

March 30, 2018

TOPICS FOR THE BA EXAM

1. Discuss the social role of media, providing three examples.
2. Name and discuss two major directions in twentieth-century American literature and name at least two representative works from each.
3. Name three novels that you consider American classics. They should come from different historical periods and deal with different topics. Defend your choice and discuss one of the novels in detail.
4. Name three American movies and/or TV shows that you consider culturally significant. You will be asked to discuss one of them in some detail, in terms of both style and themes.
5. What three U.S. visual artists would you recommend to someone who knows nothing about American art? Discuss their style and their works, including specific paintings, sculptures or photographs.
6. Discuss the notion of “culture.” Review its definition according to Cultural Studies and provide two examples.
7. Discuss one of the major currents in American philosophy, providing two examples of specific texts.
8. Describe social stratification in the modern United States and suggest some of the historical factors affecting their development. Choose one social class and discuss it, referring to its values, attitudes, work, consumption styles, family patterns, gender, and race.
9. How has religion played a role in shaping society and culture over the course of American history? What are the main religious groups in the United States today? Pick a sect, movement or denomination to discuss in detail.
10. In what ways did slavery “make” America the nation that it is today? Cite specific and concrete examples that illustrate this process politically, socially, culturally, and economically.
11. How have the ideologies regulating women’s roles in American society changed over time? What non-ideological factors have forced changes in the prescribed roles?

12. Discuss the most numerous American ethno-racial groups, their historical origins, and the evolution of their status in the U.S.
13. Discuss American patterns of settlement in the U.S. regions, and in urban, suburban and rural areas. How have these patterns changed in the course of the U.S. history?
14. Discuss American sexuality and the family. What have been the factors shaping American attitudes and behavior?
15. Discuss the origins and dynamics of the American Constitution: the reasons for its adoption, the conflicts which shaped it, reasons why it has lasted so long, and the way it has evolved since 1787 including “incorporating” clauses of the Bill of Rights through the Fourteenth Amendment. Think about the causes and consequences of major changes.
16. How is power distributed among the branches of government and levels of government in America? What factors determine as well as legitimize the scope of power of major institutions and actors in the system?
17. American political philosophy has many forms: discuss major ideas and ideologies which have shaped (and still shape today) the thinking about American democracy.
18. Talk about the political behavior of Americans: their motivations, beliefs and values, sometimes referred to as the “American Creed.” Identify key actors on the political scene who have made strong contributions to America’s “Core Values.”
19. Government regulation of business and attitudes to social problems have evolved through the decades. How are these reflected in the different postures of the major parties (Democrats and Republicans in particular)?
20. American neutrality, isolationism, interventionism and expansionism from Presidents Washington through Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan to the present time.
21. American national interest, foreign policy, and the impact of domestic politics on foreign policy as seen through the prism of major international relations theories.

Please, remember that these are topics. You will/may be asked more specific questions during your exam.