

天津社科研究规划基金项目
大学高级英语读物

美国的价值观与文化

美国文化阅读教程

American Values and its Culture Reading Course

宁 洪 编



天津大学出版社
TIANJIN UNIVERSITY PRESS

天津社科研究规划基金项目 美国的价值观与文化
大学高级英语读物

美国文化阅读教程

American Values and its Culture Reading Course

宁 洪 编



天津大学出版社

内容提要

本书主要介绍现代美国文化及其概念,其语言文字表达简练流畅、通俗易懂。读者在阅读中还可了解和领会到美国人的的人生观、价值观。

本书可作为大专院校本科高年级学生、硕士、博士研究生学习、进修用的高级英语阅读教材。

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

美国文化阅读教程/宁洪编. —天津:天津大学出版社, 2004. 4

ISBN 7-5618-1925-0

I. 美… II. 宁… III. ①英语—阅读教学—高等学校—教材②文化—美国—高等学校—教材

IV. H319.4:G

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2004)第 025160 号

出版发行	天津大学出版社
出版人	杨风和
地址	天津市卫津路 92 号天津大学内(邮编:300072)
网址	www.tjup.com
电话	发行部:022-27403647 邮购部:022-27402742
印刷	天津市宝坻区第二印刷厂
经销	全国各地新华书店
开本	140mm × 203mm
印张	12.375
字数	322 千
版次	2004 年 4 月第 1 版
印次	2004 年 4 月第 1 次
印数	1—4 000
定价	18.00 元

前言

2001年中国“入世”后,中国与世界各国的经济交往日益频繁。经济交往中最为重要的因素之一是主观因素。从深层面看,主观因素是一个文化交际过程。了解文化对于经济交往的作用,首先要面对文化差异、了解文化走向。文化差异问题同经济问题一样,归根结底是价值观问题。价值观的研究实质上是传统观念与现代价值观念平衡的问题。

在一定意义上,中国的改革与对外开放是文化观念的改革与开放,是中西方文化相互借鉴与补充的过程。市场经济的运作成功、市场的初始繁荣(如中国汽车文化的兴起),在很大程度上体现了市场经济中“私有和利润”(private and profit)的基本价值观念。人才流动、自由择业、民营企业的成功兴起、国有企业的成功转轨都无疑体现了当今世界上人们普遍认可的一些基本价值观念。

大学生在中华复兴伟业中,在学习专业知识的同时,应学习、实践、“应维护和帮助建立一些社会的基本价值观,维护人类的一些基本原则,应维护和帮助建立一些基本的社会尺度和界限,推动整个社会走向文明”。

本教材编写为宁洪先生申请的“天津市哲学社会科学研究规划资助项目”研究内容。申请课题名称为《美国人的价值观与文化》。经审定,正式批准立项为“天津市‘十五’社科研究规划(2003年度) TJ03—GJ006 课题:《美国的价值观与文化》”。

编写前提

经过几年的教学实践,本人完成了英语专业本科生、研究生

“美国文化研究”课程的资料选编,形成了独特的课程专用教材,用于两届英语专业硕士研究生,一届英语教师研究生班和一届同等学力研究生班教学,受到一致好评。他们普遍认为,该教材将英语学习和人文社会科学常识有机地结合起来,是一本切合实际、加强英语专业学生人文知识学习、促进思想修养、提高文化素质的好教材,是一本难得的学习、研究美国人价值观和美国文化的精编教材。

资料说明

《美国文化阅读教程》所精选的全部资料,语言表达精练、浅显易懂。语言风格体现了美国人的务实与强调交际效率的特点。教材内容覆盖广泛,具有很大的感召力。

教学方法

依据不同教学对象,教学应具有不同的侧重点:初级层次教学以阅读理解为好,高级层次教学以撰写英文短篇论文、课堂研讨为好。

教学注意事项

本教材重点在于美国文化的学习、研究,不在于中、美文化比较和研究。

在教学中,应避免由于教学重点偏移而产生的 negativism 倾向。此种现象在教、学异国文化初期较为普遍。

菲利普 R.凯特奥拉等在其 2000 年所著的《国际市场营销学》一书中指出了在学习异国文化时应采取的态度:文化只有差异,没有对错、好坏之分;文化行为的好与坏,对与错是无法作出价值判断的。文化不存在是非问题,只存在差异问题。不同国家或不同地区的人们都对本国文化抱有一种强烈的情感,都把本国文化看

作是最佳文化,对外国文化的奇特之处常常会觉得滑稽可笑。例如,中国人会跟美国人讲“狗的笑话”,这反映了中国人将狗视作食物,而美国人则将狗视作宠物。这是两种文化间的差异。这种差异往往会引起对方的惊奇。同样,美国人也会对法国人将狗带进高级饭馆,享受美食的做法感到惊奇。

在学习异国文化时,首先应该认同异国文化,这样才能避免上述“惊奇”,才能在跨文化交际中避免由此而产生的误解和冲突。

另外,在教学过程应着重观念的学习与研究,不应过于拘泥于个别英语单词的学习与研究。

适用对象

适用于广大的读者群体,包括英语专业本科生、研究生,非英语专业本科生、研究生和博士生,以及有志通过英语,自学社会科学、人文科学,提高自身素质的众多英语爱好者。

本教材依据我所讲授的研究生“美国文化研究”课程内容经重新整编后独立完成。

在编写过程中,我的家人给予了我极大的关心和鞭策。他们是:南开大学社会科学研究处的张金香副研究员和澳大利亚 Monarsh 大学在学的宁浩洋先生。

由于诸多原因,书中定有疏漏之处,恳请读者斧正。

宁洪

2003 年 12 月 21 日

于南开大学外语学院英语翻译系



CONTENTS

Chapter 1	The Definition of Culture	(1)
Reading 1	What is Culture?	(1)
Chapter 2	American Ideals	(44)
Reading 2	Traditional American Values and Beliefs	(44)
Reading 3	Liberty and Its Limits	(54)
Chapter 3	The American Religious Heritage	(77)
Reading 4	The Protestant Heritage; Self-improvement	(77)
Reading 5	The American Idea of Success	(84)
Chapter 4	The Frontier Heritage	(102)
Reading 6	The Impact of the Frontier on the American Character	(102)
Reading 7	The Significance of the Frontier in American History	(111)
Chapter 5	The Heritage of Abundance	(123)
Reading 8	From Producers to Consumers	(123)
Reading 9	Democratizing Luxury: Shopping in America	(128)
Reading 10	The Car Culture	(154)
Chapter 6	The World of American Business	(163)
Reading 11	The Business of America	(163)



Reading 12	The U.S. Economy: Realities and Challenges	(180)
Reading 13	The Economic Theories behind Ideologies	(193)
Reading 14	Capitalism and the Role of Capitalism in the Global Economy	(198)
Chapter 7	The US Government and Politics	(206)
Reading 15	What Two Basic Rights are Guaranteed to Americans	(206)
Reading 16	The American Federal System and Checks and Balances	(214)
Reading 17	The U.S. Economy	(225)
Chapter 8	Ethnic and Racial Assimilation in the U.S.	(235)
Reading 18	The Rights of Allan Bakke	(235)
Reading 19	Poverty in the United States	(253)
Chapter 9	Education in the United States	(273)
Reading 20	The Issue of "Quality" Education	(273)
Reading 21	Fundamental Characteristics of Contemporary American Education	(289)
Reading 22	What Do Grown Children Owe Their Parents?	(296)
Chapter 10	Leisure Time: Organized Sports and Recrea- tion	(306)
Reading 23	Sports, Recreation and American Values —	



CONTENTS

	organized sports seen as a laboratory regarding a system and self-improvement	(306)
Reading 24	Sports, Competition, and Violence	(312)
Chapter 11	The American Family	(340)
Reading 25	The American Family in the Year 2000	(340)
Chapter 12	The Development of American Culture and Society	(359)
Reading 26	The McDonaldization of Society: The Process of Rationalization	(359)
Chapter 13	American Values at the Crossroads ...	(376)
Reading 27	Factors that Affect American History	(376)
参考文献	(384)



Chapter 1 The Definition of Culture

with Emphasis on Non-Material Components of Culture: Beliefs, Values, Norms and Mores

(Notes: Many good reasons exist for a trip to learn and study American culture to set out from familiarizing ourselves with what culture is as most of us Chinese college students, both undergraduates and postgraduates, are less aware of the definition of culture which has kept hindering them from understanding other cultures well and our own culture. H. Ning.)

Reading 1

What is Culture?

Eight essential sociological principles are significant to understand culture.

Principle 1: Culture consists of material and non-material components.

Material culture. In sociological terms, material culture is composed of all the objects or physical substances available to the people of a society. Examples of such objects include the telephone, the shovel, the writing system, paper money, the computer, the microwave oven, the au-



tomobile, and writing paper. All of these items began as resources (plants, trees, minerals, or ores) and were converted into other forms for a purpose — to transport people, animals, and goods; to cook food; to make calculations; and so on. Sociologists refer to technology as the knowledge, skills, and tools used to transform resources into forms with specific purposes, and the skills and knowledge required to use them.

The significant features of material culture are the purpose for which the culture is designed, the value placed on it, and the fact that some people are unhappy without it and direct their energies toward acquiring it. Consider the automobile, for example. It is neither good nor bad. It all depends on the use to which it is put. It can serve doctors and patients, bank robbers, truck drivers, and kidnappers.

Along these lines, Americans, especially teenagers, define the automobile as the mechanism by which they gain independence. A student gave the following written response to the question “Describe an event that has affected your life in a significant way”. This response shows what owning an automobile can mean to some young adults:

Getting my driver's license and purchasing an automobile is one event that has had a profound effect on my life. Now I am free to do what I want when I want; I do not have to rely on someone else to get where I want to go. On the other hand, in order to pay for my car and related expenses I work 32 ~ 40 hours a week. I would not have to work as much if I did not own a car. One reason my car costs me so much is my **insurance premiums** are very high and have become even higher because I was in an accident.



Chapter 1 The Definition of Culture

Nonmaterial culture. In sociological terms, **nonmaterial culture** includes the **intangible human creations** (things that cannot be identified directly through the senses) that exert considerable influence over people's behavior. Four of the most important of these creations are **beliefs, values, norms, and symbols**.

Beliefs. Conceptions that people accept as true about how the world operates and where individuals fit in it are known as beliefs.

Beliefs can be rooted in blind faith, experience, tradition, or the scientific method. Whatever the origin, beliefs can exert powerful influences on behavior. To learn about the connection between people's beliefs and behaviors, sociologists Evon Z. Vogt and John M. Roberts studied beliefs about nature held by two groups living in Gallup, New Mexico. One group consisted of **Protestant American homesteaders** from Texas. The other group consisted of Zuni, **a pueblo-dwelling group of Native Americans**. The researchers found that homesteaders see themselves as separate from nature. They think of nature as "something to be controlled and exploited by man for his own ends and material comfort". The Zuni, on the other hand, believe themselves to be neither masters nor victims of nature, but to have an integral and essentially cooperative **role in the cosmic scheme of things**.

The differing belief systems of these two groups are reflected in how each relates to the environment, particularly in how each group responds to droughts. The homesteaders equip themselves with tractors, practice modern farming methods, and, when droughts occur, seed the clouds with **silver iodide**. The Zuni, on the other hand, have developed a body of knowledge about how to live in a difficult environment. In addition, they increase their ceremonial activity during hard times. From the Zuni per-



spective people need only do their part and the gods will do the rest. With centuries of summer rains to **testify to the soundness of** this view, Zuni [are] deeply opposed to rainmaking with airplanes and silver iodide.

Values. General and shared conceptions of what is good, right, appropriate, worthwhile, and important with regard to modes of conduct (for example, self-reliance and obedience) and states of existence (for example, freedom of choice and equal opportunity) are known as values. Whereas **beliefs are conceptions about how the world and people in it operate, values are conceptions about how the world and people should be**. Sociologist Robin Williams (1970) has identified nine core values that people in the United States consider important even if they are not always aware of:

1. equal opportunity (not equality of outcome but equal opportunity to compete)
2. achievement (especially occupational)
3. activity (active role in manipulating the environment to achieve desired ends)
4. results (what is actually achieved rather than the process of obtaining desired results)
5. future outlook (as opposed to looking to the past and the present)
6. science (as a means of solving problems)
7. material comfort (consumption and a high standard of living)
8. democracy (right of political participation)
9. survival of the fittest

We distinguish between societies not on the basis of which values are present, but rather according to which values people in that culture



Chapter 1 The Definition of Culture

choose, when they are in situations in which they must choose. Americans, for example, place considerable value on the individual as an individual; they stress personal achievement and unique style (free choice). In contrast, Koreans value the individual in relationship to the group (particularly the family); they stress self-discipline and respect toward those who are older.

In sports, for example, the value placed by Americans on the individual is **evidenced** in the fact that they single out the most valuable player of a game, a season, a league, or a tournament. Furthermore, when Americans view an outstanding athletic feat, they tend to give more credit to the individual's talent or desire to win than to **disciplined practice**. In addition, American athletes work to find the style that is right for them and are willing to change this style if it does not bring success.

Koreans, on the other hand, do spotlight individual achievement, but, in doing so, place considerable value on discipline, particularly on form (that is, adhering to **time-tested** and efficient methods of accomplishing goals). From the Korean point of view, athletic achievement does not occur simply because a person wants to excel or because he or she possesses **raw talent**. Athletic competence develops over time, after the individual masters and appreciates the steps that combine to produce the intended result. Compared to the American system, the Korean system minimizes individual achievement because **the achiever owes success to the mastery of technique**.

Values, we should note, transcend any particular situation. For example, the American emphasis on individual achievement and unique style — and the Korean emphasis on the group, form, and discipline — are not confined to one single area of life, such as sports. As we will see later in this chapter, these cultural values permeate many areas of life.



Norms. All societies have guidelines that govern moral standards and even the most routine aspects of life. Sociologists call the written and unwritten rules that specify the behaviors appropriate to specific situations norms. Some norms are considered more important than other norms. In this regard, sociologist William Graham Sumner distinguished between **folkways and mores**. Folkways are norms that apply to the routine matters — eating, sleeping, appearance, posture, use of appliances, and relationships with various people, animals, and the environment.

Consider the folkways that govern how a meal typically is eaten at Korean and American dinner tables. In Korea, diners sit at low tables with legs crossed. They do not pass items to one another, except to small children. Instead, they reach and stretch across one another and use their chopsticks to lift small portions from **serving bowls** to individual rice bowls or directly to their mouths. The Korean norms of **table etiquette** — reaching across instead of passing, having no clear place settings, and using the same utensils to eat and to serve — deemphasize the individual and reinforce the greater importance of the group.

Americans follow different dining folkways. They sit in chairs at tables approximately waist high. They have individual place settings, marked clearly by place mats or blocked off by eating utensils. It is considered impolite to reach across another person's space and to use personal utensils to take food from the serving bowls. Diners pass items around the table and use special serving utensils. The fact that Americans have clearly marked eating spaces, do not trespass into other diners' spaces, and use separate utensils to take food reinforces values about the importance of the individual.

Koreans and Americans even have different folkways about how they should use resources such as notebook paper and the electricity needed to



Chapter 1 The Definition of Culture

keep refrigerators cold. Koreans open the refrigerator door only as wide as necessary to remove an item, blocking the opening to minimize the amount of cold air that escapes. Americans open the refrigerator door wide and often leave it open while they decide what they want or until they move the desired item to a stove or countertop. As for notebook paper, Koreans fill every possible space on a sheet of paper before throwing it away. Sometimes they use a ruler to draw extra lines between those already on the paper in order to **double the writing space**. Americans will sometimes throw away a sheet of paper with only one line of writing because they do not like what they wrote.

Mores. Mores are norms that people define as **pivotal** to the well-being of the group. Obvious examples of mores are norms that prohibit **cannibalism** or the unjust and deliberate taking of another person's life. People who violate mores usually are severely punished (imprisoned, **institutionalized**, or executed); mores are considered to be final and unchangeable. In contrast, there is considerable tolerance toward nonconformity to a folkway, and the consequences of violating folkways are usually minor — a disapproving stare, whispers behind one's back, or laughter. Thus, people can conceive of changing folkways that govern the number of meals they eat each day, for example, but they cannot conceive of changing mores.

One way to explain differences in behavior is to point to differences in Korean and American values and norms. One could argue that Koreans value conservation and Americans value consumption and that they have devised standards of appropriate behavior that reflect these values. Yet, it is not very satisfying simply to say that values and norms guide behavior. We must investigate the geographical and historical circumstances that gave rise to specific norms and values.



Principle 2: Geographical and historical forces shape the character of culture.

The role of geographical and historical forces. Sociologists operate under the assumption that culture is “**a buffer** between people and their habitat”. That is, material and nonmaterial aspects of culture represent the solutions that people of a society have worked out over time to meet their distinctive historical and geographical challenges:

All mankind shares a unique ability to adapt to circumstances and resolve the problems of survival. It was this talent which carried successive generations of people into the many proper places of environmental opportunity that the world has to offer — from forest, to grassland, desert, seashore, and icecap. And in each case, people developed ways of life appropriate to the particular habitats and circumstances they encountered.

Part of the reason that Koreans and Americans use refrigerators and paper differently has to do with the amount of natural resources in each country. Korea has no oil, only moderate supplies of coal, and depleted forests. Relative to Korea, the United States possesses abundant supplies of oil, wood, and coal. Although Koreans can import these resources, they face pressures unknown to most people in the United States, even as Americans come to realize that resources are dwindling. Because Koreans depend on other nations for most resources, they **are vulnerable to** any world event that might disrupt the flow of resources into their country.