. At all colleges and universities, there is a two- to four-week holiday beginning in mid-December, and many schools separate their terms with this holiday.

<p style="text-align: center;">UK (approximately)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">US (approximately)</p>
<p>15 First term Oct 5 – Dec Mid-sessional exams Christmas vacation Dec 16 – Jan 10</p>	<p>First semester Sep 5 – Dec 22 Winter vacation Dec 23 – Jan 21 End of semester (final) exams Winter session Jan 2 – Jan 21</p>
<p>Second term Jan 11 – Mar 20 Mid-sessional exams Easter vacation Mar 21 – Apr 25</p>	<p>Second semester Jan 22 – Jun 8 End-of-semester (final) exams Summer session Jun 9 – Aug 31</p>
<p>Third term Apr 26 – Jun 30 Sessional exams Summer vacation Jul 1 – Oct 4</p>	<p>Summer vacation Jun 8 – Sep 4</p>

Top Universities

These rankings are based on factors like brand recognition, admissions selectivity, alumni donors' generosity, and faculty research volume. In global university rankings, the US dominates more than half the top 50 places (27) and has 72 institutions in the top 200 table under the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. It has more than twice as many universities in the top 200 as its nearest rival, the United Kingdom, which has 29. A small percentage of students who apply to these schools gain admission. Included among the top 20 institutions are six of the eight schools in the Ivy League (Ivy League: Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University, and Yale University); 4 of the 10 schools in the University of California system; the private Universities of Stanford, Chicago, and Johns Hopkins; the public Universities of Washington and Wisconsin; and the Massachusetts and California Institutes of Technology.

Questions for practical classes:

1. Describe the main principles of the educational system in the USA.
2. The levels of education in the USA.
3. Enlarge on the school age in the USA.
4. What tests are passed by the students in the USA?
5. Describe the main principles of higher education in the USA.
6. Give information about prominent universities in the USA.
7. What is the academic year division in the USA?

Recommended Resources

1. Garrett, R. W. US education is in trouble. Let's fix it! Rowman & Littlefield, 2023. 190 p.
2. U. S. History Primary Source Timeline.
URL: <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/>.
3. History of the United States.
URL: <http://usa.usembassy.de/history.htm>.
4. United States. Wikipedia.
URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States.
5. US Department of Education. URL: <https://educationusa.state.gov/us-higher-education-professionals/us-government-resources-and-guidance/us-department-education>.
6. Education in the United States. Wikipedia. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_the_United_States.

Електронне навчальне видання

Ущатовська Ірина Василівна

Лінгвокраїнознавство англомовних країн

Конспект лекцій
для здобувачів спеціальності 035 «Філологія»
очної та заочної форм здобуття вищої освіти

(Англійською мовою)

Відповідальна за випуск С. В. Баранова
Редакторка І. В. Ущатовська
Комп'ютерне верстання І. Л. Ткаченко

Формат 60x84/16. Ум. друк. арк.. 6,34. Обл.-вид. арк. 6,29.

Видавець і виготовлювач
Сумський державний університет,
вул. Римського-Корсакова, 2, м. Суми, 40007
Свідоцтво суб'єкта видавничої справи ДК № 3062 від 17.12.2007.