

HST 203: ONLINE U.S.History Sp19 (Escobar)

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American Exceptionalism
by [Joe Escobar](#) - Saturday, April 13, 2019, 11:54 PM

This thread is for discussions on the American Exceptionalism topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

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BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, which clearly describes the source and questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: American Exceptionalism

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Can America Become Ever Exceptional Again
by [Genevieve Martini](#) - Monday, April 15, 2019, 8:09 PM

The leaders in chapter 22, specifically Theodore Roosevelt, were a definite believers in American exceptionalism. Roosevelt made this clear by the way that he conducted his presidency. His imperialistic tendencies of wanting to expand America’s rule, and his belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority(week one video: U.S. Foreign Policy - Roosevelt & Wilson, minute mark 6:50), I believe, both contributed to his belief American exceptionalism; wanting to conquer and rule other nations as he believed that Americans were more exceptional than they.

In contrast, in the video ‘Speakers on American exceptionalism’, Obama was asked if he believed in American exceptionalism, to which he responded, “I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism.”(minute mark 0:21). Just after that clip, Evan Sayet talks about what he believes Obama’s reply really means. He says that his answer was a very non-biased, political answer and that if Obama only believes in American exceptionalism simply because he lives there then he really doesn’t believe that America is anything special. “He said yes, and then made it very clear he meant no.”(minute mark 1:10).

In addition, the video “Do you know what President Trump thinks of American Exceptionalism?”, Trump talks about how he doesn’t like the term American exceptionalism because it essentially saying that other nations aren’t special. He said that he’d heard Obama talk about it before, he gagged at this, and proceeded to give an answer that, in my opinion, sounded very similar to what we heard Obama say in the previous video. “I don’t like the term, I never liked it. When I see these politicians go ‘well the American exceptionalism’- we’re dying.” Even though Trump went a completely different route than Obama did when addressing this topic, he essentially said, just as Obama had, that he doesn’t truly believe in American exceptionalism.

When comparing Theodore Roosevelt’s beliefs, that America needs to conquer other nations because America is superior, with Obama and Trump’s beliefs, that America is no more exceptional than any other nation of the world, it’s easy to see that our nations leaders today do not use exceptionalism in the same way that our nations leaders

did 100 years ago. Our presidents no longer see America as a truly exceptional nation.

In the ‘Speakers on American exceptionalism’ video there is an over the phone interview with author Charles Murray. He is asked if, in his view, he believes there is any way that we(America) can get back to our exceptionalism(minute mark 4:58). Murrays response after he’s finished laughing, is: “Don’t even ask me for a way, I’m having a tough enough time saying there’s a chance.” Murray then tries to answer the question, saying that a great awakening could happen to true America around. However, he adds at the end that he’s not optimistic, and doesn't believe that it will ever happen. I feel I agree with this statement because not only is America is trillions of dollars in debt to other countries, but also because of the fact that many Americans today are loosing their pride in being American. Whereas in the past Americans and their leaders were always proud to call America their home.

Murray adds a new layer to the topic of American exceptionalism by diving into the past, stating fact that had been America exceptional, but as time goes on, there’s not much hope for us building back up to that exceptionalism in the future. Something that I didn’t feel any of the other speakers addressed, answering the question, can America ever become exceptional again.

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Re: American Exceptionalism Past VS Present

by [Carisa Snell](#) - Tuesday, April 16, 2019, 2:40 PM

I definitely believe that our nation's leaders today still use exceptionalism just like the leaders did at the turn of the 20th century. Donald Trump's entire campaign is based around making "America Great Again" and how the United States is the greatest place in the world and he alone can get us back on top. He almost uses exceptionalism as a goal for his presidency though claims to reject the idea. Clearly Herman Cain of the spectator.org article that was linked for us agreed with leaders of the past and believes in exceptionalism as well, as he stated in the fourth paragraph, "We see American Exceptionalism not as an empty cry for nationalism, but instead, the blessings of God that keep our nation strong, independent, and free." It's interesting that leading progressives in the early 1900's had a similar point of view in that the basis of their beliefs came from their religion. They also believed that their thinking was superior and that everyone else was beneath them, which I believe is basically the same thing as exceptionalism. Conservative leaders today want to believe that the constitution is still something to be upheld and protected, and that the laws first passed more than a hundred years ago are still relevant and don't need revisited, regardless of how archaic and backwards the thinking is today.

In the video clip Ted Cruz talks about the "American Dream" and how people all around the world can "come to America with nothing and achieve anything." (10:23 in the Exceptionalism video) However, I'm having a hard time even listening to him say that with his party wanting even stricter border laws and that he supports the deportation of dreamers. To me, I think it's interesting that Conservatives say that they believe in exceptionalism and a limited government but at the same time want to change what made this country great in the first place. We are a nation of immigrants. With the exception of the Native Americans we murdered to claim their land, everyone in this country is from a different country. How can we uphold exceptionalism while at the same time want to abolish those principals that literally created this country?

I appreciated Andrew Bacevich's point of view in the video clip. I found myself nodding along while listening to him talk about how "every nation is unique" (7:28 in the Exceptionalism video) and how he felt like believing in exceptionalism is feeling superior over other countries. Sure, our country has its benefits and good things about it, but it also has a lot of areas that it can improve on, just like every other country can. That is why I think the idea of exceptionalism is a dated view that needs to be left in the past.

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Re: American Exceptionalism Past VS Present

by [Genevieve Martini](#) - Wednesday, April 17, 2019, 9:01 AM

Carisa,

I think it’s interesting that you said Trump believes that America is exceptional, because when I watched the video ‘Do you know what President Trump thinks of American Exceptionalism?’, I concluded that he doesn’t believe America is any more exceptional or outstanding than any other country. He says(minute mark 1:06) “I

don't like the term, I never liked it... we're dying! We're 18 trillion in debt." He then pauses and adds, "I'd like to make us exceptional.". I believe that this is where he gets, like you said, his whole campaign: Make America Great Again. He doesn't believe that where America is now is exceptional, however, he believes that he can get us there again. You said that he rejects the idea of American exceptionalism while saying that America is better, and I think that he, in part, does believe that America is better, but he doesn't believe that we're nearly as outstanding as we used to be. Now it may just be semantics, but I believe that the basis of his campaign is knowing that America is not exceptional, and trying to get us there again.

I do agree with you that leaders in the past believed that America was exceptional, and that their way of life was superior to other nations, and that it is what fueled the fire of imperialism. But I don't agree with you in that todays leaders use exceptionalism in the same way our leaders did in the past, because I don't think that they view America as a truly exceptional nation.

I, like you, agreed with Andrew Basevich's comment about all countries and nations being unique. He said we can say we're unique, that's fine, "but there's an implication that we are better, we are chosen, that somehow we represent what the world is supposed to become."(minute mark 7:45) I liked this comment because it gives exceptionalism a bit of a definition. It helped to watch the videos through again after I hear this explanation of what exceptionalism is. Now, you said that Trump believes America is the greatest place in the world, and I agree with you, I believe he does think that, he's made it clear time and time again. However, I don't think that he believes that America, as it stands, represents what the world is supposed to become, as he himself says, "we're dying."(minute mark 1:12).

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Re: American Exceptionalism Past VS Present
by [Carisa Snell](#) - Wednesday, April 17, 2019, 2:33 PM

Hi Genevieve,

Thank you for your comment! I appreciate your perspective and you taking the time to respond to my post. However, after re-reading my post, I couldn't find where you said I had stated that Trump thought America was exceptional, though you wouldn't be wrong in assuming that I *do* think that. I did talk about his platform and how though he claims to reject the idea while also making it the basis of his presidency. I think the conundrum is the fact that he states that "we're dying" and talks about our large amount of debt (like you mentioned in the exceptionalism trump video), but then turns around and proposes billions towards a border wall and the largest spending budget in history (New York Times article [here](#)). The last sentence in your first paragraph is basically exactly what I was getting at, that he is using exceptionalism as a goal of his presidency. Even though in the video you mentioned he claims to not like the term, his actions clearly indicate that he agrees that America *should* be exceptional, which is the very basis of the term. He has been known to state things like "economy is the best it's ever been with employment being at an all time high" (his twitter June 2018 found [here](#)) and claiming things are the "best ever" quite often, giving credence to the fact that he probably does believe in exceptionalism...just doesn't want to say it. Even his foreign policy is "America First" which to me indicates that he *does* consider us above the rest of the world, or rather, exceptional.

I still disagree with you that leaders today don't view America as an exceptional nation (though I did clarify I meant *conservative* leaders in my post), especially given the fact former presidential candidate Herman Cain (from the Exceptional leader video we watched) stated the exact opposite in his interview, like I had mentioned in my post. There are also the responses from several conservatives responding to Obama's view of exceptionalism in which they all express how exceptionalism is alive and even revered today (NYMag.com article [here](#)). It's hard to disagree with the notion when the leaders today admit themselves that they believe in exceptionalism, Newt Gingrich even going so far as to say in the article, "If you are for - American exceptionalism, you're us. If you're for European socialism and Saul Alinsky radicalism, you're with Barack Obama."

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Re: American Exceptionalism Past VS Present
by [Genevieve Martini](#) - Wednesday, April 17, 2019, 4:14 PM

Carisa,

First I'd like to say sorry for mincing your words in saying: "you said Trump believes that America is exceptional", rather than saying that you thought todays leaders believe in exceptionalism in the same way leaders did at the turn of the century. That is what I thought you meant by that statement and I simply built off of that, I didn't mean to twist your words, I apologize.

Going back to Trumps views on exceptionalism, yes, I do think he believes that America is great. Although as I said in my previous post, he recognizes that we are not the best we can be, thus he gets his political campaign, something I think that we both agree on. However, in my opinion, his views don't line up with the leaders at the turn of the century. If I'm wrong, and he truly does believe that America is as exceptional as it was 100 years ago, I'd have to disagree with him, we are much less outstanding than we used to be. And like you said in your initial post, "I think the idea of exceptionalism is a dated view that needs to be left in the past."; I agree with this statement wholeheartedly.

I really enjoyed the links you provided, specifically the one on Obama's views on American exceptionalism. The video on American exceptionalism provided had a much different feel than the article did, and I appreciated being able to see a different side of the argument. Although, I feel I must add again that I don't believe that he, or Trump, use American exceptionalism in the same way Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson did. They may still use the term, but they don't subscribe to in the same manner as the early 20th century leaders did.

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Re: American Exceptionalism Past VS Present

by [Connor Antich](#) - Friday, April 19, 2019, 8:51 PM

I think you make a good point saying that Trump's policies are American Exceptionalism but he claims to deny believing in American Exceptionalism. But I'm honestly not sure whether I agree with you or disagree with you. For Example, many of Trump's policies have differed from that of past presidents. He has approached diplomatic relations with North Korea and met with Kim Jong Un. He also has stated his desire to pull U.S. troops out of the war in Syria and stop supporting allied rebel groups. He also has brought many U.S. companies jobs back to the U.S. from China and Mexico. He also has called for NATO allies to support the alliance more and pay more. By looking at Trump's policies, I wonder if he actually believes in American Exceptionalism, rather than just listening to what he says and making a conclusion. Based on just a few of Trump's policies I previously mentioned and others, I can't really tell if he does truly believe in American Exceptionalism or not.

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Re: American Exceptionalism Past VS Present

by [Trey Husko](#) - Saturday, April 20, 2019, 11:18 PM

Hi Carisa, I agree with a lot of what you said and wanted to touch on the topic and point you made in your 2nd paragraph. I think it's fair to say what once made America so exceptional in the past was how open we were to others and were viewed as "a shining city on a hill" according to Cruz (about 10:40 into the Exceptionalism video) where people from all over the world could come and live the "American dream" as it's called. He also described the working 2 jobs at 17 and (at the time of the video clip) finally paying off thousands in student loans. Now I don't know about you or anyone else going to class, but I wouldn't call that a "dream". Should things be handed on a silver platter to everyone? No, but people shouldn't have to go through years of struggle to accomplish something.

Recently, the Trump Administration scuttled an agreement between *Major League Baseball* and the *Cuban Baseball Federation* that allowed Cuban players to come to U.S. and sign with *MLB* teams because it "violated U.S. trade policy". The goal of the agreement was to "*end the defection of players and erase the human trafficking of Cuban players that has become the standard as they attempt to join MLB*" (source article: http://www.espn.com/mlb/story/_/id/26472986/white-house-scuttles-mlb-cuban-agreement). Like you said there's some conservatives who say they want to follow the ideals that made our country who we are but instead are making it their effort to not actually do it like in the case of the Cuban baseball players or immigrants coming across the border. Cruz himself said the purpose of our constitution is to "serve as chains to bind the mischief of our government" (10:05 into exceptionalism video) yet here is the Trump administration using their power to stop immigration into the U.S. in this case that would actually be beneficial and promote safety for the Cuban players.

If it's so important to let people come to America to live the American Dream then why are our government leaders doing everything they can to prevent immigrants from coming to our country... American exceptionalism is an interesting topic but I agree with a lot of what you had to say. Thanks for your post!

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Re: American Exceptionalism

by [Trey Husko](#) - Wednesday, April 17, 2019, 7:04 PM

Looking at the class survey results compared to the larger survey done by barna.com they both share similar top answers. The idea that people have the opportunity to pursue what they want and that they are entitled to their God-given rights are close ideas. In general, the freedom to be who want to be were popular choices in both surveys.

As for myself, I chose "all human beings having God-given rights" and "religious liberties." From previously taking HIS 201 (which covered the Americas up until shortly after the United States independence) there were two main reasons I took away as to why early settlers and later immigrants from all across the world came to the United States. The first being groups like the Pilgrims who "sought to withdraw from the Church of England -- which they considered hopelessly corrupt" and believed that America "promised to better serve and preserve their children and their community" (Roark, The American Promise textbook p. 75). This idea that the Americas (now the United States) is open to people of all religious and ethical backgrounds is something that needed to exist from the beginning as people came here to be free to have whatever religious and cultural beliefs they wanted. The other key reason being the U.S. was viewed as the land of opportunity. Many of the immigrants that came pre-WWI were "propelled by economic hardship" (textbook ch. 20 p. 665) and that still stands true today for why people seek to come to the U.S. The United States is often viewed as country that can provide its' people with a better lifestyle compared to elsewhere around the world. The previous reasons I stated are why I agree with both the class survey and the barna.com survey that had both this ideas toward the top reasons why people see America as great.

The only thing that jumped out at me as a surprise was that "Christian Origins and Values" was at 11% placing higher than Military (9%) and Technology (7%) according to the barna survey. I say this is because the United States is usually viewed as both a military and technological powerhouse of the world so I would have expected people to consider that to make America great more than Christian Origins since Freedom of Religion was also another option given.

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Re: American Exceptionalism

by [Genevieve Martini](#) - Thursday, April 18, 2019, 4:39 PM

Trey,

The information you gave from your previous history class really backed up your reasonings and I enjoyed getting to see your analysis of the surveys with that extra bit information under your belt. I myself chose, "The idea that all human beings have a God-given right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness", and "The ethic of self-government and personal responsibility" as reasons why I believe America is great, so I was happy to see my answers backed up with your sources.

Adding to that effect, I also liked seeing the chart from the [barna.com](#) survey matching up quite well with the poll from our class. It's so interesting to see how similarly Americans think, even if our political views may be on opposite ends of the spectrum.

Something that stood out to me when comparing the two surveys of what makes America great was that there was no option from our survey that specifically mentioned freedom of speech. Since freedom of speech was ranked so high on the Barna survey, I think it would be interesting to see how the answers on our survey would have changed with the added option of this response.

Another thing found strange, is that "Christian origins and values" took up 11% of why people considered America to be great. You said that this surprised you because the United States is usually viewed as both a military and technological powerhouse of the world and those were ranked lower. I, however, had a different reason for surprise. It seems recently that many innately Christian beliefs are being taken out of schools and places of work. I've even had a teacher that used BCE (Before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era) because she believed BC and AD to be too Christian(I understand why, but it made learning dates in her class much harder). So to see that Christian roots is a big reason why people consider America to be great, even at just 11%, genuinely shocked me. I'd really love to know what percentage of the people that used this as their reason were Christians, it would be interesting to see if any non-christians said this, and to hear their reasons why.

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Analyzing American Exceptionalism
by [Alison Backes](#) - Wednesday, April 17, 2019, 9:53 PM

When looking at the 2017 survey "What Makes America Great" (Barna.com) I did notice some similarities in the answers presented by the class in the survey we took on "American Exceptionalism". The number one response to the question "What Makes America Great" was "The opportunity to become who you want to be". Comparably, the number one response to the "American Exceptionalism" survey was "The idea that all human beings have a God-given right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." These phrases, while worded differently, embody the same principles. Upon measuring my answers with those of the class I was not surprisingly middle of the road. In some places I voted with the majority and others I did not. I was on the cusp when voting "yes" to the question "Do you agree that America is a great nation?". Instantly I answered yes, but then started to ask myself why. I believe America is great because it is what I was raised to believe and all that I know. However, MANY countries have freedom and many citizens have pride for their country.This feeling is reinstated In this quote by President Obama in 2009."I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism." (spectator.org) I am proud to be who I am and proud to be an American but I cannot help but think about what does make us so much different! The survey pointed out many great things that this country has to offer. However, these things a lot of other countries have as well. This is mainly what brought me to bring up the point. I would love to hear everyone's opinion on the matter and what you think sets us apart from other countries.

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Re: Analyzing American Exceptionalism
by [Genevieve Martini](#) - Friday, April 19, 2019, 10:05 PM

Alison,

I too struggled in answering the "Do you agree that America is a great nation?" question. I found myself in the same position as you, freedom and democracy are the things that made America great when it was first established. But like you said, there are so my countries that have now followed suit.

If the question had been, "Do you agree that America was a great nation in the past?" I know that my answer would have most definitely been yes. But, like I said in my response to Declan, I think that America has fallen so far from the things that initially made us exceptional, that I don't know if we are a truly great nation as we now stand(which is what I ended up choosing as my answer in the survey). Sure we have freedom of speech, press, and religion, but so do dozens of other countries across the world. I feel as though America is no longer known for its political, economic and war achievements, but rather it's film and music stars.

I love that you asked for options on what we, as a class, think sets us apart from other countries, and must say that I don't truly believe that America stands out nearly as much as it used to. At the turn of the 20th century(from our textbook: Liberty, Equality, Power) we were fighting for women suffrage(pg. 697), environmental protection(pg. 706), equal rights for African Americans(though, admittedly, not as much as we should have been)(pg. 702), and against child labor(pg. 688) and unfair treatment of America's minorities(pg.689). Comparing these things to what we are accomplishing now, the list doesn't seem nearly as long. However, I must say, even though we may not be getting as much done as the people in the early 1900's, America has done a great deal for the rights of the LGBT community, and pushed even further for women's rights and equal treatment of minorities. And I believe that this is part of what now sets us apart as a country.

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Re: Analyzing American Exceptionalism

by [Alison Backes](#) - Saturday, April 20, 2019, 7:14 PM

I totally agree with the fact that America is more known or rather focused on fame and the celebrities it produces. There are so many issues that are happening in this country and generally I am notified first when Arianna Grande releases a new album before I hear about another bombing. I also understand that right now we are in sort of a standstill as far as progress goes. I am sure it was easier to be innovative when there was so much to be done and so much room to grow. Of course, as we have learned, there is no more frontier and no where to grow physically. So I suppose I'm wondering where we go from here? I appreciate your comment and all the insightful information you have to share! Thank you!

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Re: Analyzing American Exceptionalism

by [Cassidy Kelley](#) - Sunday, April 21, 2019, 8:40 PM

Alison,

I feel I could have written this post myself, especially when you said you said yes to America being great but then stopped yourself to ask why. I did the same exact thing when I answered. At first I thought to myself "Of course we are" but then I really stopped to think about it. Are we actually? What makes us so great with ALL this negativity going on right now. Now I'll be the first to say we shouldn't always trust the media, but it seems like all I see on TV and on the internet these days are heartbreaking things happening to the people in this country. How can I think we are so great when this is so much of what I see everyday? Those are some of the thoughts that were going through my mind when I stopped to dig deeper. So many Americans are just taught to believe America is the greatest nation. whether we learn it from parents, teachers or anyone else- I would guess a lot of people can relate to your statement about being raised to believe America is great.

As far as what I think sets us apart from other countries, I don't think I can answer that question because honestly- I don't know enough about them to really give a reason as to why we are greater. Although countries and nations aside, I think everyone deserves to be treated equal and in the grand scheme of things- we are all on the same playing field. Something that I've been thinking about since digging deeper into this topic is- If America was founded on Christianity like many people say, why do we treat other counties like they are inferior to us? That's the exact opposite of what God wants us to do. I'm not trying to bring religion deep into this- but it is something to think about!

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American Exceptionalism: How it has Changed from the beginning of the 20th Century

by [Connor Antich](#) - Wednesday, April 17, 2019, 10:57 PM

Today American leaders use and apply American exceptionalism around the world just like our previous leaders did at the turn of the 20th century. American leaders still use American exceptionalism but it is a much different variant than the American Exceptionalism used by presidents like Roosevelt and Wilson. For example, Roosevelt turned America into an imperial country foreign policy wise. Regarding american foreign policy today, the term for imperialism is now exceptionalism. This is general evidence that American exceptionalism is different today than it was at the turn of the 20th century. To show you how it has changed, I will compare two United States invasions that occurred roughly 100 years apart and how they are different. In 1898 America's invaded the Philippines in response to the start of the Spanish-American War. The Spanish ceded the Philippines to the United States after their defeat. The U.S. desired the control of the Philippines primarily for an entry into the economic markets of Asia and China (textbook p.726). This was a very imperialistic move considering we took over a foreign country using force fighting the Spanish and then after, fought the Philippine Rebels, rejecting there claim for independence. Now in recent years, the U.S. still is very involved in foreign wars and economies but in a slightly different way. For example, the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003 in response to evidence that the Saddam Hussein regime had, "weapons of mass destruction" and supports Al Qaeda and is also an evil country that poses a threat to the west according to president George Bush (<https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2003/06/wmd-j21.html>). The difference between policies in these invasions is that the colonization of the Philippines was colonized for economical reasons, american influence and for competing with other colonizing world powers. The U.S. was very open about this policy. President Roosevelt did not try to pretend the U.S. wasn't an imperial country at the time and actually embraced and believed

in this policy. The invasion of Iraq however was wrongly justified by american leaders unlike that of the Philippines. The Bush administration claimed that the Saddam Hussein regime had nuclear weapons and supported Al Qaeda. But there is no real evidence that these claims are true. The U.S. invaded Iraq primarily for control of influence and trade over oil in the Middle East and to showcase U.S. military might. Also the U.S. after the invasion did not attempt to control the country and its government after, unlike the conquest of the Philippines.

In conclusion, american policy has changed but also remained the same. Really American exceptionalism is still imperialism. Our wars today are always now for a good reason because we are fighting evil and giving the world justice and using our power to help others. This is what american leaders today say. Roosevelts reasons were that he believed the major world powers should colonize and control the markets, he also believed in Anglo-Saxon superiority, and that America was rightfully a better country than those it colonized and considered the local people inferior. Today though, majority of the people in our country criticize these reasons and do not believe in them anymore due to many historical events and wars. The american people are also critical of american foreign military involvement due to wars like Korea and Vietnam. So the Bush administration had to justify the invasion for Iraq, even going as far as too promoting false intelligence about the Saddam Hussein regime to make them look like a true enemy to the american people. But the main reason for America being involved in any foreign war is the economy, american businesses and control for world influence of the economy and protection of american investments. The occupation of the Philippines and the invasion of Iraq were done for the same primary reason which was the economical growth. But they were both portrayed differently and done a little differently in terms of the Military. The term imperialism has changed to exceptionalism because leaders today justify our wars for fighting evil, liberating people, and spreading democracy. But really the primary goal is still the same which is America dominating the world economy and protecting its investments.

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American Exceptionalism: Evan Sayet and President Obama
by [Connor Antich](#) - Thursday, April 18, 2019, 4:56 PM

If I had to agree with one speaker the most on the topic of American Exceptionalism, I would agree with Evan Sayet in the Exceptionalism Speakers video. Sayet said, "He (Obama) gave a very clever, very politic answer in which he said yes, and made it very clear he meant no" (1:10 into Exceptionalism speakers video). Sayet was referring to when Obama answered yes, answering the question that he does believe in American Exceptionalism just as much as the brits believe in British Exceptionalism and as much as the greeks believe in Greek Exceptionalism (0:22 Exceptionalism speakers video). I reason I agree with Sayet so much is because I believe all Liberals and Obama don't truly believe in American Exceptionalism. Sayet said, "it nots a belief based on anything other than the fact that he lives here" (1:26 into Exceptionalism speakers video). Obama doesn't truly believe in American Exceptionalism, but when asked the question if he does or not, he can't say no in front of the whole country or the world. The reason for this is because America since World War 2 has acted as the policeman of the world and has used its power for the greater good of the people of the world. Especially when America is involved in foreign wars during his presidency. This in general terms is one reason why Sayet stated that Obama said yes but also cleary said no. This is what our people believe and what the history books have written. Obama can't criticize American Exceptionalism otherwise he would lose support and the people would see him as unpatriotic. I think actions that support the idea that Obama is not a hardline believer in American Exceptionalism is the fact that he believed the war should be fought in Afghanistan, not Iraq. I think Obama believed that the Iraq was a war started for unjust reasons and for the belief of American Exceptionalism. The problem was that Obama was elected into office and forced to deal with the wars President Bush started. People might argue my claim that Obama supported the war in Afghanistan and increased the U.S. military presence there. But I think this was a strong and needed move. In Afghanistan we were fighting the Taliban who harbored and supported Al Qaeda militants who attacked our country. America should always fight its enemies with strength. But did Saddam Hussein attack our country? Saddam Hussein and his regime took no certain military action against the U.S. to the fact that they needed to be invaded and removed from power. Saddam Hussein was never an enemy to the U.S. as much as Al Qaeda and the Taliban. President Bush was true believer

in American Exceptionalism unlike President Obama or Donald Trump. Liberals and Donald Trump don't believe in fighting foreign nations on the belief of American Exceptionalism. They only fight Americas true enemies (Al Qaeda and ISIS).

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Re: American Exceptionalism: Political Party's and American Exceptionalism

by [Connor Antich](#) - Sunday, April 21, 2019, 10:17 PM

Political parties have a great influence and differ from the thought of American Exceptionalism. Republicans are for the most part believers of American Exceptionalism. Examples would be President Bush or especially President Roosevelt. President Roosevelt believed in Anglo-Saxon superiority and believed the imperial powers of the world should colonize the inferior peoples (textbook page 734). Republicans have always been more aggressive when it comes to foreign policy. President Trump is an example though of a Republican who does not seem a hardcore believer of American Exceptionalism. In the video he said he "doesn't like the term", and he spoke out against it (0:08 into Trump Exceptionalism video). Democrats aren't believers of American Exceptionalism or at least aren't as much of believers as republicans are. An example of this, would be President Obama when in the video Sayet said this about his response to American Exceptionalism, "He (Obama) gave a very clever, very politic answer in which he said yes, and made it very clear he meant no" (1:10 into Exceptionalism speakers video). Democrats are not as aggressive with foreign policies as republicans are. This is because republicans are more hardcore believers of American Exceptionalism than democrats are. I would say one of the exceptions to this theory is current President Donald Trump. As I mentioned earlier, Trump says he is not a believer of American Exceptionalism. Based on his policies and the moves he has made, I would agree with what he has said. Trump if anything seems to me like he is trying to make America more of an isolated nation more than it has been in previous years. Examples of this would be the policy of anti-immigration, less involvement in foreign wars and focusing only on American security and American business only.

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American Exceptionalism and the Loss of Potential

by [Declan Jensen](#) - Wednesday, April 17, 2019, 11:42 PM

The differences between our nation's leaders in the 20th century vs. the 21st century in terms of American Exceptionalism is that we have lost our potential as a nation to be unique. Our uniqueness laid in our "Western Frontier" and success as a world power because of a strong military. However, we have no more frontiers to conquer and our government's frame is falling apart before our very eyes. Our leaders try to use the idea that because American was once so great and powerful, that we can again attain that, even though there is nothing tangible coming out of it (besides whiteness? religious uniformity? I don't even know). Teddy Roosevelt especially embodied the idea that America is exceptional because it is unique with his Great White Fleet (textbook p.740). The slogan that has been around for far too long, "Make America Great Again," is how our leaders are trying to get us to buy into the thought that we can grow (literally, not metaphorically) in the same way that we did in the early 20th century. Cruz especially rubs me the wrong way with his spiel about his 2 jobs at 17 years old to make his way through school (8:46 into Exceptionalism Speakers video): it's a reference to the idea that just anyone "pull themselves up by their bootstraps" rhetoric used by when our system actively works against anyone who isn't a white, able-bodied, cisgender, Christian male. That idea has always been the American ideal, and I desperately wish that class fluidity existed to literally any extent in America, but it doesn't and it never has.

The class survey and the barna survey were extremely similar in terms of the first four answers, and even one of my answers follows suit. However, the rest of mine appear to mostly be different from the rest of the class, especially in what I think is "under attack" by our government. I don't agree or disagree with the results of the barna survey as they are all pretty harmless, if a little bizarre towards the end; however, no one is coming to take your guns, classmates. I love the fact that so many people in the barna survey appreciate that we're a "melting pot" society and appreciate religious freedom and variety; those two things are my favorite things about America and what I think makes us great.

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Re: American Exceptionalism and the Loss of Potential



by [Genevieve Martini](#) - Friday, April 19, 2019, 9:34 PM

Declan,

I think it's interesting that you mentioned you believe that our uniqueness lays in our "Western Frontier"(among other things), because that is what imperialist Frederick Jackson Turner said in chapter 22: "The frontier had been essential to the growth of the economy and to the cultivation of democracy"(Liberty, Equality, Power. pg. 718), a few sentences later the book adds: "How, Turner wondered, could the nation continue to prosper now that the frontier had gone?"(Liberty, Equality, Power. pg. 719). It seems your view of American exceptionalism is somewhat in line with Turner. I realize that you most likely have opinions that don't match up with his, however, I do think it's interesting that you pulled such a similar statement into your post. Is there any specific reason for your belief that America was made exceptional by it's frontier? I believe that the prospect of new land is something that made America a desirable place to immigrate to, as new land meant new opportunities. I don't however see this being a specific thing that makes America exceptional, so I would love to hear your opinion on it.

I believe that our exceptionalism was found, like you also mentioned, in our military as well as our economic structure. I must confess that I am not entirely sure where America stands as far as strong militaries are concerned, but I do know that our economy is nothing compared to what it was at the beginning of the 20th century, and I believe that it is the main reason for America's decline as a world power. I agree with you, our leaders are telling us that America can attain exceptionalism once more, but there doesn't seem to be a way. Just as author Charles Murray said, in the Speakers on American Exceptionalism video, when he was asked if there was a way he thought that America could become exceptional again: "Don't even ask me for a way, I'm having a tough enough time saying there's a chance."(minute mark 4:58). I believe that America is almost too far gone to become what it was at the turn of the century; although we may have good ideals, and a solid foundation, I think that we are slowly slipping away from what made us such an exceptional nation to begin with.

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Re: American Exceptionalism and the Loss of Potential

by [Declan Jensen](#) - Saturday, April 20, 2019, 10:20 PM

Genevieve,

When I said that America was exceptional because of its frontier, I was only trying to think in terms of what people thought back when we still had it. I didn't even realize how close I was to plagiarizing, my mistake. I can only imagine that the other world powers thought they were exceptional because of their "frontiers," I suppose we would call them colonies (think of the saying "The sun never sets on the British Empire" and how awe-inspiring that is). Our frontier was unique, I think, because of the sheer amount of land we have in the United States: we couldn't just sail around to the other side of the continent and move from there like other world powers could with Africa or India. We idolize our pioneers for braving the travel west and dying trying to make a living out in uncivilized land, whereas when we learn about the colonization of other countries by Britain or France or what have you, we mostly hear about the indigenous people dying-- although I think that's a fault with our education system. Personally, I think the "manifest destiny" portion of our history where we conquered the Wild West is not exceptional but is instead one of our darkest portions.

I definitely hear you on the thought that America might be too far gone to become what it once was, and I don't know if we could, as a nation, reach that point of confidence and inspiration without another World War or something. Although, I'd need some pretty convincing propaganda to get to that point, personally. A lot of our progress isn't really tangible, you know? We once had land and an urgency to establish ourselves to be on par with the British Empire, which we could attain through military prowess. Now, though, we are making new technology, sure, but a lot of it is digital: the internet and AIs. In my experience, I believe a lot more in things I can see *and* touch, and I want to say that's just a human trait, so digital progress doesn't inspire too much from me. Maybe our exceptionalism will be re-found in robotics? Robots are tangible and we are making leaps and bounds in that area. Hopefully it doesn't go all Terminator on us.

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Re: American Exceptionalism and the Loss of Potential

by [Genevieve Martini](#) - Sunday, April 21, 2019, 4:05 PM

Declan,

I understand what you mean about the frontier and how unique it made America. And although there may not be any more dry land on earth that is undiscovered, the sea, and space, also known as “the final frontier”, are both things that people are still trying to figure out. I’m sure you’ve heard the news that we recently got the first picture of a black hole ever taken! I’m a pretty big space geek so seeing this news and reading about it has been so exciting! We, as a nation, are taking huge leaps towards learning and discovering more and more outside of earth! Like I said, even though there is no longer a “frontier” in the traditional sense of the word, there is still so much more we don’t know about our universe and it's so exciting to think of space as a kind of frontier for us to explore!

The thought of sea and space as a new frontier also somewhat touches on your comment about exceptionalism being found in robotics. Robotics is so closely associated with exploration in both of those areas(especially space) that I can most definitely see the nation with the most advanced tech as being a truly exceptional nation in the future!

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Similarities or differences

by [Steph McGuire](#) - Saturday, April 20, 2019, 1:36 AM

My personal belief is that our leaders past and present do use exceptionalism in similar ways. We used American Exceptionalism with the Philippines. “The United States would undertake a solemn mission to civilize the Filipinos and thereby prepare them for independence” (P. 726). The United States used it again in World War 1 with President Wilson. He thought that we should negotiate the peace treaty because we played a crucial role in Germany signing the armistice. “It is not too much to say that we saved the world” President Wilson said (48:32).

I agreed with the speaker, Charles Murray. When asked if America is exceptional he replied “Well, we used to be. The issue of exceptionalism is not a matter of opinion” (2:48). He goes on to say that it is “not etched in stone that we always have to be” (3:16). I think this is true. We can be great and make great strides into the future. But sometimes it is a good thing to sit back, watch and learn. We are a great country, but we are a young country. I find it interesting that the top two things on poll entitled “What makes America great” are two things that contradict each other. The first being “Opportunity to become who you want to be” (freedom). And the second being the “Constitution” (rules). I think one of the things that can hold our country back from being great is that we are always contradicting ourselves. Or we are trying to keep everyone satisfied. Like the 14 points, it is impossible to help everyone get what they want and keep everyone happy.

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Re: Similarities or differences

by [Cassidy Kelley](#) - Sunday, April 21, 2019, 7:49 PM

Steph,

I enjoyed reading your thoughts. I too like what Charles Murray said. I think he has a very sensible perspective on the topic. Perspectives like these are oddly comforting to me. To think that some people can have their head in the clouds and think America is so great with no negative sides (in my opinion this is something that has always been a problem with many people) is pretty scary. Being able to recognize the good and bad parts of anything is so important when it comes to making steps to move forward. I see it as if we ignore the not so good sides that need work, there's no way we can great. In order to be great we need to be well rounded- and that starts with recognizing our successes and mistakes. You said it perfectly, we need to sit back, watch and learn.

You make an interesting point about how the poll contradicts its self. Those two traits you mentioned being at the top I think helps put it into perspective how divided we are as a county. It's hard to come to a consecutive agreement on almost anything these days.

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Is America the MOST exceptional?
by [Cassidy Kelley](#) - Sunday, April 21, 2019, 6:23 PM

One of the first similarities I noticed between what's written in our text and the materials we were given on American exceptionalism, is between what was said by Barak Obama and how it relates to part of what Roosevelt believed. Obama said, "I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism." (3rd paragraph, spectator article.) Our text says Roosevelt "Believed that Americans were a racially superior country destined for supremacy in economic and political affair. He did not assume, however, that international supremacy would automatically accrue to the United States" (Liberty, Equality, Power pg. 734.) In my opinion (regardless of the backlash Obama received for his statement) both leaders are stating they believe in American exceptionalism, but they don't expect every other country to be on board with it. Both of these statements are also quite different. While I do think there was some truth behind Obama saying he believes in American Exceptionalism, I don't think his stance was quite as extreme as Roosevelts. From what I see, both leaders acknowledged other countries and what they might think about American Exceptionalism, but Roosevelt believes that the countries who don't agree are just flat out wrong, America is THE best and there's nothing else to it. After watching Obamas response to if he believes in American Exceptionalism, I get the sense that he has a little bit more of a realistic perspective than Roosevelt. The opinion that America is the greatest country on the planet is just that- an opinion.

From what I have seen, listened to and read so far this week I believe todays leaders don't view and see American Exceptionalism quite the same as they did at the turn of the 20th Century. (That's not to say todays leaders don't believe America is exceptional, they clearly do.) Leaders at the turn of the 20th century in my opinion had very strong, biased and extreme ideas on American Exceptionalism. Leaders today still believe America is exceptional, but many also see where America is not so great and could use some work. From what I have learned this week, fewer people have this unrealistic view that American is the most exceptional country out there- end of story. It's important to know where our faults are and where we can approve. The blanket statement that "Americans [are] a racially superior country destined for supremacy in economic and political affairs" can and has been very dangerous. (Liberty, Equality, Power pg. 734)

Of the five speakers we listened to in the video clip, I disagree with the first speaker- Evan Sayet. Sayet said Obamas belief in Exceptionalism is not a belief based on "anything but the fact that he lives here." (1:30.) I think this comment was a bit extreme, and not at all what Obama was trying to say. To be fair, I haven't seen more than that small clip we were shown of Obamas answer to whether or not he believes in Exceptionalism- but from what I saw it seemed to me that he was saying yes- he believes we are an exceptional country, but he isn't ignorant. He knows that is not a shared idea between many other countries. I did however agree with and really enjoy what Andrew Bacevich said, "Every nation is unique... To say we're unique-fine.... But in politics this claim to uniqueness is claim to exceptionalism" (7:32) He is saying that not only are we saying we are different, but in that we are also saying we are "better" and "chosen." Bacevish adds some good depth to this discussion, his point that uniqueness shouldn't necessarily extend to exceptionalism is an important one to think about. His statements have really made me think about this topic. I think much of where American Exceptionalism stems from is uniqueness, but it takes more than just being unique to be exceptional.

It looks like the results from the class questionnaire are pretty comparable to the results from the barna.com survey. In our class survey, the majority of us said one of the greatest things about America is our God given right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. According to the Berna.com survey, the best things about America are freedom of speech/religion, the constitution and the opportunity to become who you want to be. The top results for both surveys are very similar. I do agree with these results, they fall in line with what I belief. Although the trait of "Christian origins and values" does stand out to me because of how low it is on the list, I personally believe it should be higher up because it plays a big part in why our country believes in so much freedom.

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Transitional American Exceptionalism

by [Christina Dukes](#) - Sunday, April 21, 2019, 8:31 PM

Within the article 'The American Spectator', I feel as though the author was extremely biased against president Obama at the time of writing the piece. In the article it mentions

"There is no denying it: America is the greatest country in the world. We are blessed with unparalleled freedoms and boundless prosperity that for generations have inspired an innovative and industrious people. America is exceptional.

American Exceptionalism is the standard that our laws reflect the understanding that we are afforded certain God-given rights that can never be taken away. We know that God, not government, bestows upon us these inalienable rights, and because of that, they must not be compromised by the whims of man" (1st/2nd paragraph Spectator.org).

The author begins by writing strong introduction as to give context to the term American Exceptionalism, and explain what is the mentality behind the term. Claiming that America is exceptional due to "x", "y", "z" gives a good background to the reader what I believe to be the actual meaning of the word exceptional. However, in the second paragraph the author begins by stating that the exceptionalism of America and all of its bountiful contributions derives from God, and in the way he writes it it sort of seems that due to the fact we have freedom and other basic human rights as Americans, we are better humans than humans living in other areas without freedom. The author talks about how the leaders of today's society, if they want to advance our nation in terms of progressivism, they are rejecting American exceptionalism.

The author goes on in the article to claim that a speech Obama made back in 2011 omitted the true significance of what he (the author) believes America is. The author claims that Obama made it seem like America was just another country striving to be good, but it wasn't all that terribly great or surpassing other nations (2nd paragraph Spectator.org). The author to me has a very religious standpoint, especially when he claims that progressives (his opposing side) view the constitution as a road block to basically act the way that they want to without any consequences.

To me, I view the author as very contradicting as he claims religious values on how the country should be made, with basis on the constitution and the bible, but then talks about how great we are at advancement as a nation - yet, progressivism should not be a determinant of how we are run. In the early 19th century, the presidents around that time were concerned with expanding America, making it a world power, becoming more notable amongst the world's greatest nations, and all whilst being heavily favorable for progressivism. Additionally, most of the presidents were exceptionally religious as well, and had no shame against showing it. All of the presidents at the time believed America was Exceptional (hint: American Exceptionalism), were extreme progressives, and yet the author claims that the leaders of this nation do not know what the proper ideals are "like the leaders in the 19th century", when the leaders actually do the exact thing the author does not like. There are several flaws I find throughout the article, and the more that I read it the more confused I am with how many times the author contradicts himself without realizing it.

Although some of the presidents at the turn of the 19th century were significantly more heavily involved in progression of America, they all contributed their own aspects at helping assist America into the world power it is today. For example, Roosevelt was much more concerned with becoming powerful, and Wilson was more concerned with the transitional movements as stated ".....the United States seemed to be becoming the kind of nation that many Americans had long despised- one that valued power more than liberty. Roosevelt brushed aside these objections and set about creating an international system in which a handful of industrial nations pursued their global economic interests, dominated world trade, and kept the world at peace. Woodrow Wilson, however was more troubled by America's imperial turn. " (Textbook pgs. 716-717). Although the leaders had various levels of involvement, I believed that throughout the course of the last century each president has tried to remain committed to the constitution, while believing in America's progressive abilities.

Additionally, I have noticed that throughout the electoral presidents throughout the years there tends to be opposing sided presidents proceeding one after another. For example, we have a democrat who favors ending the war, more peaceful negotiations, etc. and then the proceeding president is one who is opposite and believes we should fight wars, take charge, be more aggressive etc. Take the most recent presidential switch for example- Obama to Trump. They are very opposing people of one another, but at the same time agrees with America's ability at being exceptional.

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