

美国文化概览

An Overview of American Culture

主编 沈 姝 胡继岳



第二军医大学出版社
Second Military Medical University Press

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内 容 简 介

本书着重分析美国文化的基本层面,旨在让读者了解美国社会、经济、政治的基本特点,从而开拓视野、提高英语交流和跨文化交际能力。在编写过程中,我们力求达成多题材练习配套,培养语言基本技能;多媒体辅助材料,培养跨文化交际意识;多方位批判思维,理解文化价值差异的教学目标。本书配有赠送的学习光盘,收录了每个单元的视频、音频文字材料,供学习者参考。

本书适用于本科低年级、具有一定语言基础的学生使用,也可供英语爱好者了解美国文化之用。

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前 言

语言是文化的载体,语言与文化不可分割。但是编者在多年的大学英语教学中注意到中国学生在长期的英语语言学习中缺乏对于英语国家文化内涵的了解,因此大学英语教学中补充文化教学显得尤为重要。了解英语国家文化能巩固语言知识、激发学习兴趣、领略语言魅力。基于上述教学需要,第二军医大学外语教研室通过多方努力,编写了这本《美国文化概览》。

本书着重分析美国文化的基本层面,旨在让读者了解美国社会、经济、政治的基本特点,从而开拓视野、提高英语交流和跨文化交际能力。在编写过程中,我们力求达成以下教学目标及特色:

1) 多题材练习配套,培养语言基本技能。本教材基于整个大学英语教学大纲和课程要求,配合大学英语教材使用。本书在每篇阅读材料之后设计了多样性的练习,保证学习者在了解美国社会文化知识的同时综合培养词汇、阅读、翻译、写作能力。

2) 多媒体辅助材料,培养跨文化交际意识。全书利用图片、音频、视频再现美国真实文化语境。真实语境下的美国社会文化知识不仅为学习者提供更多的英语学习背景资料,而且能够激发学习者英语学习的兴趣;更重要的是可以培养学习者的跨文化交际能力,帮助其更好地适应新形势下社会对复合型英语人才的需求。此外每章的拓展阅读书目和推荐电影赏析,可以帮助学习者更全面地了解相关主题。

3) 多方位批判思维,理解文化价值差异。美国是全球最有影响力的国家之一,同时也是英语语言的主要载体国家。每个章节的中美文化冲突讨论帮助学习者结合自身经历和感受社会文化来寻找语言灵感、表达自身看法。了解美国社会文化知识、分析中美文化差异还可以帮助学习者在交流与学习中取长补短,在全面认识美国文化的同时发展自身文化。

《美国文化概览》配有学习光盘,收录了每个单元的视频、音频以及相应的文字材料,供学习者参考。本书适用于本科低年级、具有一定语言基础的学生使用,也可供英语爱好者了解美国文化之用。作者希望本书能够帮助读者对美国文化有比较基本且全面的了解。由于编者的水平和经验有限,不足之处在所难免,恳切希望各位读者不吝赐教,以便进一步修订完善。

编 者

2013 年 6 月

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Chapter One

“This Is America.”

—Overview



Learning Objectives

In this chapter students are required to:

- Learn some useful words and expressions related to the topics.
- Know the most global and fundamental knowledge about USA.
- Learn how to use proper words and expressions to talk about the specific topics about USA.
- Conduct a series of language activities to arouse the cultural awareness especially on American values.

PART I : Pre - reading Activities



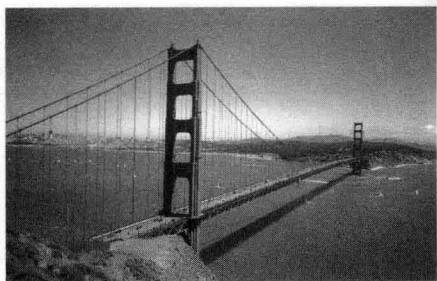
1. Quiz

Directions: Please have a brief discussion with your group members and answer the following questions.

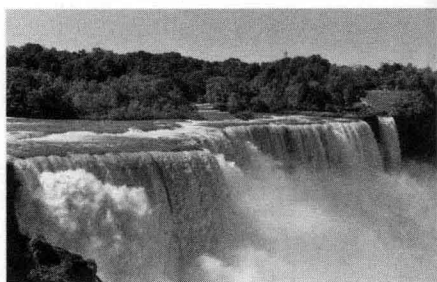
- 1) What is the national flag of USA?
- 2) What is the national anthem of USA?
- 3) What is the national flower of USA?
- 4) Which state is the largest state? Which state is the smallest one?
- 5) Which state is most populous in USA?
- 6) Can you name some largest cities in USA?
- 7) Which city is the capital city of USA? Can you name some symbol buildings in the capital city?
- 8) Which state is the last one to join the USA?
- 9) How does the United States rank among the countries of the world in terms of population and area?
- 10) What are the two major mountain ranges in the United States?

2. Game

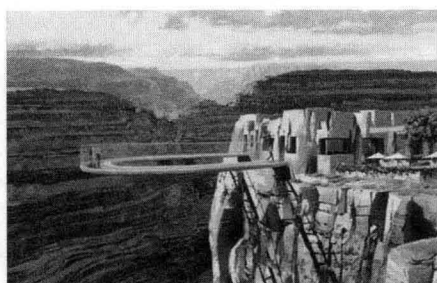
Directions: The students will be divided into two groups. The students are required to look at the following pictures and tell us their names and locations. Let's see which group will win.



1) _____



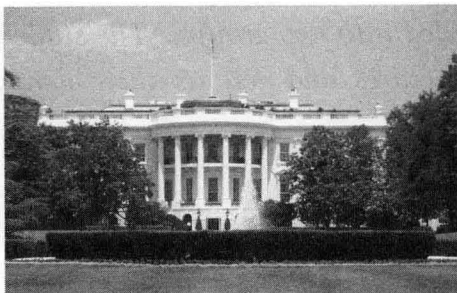
2) _____



3) _____



4) _____



5) _____



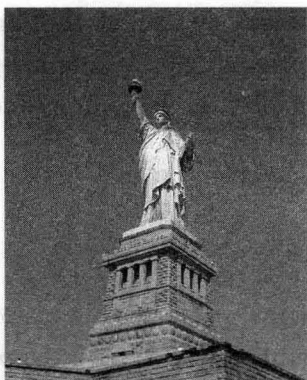
6) _____



7) _____



8) _____



9)

PART II : While - reading Activities

Introduction

The United States of America is composed of 50 states and Washington D. C. Variety is a key characteristic of the United States, both geographically and culturally. The total area is 9,372,614 square kilometers, making it one of the largest countries in the world. According to 2007 estimates, the population of the United States is 270,300,000, the third largest in the world behind China and India. The largest cities in the United States are New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston and Philadelphia. Throughout most of its history, the United States places a high priority on education. Colleges and universities in the United States — notably Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, California Institute of Technology, and the University of Chicago — are among the world's greatest education institutions. The official language of the United States is English. In addition, some regions and races use other languages, like French, Spanish etc. The United States locates in the south of North America, east to Atlantic Ocean, west to Pacific Ocean, north to Canada and south to Mexico and Gulf of Mexico.

TEXT A

Brief Introduction of USA

The United States consists of 50 states and Washington D. C. The last two States to join the Union were Alaska (49th) and Hawaii (50th). Both joined in 1959.

Washington D. C. is a **federal** district under the **authority** of the U. S. Congress. Washington D. C. is represented in Congress by an elected, non-voting **delegate** to the House of Representatives. Residents have been able to vote in presidential elections since 1961.

Geography

Americans often speak of their country as one of several large regions. These regions are cultural units rather than governmental units — formed by history and geography and shaped by the economics, literature and **folkways** that all the parts of a region share. What makes one region different from another? Within several regions, language is used differently and there are strong **dialects**. There are also differences in **outlook** and attitude based on geography. A region's multicultural **heritage**, as well as **distinct demographic** characteristics like age and occupation, also makes regions different and special. The United States is a varied land — of forests, deserts, mountains, high flat lands and **fertile** plains. The country lies mostly in the temperate zone but there is a very wide range of climate **variations**. The continental United States stretches 4,500 kilometers from the Atlantic Ocean on the east to the Pacific Ocean on the west. It borders Canada on the north and reaches south to Mexico and the Gulf of Mexico. The United States covers a total area of 9 million square kilometers(including Alaska and Hawaii). Alaska is the largest in area of the 50 states, and Texas is the second largest. From the Appalachian Mountains in the East to the Rocky Mountains in the West, the center of the country is **drained** by the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and their branches. The Mississippi is one of the world's great rivers; it was known to the native Americans as the “father of waters”. Water from the source of its main branch, the Missouri River, flows about 6,400 kilometers from the northern Rocky Mountains to the mouth of the Mississippi in the Gulf of Mexico. On a **topographic** map of the United States, the mountains look like **jagged** masses, the plains like vast, open flat spaces, and the rivers like **meandering** threads. Today, highways, railways and transcontinental aircraft **criss-cross** the land, making travel easy. But only a few generations ago the topographic features on the map represented great dangers and difficulties.

History

The first Europeans to reach North America were **Icelandic Vikings**¹, led by Leif Ericson, about the year 1,000. Traces of their visit have been found in the Canadian province of Newfoundland, but the Vikings failed to establish a permanent settlement and soon lost contact with the new continent. Five centuries later, the demand for Asian spices, textiles, and dyes **spurred** European navigators to dream of

shorter routes between East and West. Acting **on behalf of** the Spanish crown, in 1492 the Italian navigator **Christopher Columbus**² sailed west from Europe and landed on one of the Bahamas Islands in the *Caribbean Sea*. Within 40 years, Spanish adventurers had carved out a huge empire in Central and South America. In the 16th and 17th Century, Northern Europeans settled in what is now the Northeast Coast of the United States, which soon fell under the British Crown and stayed an English Colony till the **Revolutionary Wars**³ in the late 18th Century.

Government

The United States is a federal union of 50 states, with the District of Columbia as the seat of the federal government. The **Constitution outlines** the structure of the national government and **specifies** its powers and activities, and defines the relationship between the national government and individual state governments. Power is shared between the national and state (local) governments. Within each state are counties, townships, cities and villages, each of which has its own elective government. Governmental power and functions in the United States rest in three branches of government: the **legislative**, **judicial**, and **executive**. **Article 1**⁴ of the Constitution defines the legislative branch and **vests** power to **legislate** in the Congress of the United States. The executive powers of the President are defined in Article 2. Article 3 places judicial power in the hands of one Supreme Court and inferior courts as Congress sees necessary to establish. In this system of a “separation of powers” each branch operates independently of the others, however, they are built in “**checks and balances**”⁵ to prevent a concentration of power in any one branch and to protect the rights and liberties of citizens. For example, the President can **veto** bills approved by Congress and the President **nominates** individuals to serve in the Federal **judiciary**; the Supreme Court can declare a law enacted by Congress or an action by the President; and Congress can **impeach** the President and Federal court justices and judges.

Economy

The United States entered the 21st century with an economy that was bigger and by many measures more successful than ever. Though the United States held less than 5 percent of the world's population, it accounted for more than 25 percent of the world's economic output. In the 1990s, the American economy recorded the longest uninterrupted period of expansion in its history. A wave of technological **innovations** in computing, telecommunications and the biological sciences were **profoundly** affecting how Americans work and play. The United States remains a “market economy”. Americans continue to believe that an economy generally operates best

when decisions about what to produce and what prices to charge for goods are made through the give-and-take of millions of independent buyers and sellers, not by government or by powerful private interests. Besides believing that free markets promote economic efficiency, Americans see them as a way of promoting their political values as well — especially their **commitment** to individual freedom and political **pluralism** and their opposition to **undue** concentrations of power. The American belief in “free enterprise” has not **precluded** a major role for government. However, Americans at times have looked to government to break up or regulate companies. That appeared to be developing so much power that they could defy market forces. They have relied on government to address matters the private economy overlooks, from education to protecting the environment. And despite their advocacy of market principles, they have used government at times to **nurture** new industries, and at times even to protect American companies from competition.



Words and Expressions

federal /'fedərəl/ *adj.* relating to the national government 联邦的

authority /ɔ:'θpriti/ *n.* an official organization or government department that has the power to make decisions 官方机构

delegate /'deligət/ *n.* a person who is chosen to vote or make decisions on behalf of a group of other people, especially at a conference or a meeting 代表

folkway /'fəukwei/ *n.* 民风, 社会习俗

dialect /'daialekt/ *n.* a form of a language that is spoken in a particular area 方言

outlook /'aʊtlɒk/ *n.* general attitude toward life 观点

heritage /'heritidʒ/ *n.* all the qualities, traditions or features of life there that have continued over many years and have been passed on from one generation to another 遗产, 传统

distinct /di'stiŋ(k)t/ *adj.* different or separate from others 明显的, 独特的

demographic /,demə'græfik/ *adj.* the statistics relating to the people who live there 人口统计的

fertile /'fɜ:tail/ *adj.* able to support the growth of a large number of strong healthy plants 富饶的, 肥沃的

variation /veəri'eɪʃ(ə)n/ *n.* the same thing presented in a slightly different form 变化

drain /dreɪn/ *vt.* empty of liquid 排水, 灌溉

topographic /,tɒpə'græfik/ *adj.* describing an area of land 地形测量的

jagged /'dægid/ *adj.* rough, uneven 齿状的, 参差不齐的

meandering /mi'ændəriŋ/ *adj.* having a lot of bends, rather than going in a straight line from one place to another 曲折的

criss-cross /'krɪskrɒs/ *adj.* crossing each other 纵横交错的, 十字形的

spur /spɜ:/ *vt.* encourages somebody to do 激励, 鞭策

on behalf of 代表

constitution /kənsti'tju:ʃ(ə)n/ *n.* the system of laws which formally states people's rights and duties 宪法

outline /'aʊlən/ *vt.* explain it in a general way 概述

specify /'spesɪfaɪ/ *vt.* give information about what is required or should happen in a certain situation 指定, 详细说明

legislative /'ledʒɪslətɪv/ *adj.* involving or relating to the process of making and passing laws 立法的, 有立法权的

judicial /dʒu:'dɪʃ(ə)l/ *adj.* relating to the legal system and to judgments made in a court of law 公正的, 司法的

executive /ɪg'zekjʊtɪv/ *adj.* concerned with the making of decisions and with ensuring that decisions are carried out 行政的, 执行的

veto /'vɪtəʊ/ *vt.* forbid or stop from being put into action 否决, 禁止

nominate /'nɒmɪneɪt/ *vt.* formally choose them to hold that job or position 推荐, 提名

judiciary /dʒu:'dɪʃ(ə)ri/ *n.* the branch of authority in a country that is concerned with law and the legal system 司法部

impeach /ɪm'pi:tʃ/ *vt.* formally charged with a serious crime in a special government court 弹劾

innovation /ɪnə'veɪʃ(ə)n/ *n.* the introduction of new ideas, methods 创新, 革新

profoundly /prə'faʊndli/ *adv.* very great or intense 深刻地

commitment /kə'mɪtm(ə)nt/ *n.* a strong belief in an idea or system 承诺, 保证

pluralism /'plʊə(ə)liz(ə)m/ *n.* a society has many different groups and political parties 多元化

undue /ʌn'dju:/ *adj.* greater or more extreme than you think is reasonable or appropriate 过度的

prelude /'preljʊd/ *n.* acts as an introduction to an event 前奏, 序幕

nurture /'nɜ:tʃə/ *vt.* care for it while it is growing and developing 养育, 培养



Cultural Notes

1. **Icelandic Vikings** The term Viking is customarily used to refer to the Norse explorers, warriors, merchants and pirates who raided, traded, explored and

- settled in wide areas of Europe, Asia and the North Atlantic islands from the late 8th to the mid-11th century. 北欧人
2. **Christopher Columbus** (31 October 1451 — 20 May 1506) He was an explorer, colonizer and navigator, born in the Republic of Genoa, in what is today northwestern Italy. Under the auspices of the Catholic Monarchs of Spain, he completed four voyages across the Atlantic Ocean that led to general European awareness of the American continents. 克里斯托弗·哥伦布, 西班牙著名航海家, 地理大发现先驱者
3. **Revolutionary Wars** Or the American Revolution was the political upheaval during the last half of the 18th century in which thirteen colonies in North America joined together to break free from the British Empire, combining to become the United States of America. 美国独立战争(1775—1783年北美13个殖民地人民推翻英国统治, 争取独立的革命战争)
4. **Article 1** Article One of the United States Constitution describes the powers of Congress, the legislative branch of the federal government. 宪法第一条
5. **checks and balances** The separation of powers, often imprecisely used interchangeably with the trias political principle, is a model for the governance of a state. The model was first developed in ancient Greece and came into widespread use by the Roman Republic as part of the unmodified Constitution of the Roman Republic. Under this model, the state is divided into branches, each with separate and independent powers and areas of responsibility so that no branch has more power than the other branches. The normal division of branches is into an executive, a legislature, and a judiciary. 三权分立, 权利制衡



Exercises

Task One: Reading Comprehension

Directions: Answer the following questions with the information contained in TEXT A.

- 1) How many states does the United States consist of?
- 2) What are the last two states to join the United States?

- 3) Please tell us briefly the geographic locations of USA.
- 4) What are the first two largest states in the USA?
- 5) Who were the major settlers in the New Land?
- 6) What are the three branches in American government? Who own their powers respectively?
- 7) Why does the USA remain market economy?
- 8) Which aspect of USA mentioned in the text are you most interested in? Why?
- 9) Please explain briefly about your understanding of the term “Super Power” which is often used to describe USA.
- 10) What are the key differences between China and America in terms of geography, history, government and economy?

Task Two: Blank Filling

Directions: In the box below are some of the key words and phrases you have learned in TEXT A. Complete the following sentences with them. Change the form where necessary.

executive	authority	nurture	distinct	innovation
specify	vest	vary	drain	on behalf of

- 1) Washington D.C. is a federal district under the _____ of the U.S. Congress.
- 2) A region's multicultural heritage as well as _____ demographic characteristics like age and occupation also makes regions different and special.
- 3) The United States is a _____ land — of forests, deserts, mountains, high flat lands and fertile plains.
- 4) From the Appalachian Mountains in the East to the Rocky Mountains in the West, the center of the country is _____ by the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and their branches.
- 5) Acting _____ the Spanish crown, in 1492 the Italian navigator Christopher

Columbus sailed west from Europe and landed on one of the Bahamas Islands in the Caribbean Sea.

- 6) The Constitution outlines the structure of the national government and _____ its powers and activities, and defines the relationship between the national government and individual state governments.
- 7) Article 1 of the Constitution defines the legislative branch and _____ power to legislate in the Congress of the United States.
- 8) Governmental power and functions in the United States rest in three branches of government: the legislative, judicial, and _____.
- 9) A wave of technological _____ in computing, telecommunications and biological sciences were profoundly affecting how Americans work and play.
- 10) Despite their advocacy of market principles, they have used government at times to _____ new industries, and at times even to protect American companies from competition.

Task Three: Match

Directions: Choose the definition in Column B that best matches each word in Column A.

COLUMN A

- 1) fertile _____
- 2) heritage _____
- 3) variation _____
- 4) specify _____
- 5) executive _____
- 6) distinct _____
- 7) innovation _____
- 8) commitment _____
- 9) nurture _____
- 10) spur _____

COLUMN B

- a. different or separate from others
- b. care for it while it is growing and developing
- c. a new idea, method or invention
- d. traditions passed on
- e. a strong belief in an idea or system
- f. a difference between similar things
- g. concerned with the making of decisions
- h. able to produce good crops
- i. encourage sb. to do sth.
- j. state something in an exact and detailed way

Task Four: Translation

Directions: Translate the following sentences into Chinese.

- 1) These regions are cultural units rather than governmental units — formed by history and geography and shaped by the economics, literature and folkways that