



☆ 田耀 主编



# 美国文化

# 点滴



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# 美国文化点滴

## A Brief Introduction to American Culture

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# 序 言

三百多年前,一批盎格鲁—撒克逊人不畏艰辛乘着“五月花”号船漂洋过海踏上北美新大陆并在詹姆士顿开辟了第一个英属殖民地,在此后的岁月中几经沧桑,这个由外来移民及其后裔组成的新兴国家发生了翻天覆地的变化。特别是自 1776 年美国人民获得独立、建立了美利坚合众国之后,其经济、军事、文化实力不断增长,最终成为 20 世纪称霸全球的超级大国。

美国的强大影响着整个世界,其文化渗透到世界的各个角落,如麦当劳、肯德基、耐克、福特汽车和黑人文化等等。现如今,人们已经意识到美国的崛起与其国家的文化传统和制度是息息相关的,学习美国成功辉煌的经验就必须要了解美国的文化。国内各高校英语专业已设立“英美国概况”课程,特别对美国文化更是非常重视。本书基于这一目的编写而成。不仅仅是由于“英美国概况”是高校英语专业的一门传统必修课,更重要的是通过本书能使读者更深刻地了解美国社会文化的最新发展。本书不但向读者介绍美国的社会文化知识,而且将传授知识与英语语言学习有机结合起来,将提高学生获取信息的能力与分析判断能力紧密结合起来,力求创出特色。

本书分别从政治、教育、宗教、西部、娱乐、节日和礼节等美国典型的方面编写,共 9 个单元,每个单元有 4 到 6 篇文章,内容翔实,深入浅出。文章后配有生词解释,便于读者阅读;背景介绍是对文章内容的简单介绍;注释部分是对课文知识的扩充,使读者对文章有更加深入全面的理解;最后是针对文章内容供读者思考的问题,给读者以思考的空间,通过思考题增强对知识点的理解,巩固文章内容。

由于编者水平有限,书中不足之处还希望读者给予批评指正。

编者

2009 年 5 月

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# Unit 1 Politics

## 政治

### 1. The Constitution 宪法

In the world, every country has its own constitutional law, no matter what it is, written or unwritten. Generally speaking, in a country's legal system, its constitutional law is the fundamental law, which has supreme legal authority and, in legal form, defines the basic system and basic tasks of the country. Here is about the Constitution which is the fundamental law of the U. S. federal system of government and a landmark document of the Western world. It is the oldest written national constitution in operation, completed in 1787 at the **Constitutional Convention**<sup>1</sup> of 55 delegates who met in **Philadelphia**<sup>2</sup>, ostensibly to amend the Articles of Confederation. The Constitution was ratified in June 1788, but because ratification in many states was contingent on the promised addition of a **Bill of Rights**<sup>3</sup>, **Congress**<sup>4</sup> proposed 12 amendments in September 1789; 10 were ratified by the states, and their adoption was certified on Dec. 15, 1791. The framers were especially concerned with limiting the power of the government and securing the liberty of citizens. The Constitution's separation of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government, the checks and balances of each branch against the other, and the explicit guarantees of individual liberty were all designed to strike a balance between authority and liberty.

More than 200 years ago, when the colonists gained their inde-

pendence, one of their objectives was to give themselves a system of government in which each person would be able to live his own life without fear of being ill-treated or interfered with by political or religious authorities. Another objective was to be free of the damage and misery caused by war, and to ensure that there should be no room in their new country for the national rivalries and hatreds that they had left behind in Europe. Under this condition, a new constitution was on its way of drafting, actually, also for the Articles of Confederation were not enough to suffice the new nation. They lacked a Bill of Rights and weakened the new, immature America. The Constitution added the Bill of Rights and gave citizens basic freedoms, such as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, etc.

The Constitution of the United States comprises the primary law of the U. S. Federal Government. It also describes the three chief branches of the Federal Government and their jurisdictions. In addition, it lays out the basic rights of citizens of the United States. In this way, under this advanced constitution, the newly independent nation can be able to develop and become the strongest nation all over the world later.

Like other national constitutions, the U. S. Constitution establishes a general framework for organizing and operating a government. It is not a detailed blueprint for governing on a day-to-day basis. The Constitution consists of only about 7,500 words. It does not attempt to consider the details of how to run the national government. Officials who run the government supply the details that fit the general framework.

At the beginning of a new nation, a stronger central administration was needed if the nation was going to survive. In order to work efficiently and avoid autocracy, in accordance with the new constitution, the principle of limited government is its essence. The main



goal of the principle of limited government is to counter and prevent the person or the collection from grapping all the powers and to abuse the power of the government, safeguards citizen's democracy rights, especially the minority. It is the main means to implement that limits the government to depend on the people, but it is not sufficient, it also needs ancillary protective measures to implement, such as separation of powers. After more than 200 years, the principle of limited government is still the main principle of the U. S. political life. The Constitution placed some restrictions on congressional power. For example, Congress could not stop the slave trade until 1808 nor could it restrict habeas corpus, the right of a person accused of a crime to know the charges against him, pass ex post facto laws, which make something a crime after the fact, give preference to any port of commerce, or grant or allow any federal officeholder to accept a title of nobility. Nor could members of Congress serve simultaneously in any other civil office.

Under the Constitution, ratified in 1788, Congress was divided into two houses and power was distributed among the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the federal government and the states. In addition to the sections pertaining to Congress, several other parts of the Constitution assign duties and powers to the President and judiciary. For example, the President can dispatch military forces to put down civil disorder or rebellion or to enforce federal laws if necessary. The Constitution also places limits on the powers of officials such as the President, Supreme Court justices and members of Congress. This kind of limitation, to some extent, restricted the centralization of the government so that the preliminary development in politics, economy and foreign affairs were guaranteed.

Such limitations on the expressed powers granted to the government protect the liberties of the people. For example, although the

**U. S. Treasury Department**<sup>5</sup> collects taxes, an act of Congress must authorize any expenditure of that tax money. More generally, the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, known collectively as the Bill of Rights, protect the liberties of the people. All government officials must follow the Constitution when carrying out their duties. For example, the Constitution (Article 6) says that “no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office of public trust in the United States”. Thus the President may not require any employees of the executive branch of government to attend church services in order to keep their jobs. The Constitution grants powers in the name of the people, and the government draws its power from the consent of the governed. The document assumes that government officials will use their powers in the interests of the people. The preamble to the Constitution says, “We the People of the United States. . .do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.” Representatives of the people wrote and approved the Constitution of the United States. Granting certain powers to government in the name of the people gives legitimacy to the government because most of the people, viewing it as legal and proper, are likely to find it acceptable.

The protection to private property is also the essence of the American Constitution. The limited power is the essence and attribute of government system that the American Constitution confirms. The lawmaking style of the American higher law is restricting the use of power which restricts the private property. The constitutionalism practice of American higher law is judicial to whether restricting the use of government power which restricts the private property has come to reality. The protection of private property promoted the stability of the newly born country and encouraged individuals to contribute to the national development. In this way, people living in a

condition of economic security can be able to create wealth and contribute to the fortune accumulation of the country.

The 1787 Constitution also succeeded in the farmers' goal of creating a huge free-trade zone. For all of the courts' and the Court's questionable interpretations of this document and for all of its abuse at the hands of Congresses and Presidents, efforts by state and local governments to protect producers from competition outside of their jurisdictions have largely failed. Sure there are exceptions. But the fact that Floridians can buy oranges from **California**<sup>6</sup>, Californians can buy wine from Washington state, residents of Washington state can buy apples from North Carolina, North Carolinians can buy seafood from **Louisiana**<sup>7</sup>, and so on, is a happy testament to the success of the Constitution's commerce clause in creating a huge duty-free, and now transcontinental market that encouraged the division of labor to deepen and, hence, promoted incredible, widespread prosperity. The development of the economy is the crucial and basic requirement for a new nation to deal with all kinds of situations at home or abroad. Domestically, the infrastructure was required at the beginning of the new government; externally, the defense power needs to strengthen with money confronting with the threat of Britain and France.

The 1787 American Constitution played an important role at the beginning of the new country. After 200 years, the Constitution has been constantly revised and improved so that the United States as the world's most typical Western democracies has never had any split with the dictatorship, the United States for long-term stability and development have made indelible contributions to becoming the biggest bright spot in American politics.

## Words and Expressions

amendment	<i>n.</i>	修改, 改动, 修正案
ancillary	<i>adj.</i>	辅助的, 附属的
autocracy	<i>n.</i>	独裁统治
bright spot		辉点, 亮点, 高兴的事, 欢乐的时刻
essence	<i>n.</i>	本质, 实质, 要素, (植物、药物等) 精髓, 精华
habeas corpus		人身保护权
judicial	<i>adj.</i>	司法的, 法庭的, 审判的, 明断的, 公正的
legislative	<i>adj.</i>	立法的
nobility	<i>n.</i>	贵族阶层, 高贵, 高尚, 崇高
officeholder	<i>n.</i>	官员
ordain	<i>v.</i>	任命(某人)为牧师, 授予圣职, (上帝、法律等) 命令, 判定
ratification	<i>n.</i>	正式批准, 认可
simultaneously	<i>adv.</i>	同时地
widespread	<i>adj.</i>	分布广的, 普遍的, 广泛的

## 背景介绍

美利坚合众国宪法(Constitution of the United States), 简称美国宪法, 是美国的根本大法。该宪法于 1787 年 5 月 25 日至 9 月 17 日在费城召开的美国制宪会议上获得代表的批准, 并在此后不久, 被当时美国拥有的 13 个州的特别会议所批准。根据这部宪法, 美国成为一个由各个拥有主权的州所组成的联邦国家, 同时也有一个联邦政府来为联邦的运作而服务。从此联邦体制取代了基于邦联条例而存在的较为松散的邦联体制。1789 年美国宪法正式生效。该部宪法为日后许多国家的成文宪法的制定提供了成功的典范, 并且在当时巩固新生的美国政权方面起到了举足轻重的作用。

## Notes to the Text

1. **Constitutional Convention** 美国 1787 年制宪会议 制宪会议是美国 1787 年 5 月在费城举行的会议。最初的决议案写明了这次会议的目的是起草邦联条例的修正案,但是会议最终决定重新起草一部宪法。费城制宪会议代表投票同意采用秘密会议的方式,并且同意新的法案需要获得 13 个州中的 9 个州的批准才能生效。有人批评说这是对会议权限和现行法律的逾越。但是对于邦联体制下的政府极度不满的会议代表全体一致同意将宪法草案交付各州表决。

2. **Philadelphia** 费城 费城是美国的故都,也是第五大都市。随着岁月的流逝,费城所拥有的重要性已逐渐褪色,但是在 18 世纪中叶,费城却是起草与签署独立宣言的地方,第一次和第二次大陆会议(Continental Congresses)均是在此地召开。而美国宪法草案也是在费城起草和签署的。贝茜·罗斯(Betsy Ross)在这里设计并升起了美国国旗;国父乔治·华盛顿也在此留下了不少岁月。这里是美国和美国民主的诞生地。Philadelphia 是希腊语,意为“兄弟之爱”,这个拥有 160 万人口的城市,至今仍维持着友善小镇的感觉。

3. **Bill of Rights** 权利法案 权利法案指的是美国宪法中第一至第十条宪法修正案。当美国宪法草案提交各州立法机构批准时,多数议员认为权利法案也应该被提出,而有关的权利也应该在宪法中受到保护。詹姆斯·麦迪逊在《弗吉尼亚权利法案》的基础上开始着手进行权利法案的起草工作。人们同意权利法案以宪法修正案的形式被加入到宪法中去,以避免直接修改宪法而需要再次进行冗长的宪法批准过程。1789 年最初有 12 条修正案被提出,但其中 2 条未能通过。1791 年 12 月 15 日其余的 10 条修正案获得通过,成为现在所称的《权利法案》。权利法案草案中的第 11 条在 1992 年最终获得批准,成为宪法第 27 条修正案。这条修正案禁止国会提高对议员的薪酬。

4. **Congress** 国会 国会是美国最高立法机关,由参议院和众议院组成。参议员由各州选民直接选出,每州 2 名,实行各州代表权平等原则。现有议员 100 名。当选参议员必须年满 30 岁,作为美国公民已满

9年,当选时为选出州的居民。任期6年,每2年改选1/3,连选可连任。众议员数按各州人口比例分配,由直接选举产生,每州至少1名,人数固定为435名,必须年满25岁,作为美国公民已满7年,当选时为选出州的居民。任期2年,连选可连任。两院议员长期连任现象极为普遍。议员不得兼任其他政府职务。

5. **U. S. Treasury Department 美国财政部** 美国财政部成立于1789年,处理美国联邦的财政事务、征税、发行债券、偿付债务、监督通货发行,制定和建议有关经济、财政、税务及国库收入的政策,进行国际财务交易。财政部长在总统内阁官员中居第二位,也是国际货币基金组织、国际复兴开发银行、美洲国家开发银行和亚洲国家开发银行的美方首脑。值得一提的是,财政部还负责美国总统及其家属的保安工作,这在世界各国可以说是绝无仅有的。

6. **California 加利福尼亚州** 通常简称为加州,是美国西部太平洋岸边的一个州,南邻墨西哥,西濒太平洋。它在面积上是全美第三大州,在人口上是全美第一大州。加利福尼亚州无论是在地理、地貌、物产,还是人口构成上都十分多样化。由于早年的淘金热,加利福尼亚州也被称为黄金州(The Golden State)。其城市人口占91.3%,主要集中在太平洋沿岸地区,其中50%聚居在洛杉矶和圣弗朗西斯科(旧金山)一带。拥有全国50%以上的华裔和墨西哥裔美国人(契卡诺人)。圣弗朗西斯科的唐人街是华人最密集的居住区。首府是萨克拉门托。

7. **Louisiana 路易斯安那州** 路易斯安那州是美国中南部的一个州。北连阿肯色州,西接得克萨斯州,东邻密西西比州,南临墨西哥湾。在50个州中列第31位。首府巴吞鲁日(Baton Rouge)。第一个发现路易斯安那州北方的河谷的人是西班牙人赫南多·迪·索多(Hernando de Soto)。1541年西班牙探险家德萨托到达该州北部。1682年法国人热内宣布路易斯安那州是法国的属地。法国探险家拉萨尔以当时法国国王路易十四的名字命名这一地区为路易斯安那,意为“路易的土地”。1731年它成为法国殖民地。1762年西班牙从法国手中得到路易斯安那殖民地。1800年重归法国。1803年美国以1500万美元从法国购入自密西西比河到落基山脉的整个地区,其中包括路易斯安那

州。1812 年路易斯安那州加入联邦,成为美国第 18 州。1861 年南北战争时退出联邦,加入南方邦联。1868 年重新加入联邦。

## Questions

1. Is US Constitution helpful in alleviating the class contradictions?
2. How important is the 1787 Constitution to the newly country?
3. How many main parts does the U. S. Constitution consist of?
4. What was the significance of the first written Constitution to the whole world?
5. How many amendments does the Constitution include?

## 2. American Democracy 美国民主

**Democracy**<sup>1</sup>, which derives from the Greek word “demos”, or “people”, is defined, basically, as government in which the supreme power is vested in the people. In some forms, democracy can be exercised directly by the people; in large societies, it is by the people through their elected agents. Or, in the memorable phrase of President **Abraham Lincoln**<sup>2</sup>, democracy is government “**of the people, by the people, and for the people**”<sup>3</sup>.

Freedom and democracy are often used interchangeably, but the two are not synonymous. Democracy is indeed a set of ideas and principles about freedom, but it also consists of practices and procedures that have been molded through a long, often tortuous history. Democracy is the institutionalization of freedom.

Democracy is an ancient concept, dating back 2,500 years to the Athenian city-state. But democratic ideals did not take root in the modern world until the late 18th century. Since that time, this powerful system for social and political organization has spread around the

globe and takes as many different forms as there are democratic countries. One thing remains constant, however, a respect for all citizens' right to participate in decisions about how they are governed. The following are three aspects which embody democracy in the country.

### **Rule of Law<sup>4</sup>**

For much of human history, rulers and law were synonymous—law was simply the will of the ruler. A first step away from such tyranny was the notion of rule by law, including the notion that even a ruler is under the law and should rule by virtue of legal means. Democracies went further by establishing the rule of law. Although no society or government system is problem-free, rule of law protects fundamental political, social and economic rights and reminds us that tyranny and lawlessness are not the only alternatives.

- Rule of law means that no individual, president or private citizen, stands above law. Democratic governments exercise authority by way of law and are themselves subject to law's constraints.
- Laws should express the will of the people, not the whims of kings, dictators, military officials, religious leaders or self-appointed political parties.
- Citizens in democracies are willing to obey the laws of their society, then, because they are submitting to their own rules and regulations. Justice is best achieved when the laws are established by the very people who must obey them.
- Under the rule of law, a system of strong, independent courts should have the power and authority, resources and the prestige to hold government officials, even top leaders, accountable to the nation's laws and regulations.
- For this reason, judges should be well trained, professional, independent and impartial. To serve their necessary role in



the legal and political system, judges must be committed to the principles of democracy.

- The laws of a democracy may have many sources; written constitutions, statutes and regulations, religious and ethical teachings and cultural traditions and practices. Regardless of origin the law should enshrine certain provisions to protect the rights and freedoms of citizens.
- Under the requirement of equal protection under the law, the law may not be uniquely applicable to any single individual or group.
- Citizens must be secure from arbitrary arrest and unreasonable search of their homes or the seizure of their personal property.
- Citizens charged with crimes are entitled to a speedy and public trial, along with the opportunity to confront and question their accusers. If convicted, they may not be subjected to cruel or unusual punishment.
- Citizens cannot be forced to testify against themselves. This principle protects citizens from coercion, abuse or torture and greatly reduces the temptation of police to employ such measures.

### **Popular Sovereignty<sup>5</sup>**

Sovereignty, by definition, means the greatest authority and power to command all others. Every nation-state in the modern world has sovereignty. It may reside in a king, in a parliament, or in the state. In the case of the United States, popular sovereignty means that people are sovereign, because they, by consent, “do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America”. By resting sovereignty in the people, the notion suggests, in theory at least, that a government can always be changed, preferably by major-