

Historical Foundations of US Cultural Identity

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授業概要

This seminar aims to explore the enduring cultural concepts (such as “exceptionalism,” “puritanism,” and “individualism”) that have shaped US society over time. By placing these concepts within their historical context, we will examine how global events and societal changes impacted the lives of everyday Americans and how these ideas were embodied by prominent historical figures.

In the first term, we will focus on the period from the colonial era through to the early 20th century. This will include an analysis of the origins of foundational US cultural ideals and how they were influenced by pivotal historical developments such as westward expansion and industrialism. The second term will cover the post-World War II era to the present day, highlighting how these cultural concepts evolved in response to major events such as the civil rights movement, the Cold War, and information globalization.

Throughout the course, we will consider how these ideals have shaped the collective identity of the US, while also preparing students for the fourth-year seminar, which will apply these historical insights to an examination of contemporary US society. In that seminar, we will explore popular entertainment culture, differences in regional identity, and current news from a more informed cultural and historical perspective.

* 授業の形式 **How the class is conducted**

Each week, students will be required to complete assigned readings or prepare discussion materials; these will form the basis of in-class activities. These readings will be critically reviewed in small group discussions where students will share insights on course themes. Class sessions will feature a combination of mini-lectures, debates, and group presentations designed to deepen understanding of the material.

The course is structured into three thematic units per semester. A comprehensive three-unit exam will be administered in Week 12 of both semesters. Additionally, students will complete a final project consisting of a short essay accompanying an in-class presentation.

課題・成績評価基準 **Requirements and Assessment**

To succeed in this course, students are expected to:

- Work independently and manage their own learning
- Attend class prepared to meaningfully discuss assigned topics
- Maintain strong organizational skills, both in managing time and course materials

Grades will be based on the following factors:

- 1) Weekly in-class group work 20%
- 2) Short reading quizzes 10%
- 3) Term Exam 30%
- 4) Final Project 40% (Essay 20%, Presentation 20%)

***その他 Others**

There is no textbook for this class.