

History of the United States, 2nd Edition

(84 lectures, 30 minutes/lecture)

Course No. 8500

Taught by [Patrick N. Allitt](#), [Gary W. Gallagher](#), [Allen C. Guelzo](#)

This is the story of a country in which immigrants of the late 19th and early 20th centuries huddled in cramped tenement apartments lit by hazardous kerosene lamps. And a country that, little more than a half-century later, a renowned economist described as "The Affluent Society."

This is the chronicle of a nation that enslaved an entire race of people to perform its labor. And of a nation that fought a Civil War that freed its slaves, and outlawed segregation and discrimination.

This is history shaped by Revolutionary War and Vietnam, Thomas Jefferson and William Jefferson Clinton, Puritanism and Feminism, Booker T. Washington and Martin Luther King, Jamestown and Disneyland, Harpers Ferry and Henry Ford, oil wells and Orson Welles.

This is a review of the extraordinary blend of people, ideas, inventions, and events that comprise **The History of the United States**. In this seven-part, 84-lecture series, three noted historians and lecturers—two of whom teach other popular Teaching Company courses—present the nation's past through their areas of special interest.

Three Outstanding Instructors in This Sweeping Series

This sweeping presentation is provided by three award-winning professors:

- Dr. Allen C. Guelzo is Henry R. Luce Professor of the Civil War Era and Professor of History at Gettysburg College, and former Dean of Templeton Honors College at Eastern University, examines the beginnings of European settlement through the Great Compromise of 1850. His teaching awards include the Dean's Award for Distinguished Graduate Teaching from the University of Pennsylvania. His most recent book, *Abraham Lincoln: Redeemer President* (1999), won the Lincoln Prize and the Book Prize of the Abraham Lincoln Institute of the Mid-Atlantic.
- Dr. Gary W. Gallagher is the John L. Nau III Professor in the History of the American Civil War at the University of Virginia and a top Civil War expert. Dr. Gallagher presents the pre-Civil War period through Reconstruction. His teaching, which includes personal guided tours of major battlefields, has consistently won high praise from students, and he is a frequent lecturer and author. He also teaches the Great Course **The American Civil War**.
- Dr. Patrick N. Allitt, Professor of History at Emory University, discusses 19th-century industrialization through the early 21st century. In 2000 he was appointed to the National Endowment for the Humanities/Arthur Blank Professorship of Teaching in the Humanities, and recently received the Emory Center for Teaching and Curriculum's

Excellence in Teaching Award. He also teaches The Great Courses **Victorian Britain** and **American Religious History**.

With their guidance you will follow, as they unfold over time, factors that have enabled the United States to become the largest, wealthiest, and most powerful democratic republic in history.

These include its sense of confidence, national destiny, and exceptionalism; religiosity and belief in virtue; abundance of natural resources and entrepreneurial talent; ability to accept a diverse array of immigrants; and, as important as anything else, success in making democracy a reality rather than a theory.

What You Will Learn: A Voyage of Discovery

In the opening lecture, Professor Guelzo describes this course as "a voyage of discovery. Not a voyage to another continent or another hemisphere or even a trip to another planet, but to something which may be even stranger, and that is the history of the United States."

You will explore a past America often different from what you were taught or have imagined.

You will understand historical fact versus fiction when it comes to figures as diverse as:

Jacques Cartier. As early as 1534, he was "surprised to sight Indians, along what he thought was an unexplored Atlantic coastline, waving furs on sticks as an invitation for the Europeans to come down to the beach and trade."

James Monroe and Robert Livingston. They made the Louisiana Purchase, the greatest real estate deal in history, without approval from then President Thomas Jefferson (they had no time to tell him). Jefferson, in turn, had no constitutional authority to make the treaty of cession that finalized the purchase. He sent the document to the Senate with the comment, "The less we say about Constitutional difficulties the better."

Carrie Nation. The fiery temperance advocate hired a publicity manager to arrange media coverage before she invaded and smashed up a saloon. She even sold autographed copies of the axes she used.

Isaac Singer. This sewing machine magnate pioneered such now universal business techniques as installment-plan payments and nationwide advertising.

You will learn which novel was the most influential in U.S. history (hint: its female author once met Abraham Lincoln); why the west side became the best place to live in many older U.S. cities (prevailing winds blew smoke and fumes away from you); and what *The Wizard of Oz* is really about (the election of 1896).

Reading History "Forward"

An additional benefit of this course is that, as they present U.S. history, Professors Guelzo, Gallagher, and Allitt also provide a mini-course on teaching and learning history in general.

They convey a variety of highly useful lessons on how to think about history, place it in a proper perspective, and understand it accurately. These include an emphasis on the social and political context in which vital decisions were made and events took place, and an ability to take both the short-term and long-term views of issues.

In his lectures on the Civil War and Reconstruction, Professor Gallagher warns that the fact that we know how history turned out, that we "read history backward," often distorts our understanding. Repeatedly, he reminds you to "read forward, not backward," to try to understand how people of the past experienced events as they unfolded.

Successes Too Often Taken for Granted

Professor Allitt reflects on the aspects of U.S. history that make it unique and noteworthy, and which indicate the degree to which the nation has lived up to its ideals. He notes that America may fall short of its own high standards, "but compared to the other actual nations of the world, America was far more impressive for its successes than for its failings."

Some of these successes, Professor Allitt adds, are so obvious that we often fail to recognize them. The poverty that exists in the U.S. is of a relative kind; it would not be recognized as poverty in most of the rest of the world. In addition, the U.S. has achieved an exceptional degree of political stability and internal civil peace for a very long time. "We're so familiar with it that it's easy to forget how rare it is," Professor Allitt notes.

This is one of the many vital and often overlooked aspects of U.S. history that this course will help you to appreciate. Throughout the nation's existence, even during the Civil War, democracy has always worked. Elections have always taken place, the losers have always accepted that they have lost and left office, and the military has never tried to overthrow the civilian government.

Perhaps this is a legacy of the most popular and revered American ever, George Washington.

At the end of the Revolutionary War, some of Washington's officers suggested that the Continental Army should take over the country and make him the first King of America. Washington flatly rejected the offer, resigned his commission, and rode off to his home in Mount Vernon.

The notion that anyone could refuse power in this manner shocked Britain's King George III. "If this is true," the king said, "then he is the greatest man of the age."

Course Lecture Titles

Part 1

1. Living Bravely
2. Spain, France, and the Netherlands
3. Gentlemen in the Wilderness
4. Radicals in the Wilderness
5. Traders in the Wilderness
6. An Economy of Slaves
7. Printers, Painters, and Preachers
8. The Great Awakening
9. The Great War for Empire
10. The Rejection of Empire
11. The American Revolution—Politics and People
12. The American Revolution—Howe's War

Part 2

13. The American Revolution—Washington's War
14. Creating the Constitution
15. Hamilton's Republic
16. Republicans and Federalists
17. Adams and Liberty
18. The Jeffersonian Reaction
19. Territory and Treason
20. The Agrarian Republic
21. The Disastrous War of 1812
22. The "American System"
23. A Nation Announcing Itself
24. National Republican Follies

Part 3

25. The Second Great Awakening
26. Dark Satanic Mills
27. The Military Chieftain
28. The Politics of Distrust
29. The Monster Bank
30. Whigs and Democrats
31. American Romanticism
32. The Age of Reform
33. Southern Society and the Defense of Slavery
34. Whose Manifest Destiny?
35. The Mexican War
36. The Great Compromise

Part 4

37. Sectional Tensions Escalate
38. Drifting Toward Disaster
39. The Coming of War
40. The First Year of Fighting
41. Shifting Tides of Battle
42. Diplomatic Clashes and Sustaining the War
43. Behind the Lines—Politics and Economies
44. African Americans in Wartime
45. The Union Drive to Victory
46. Presidential Reconstruction
47. Congress Takes Command
48. Reconstruction Ends

Part 5

49. Industrialization
50. Transcontinental Railroads
51. The Last Indian Wars
52. Farming the Great Plains
53. African Americans after Reconstruction
54. Men and Women
55. Religion in Victorian America
56. The Populists
57. The New Immigration
58. City Life
59. Labor and Capital
60. Theodore Roosevelt and Progressivism

Part 6

61. Mass Production
62. World War I—The Road to Intervention
63. World War I—Versailles and Wilson's Gambit
64. The 1920s
65. The Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression
66. The New Deal
67. World War II—The Road to Pearl Harbor
68. World War II—The European Theater
69. World War II—The Pacific Theater
70. The Cold War
71. The Korean War and McCarthyism
72. The Affluent Society

Part 7

73. The Civil Rights Movement
74. The New Frontier and the Great Society
75. The Rise of Mass Media
76. The Vietnam War
77. The Women's Movement
78. Nixon and Watergate
79. Environmentalism
80. Religion in Twentieth-Century America
81. Carter and the Reagan Revolution
82. The New World Order
83. Clinton's America and the Millennium
84. Reflections