

HST 203: History of the United States Sp14 (Escobar Meta 41237 41238)

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Forum 1

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American Exceptionalism

by Joe Escobar - Friday, April 11, 2014, 11:49 PM

This forum thread is for American Exceptionalism posts and replies.

After studying the required materials, address the questions in your posts.

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.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post. Do NOT simply leave it

RE: American Exceptionalism

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Got Lunch Money?

by Kenneth Green - Saturday, April 12, 2014, 8:37 PM

There are a few important comments which help open this topic made about Fredrick Jackson and his work, "The significance of American History." (text page 745) This first forum certainly asks us to explore our own Political beliefs (I'm a Liberal) & the obligatory knee-jerk reaction expected of Liberals on the question of American Exceptionalism? "We killed Native-Americans! And the buffaloes!" Uh, actually WE didn't. Our ancestors did. Basing answers to the question of American Exceptionalism upon the behavior of our fore-fathers is a double-edge sword. One hand always ignores the other. Fredrick Jackson is seen by us moderns as almost silly, when we count the costs. It literally takes a entire year of History of Western Civilization, a Freshman level course of study, to place things into perspective. (White people are mean,) but no meaner than any other race of humans in the early

History of civilization. And that's a "Liberal" perspective.

To the question, Barack Obama could better be compared to the first George Bush than the second. (Except George Bush 1 spent his entire life meeting and working with World Leaders before he became President.) I'm wrong oh really? A mile from Baghdad, Bush 1 halts the war and withdraws. Point, they would both fall nearest Woodrow Wilson, where as George Bush 2 and Teddy Roosevelt would share the same foreign policy. (And the comparison ends there.)

Under Obama, the Government does not use American Exceptionalism to practice imperialism. (Unless, you're on the secret drone kill list.) But that's more 60's Kennedy CIA stuff than outright imperialism, using an imposing force to occupy an entire Country. But it is still the idea of Exceptionalism to justify means to an end.

Neocons would have "boots on the ground" in every Country that has vital resources to support the American way of life. So perhaps, despite his amazing domestic accomplishments, Teddy was the first neocon.

The article in Salon certainly paints the divide between the Conservative and Liberal perspective of American Exceptionalism and the use of Military power. From my perspective it's the difference between a Bully who steals lunch money and a big kid who stands up for the "little guys." Our difference of opinions and right to express them is what makes us, "Exceptional."

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Where Are the Conservatives?

by Kenneth Green - Tuesday, April 15, 2014, 8:31 PM

Weren't over half of the students in this term of American History self-identified "Conservatives?" What's that line from (South Park) Team America movie? "America! & %# Yeah!" Man, I wanna read your forum responses. Don't be shy.

It's much easier to defend American Exceptionalism on Twitter when your handle is @Rushisright (I made that up) than it is in a College forum of ideas. (I tried to welcome you Conservatives by offering the first post and the premise white people of USA History suck, but so does early History of mankind) lol. Failed logic, but there is a reason Conservatism remains an Intellectual option in our Country today. And as a Liberal, I'd love to know why and read it expressed, proudly.

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“And don’t let anybody make you think that God chose America as his divine, messianic force to be a sort of policeman of the whole world.” — Martin Luther King Jr.  

by Jennifer Rose - Monday, April 14, 2014, 11:14 PM

To answer the question on whether or not the United States is still practicing imperialism and American exceptionalism, I would say yes, of course. The US is a country founded on imperialism and American exceptionalism, and those forces and paradigms continue to this day. Even if the US government did not currently practice imperialism (which we do), the culture of US exceptionalism and white racial dominance continues to this day. It began with our forefathers:

"The gradual extension of our settlement will as certainly cause the savage as the wolf to retire, both being beasts of prey, though they differ in shape." - George Washington

A quote by Jefferson: "We shall drive them [the savages] -- We shall drive them with the beasts of the forests into the stony mountains, and the country will ultimately be free of blot or mixture" - meaning red or black. It wasn't quite achieved, but that was the goal. Furthermore, Jefferson went on, "Our new nation will be the nest from which America, north and south, is to be peopled." This displaced not only the Native people here but the Latin-speaking population to the south and anyone else who happened to be around.

The term exceptionalism does reflect a "chosen people" context. In my opinion, to think that a nation founded by human beings, with flaws and contradictions is somehow in its inherent nature exceptional can be dangerous and is a toxic way of thinking. It dismisses and covers up past and present human rights violations and genocide. The myth of American exceptionalism can also lead people to believe also that the United States is a classless society, when of course this isn't the case.

Similarly to TR's administration's handling of Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Obama administration lacked wisdom with their decisions regarding Egypt, Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Afganistan. Both the Obama administration and Theodore Roosevelt have continued the American legacy of nativism, bullying governments and people it does not like, or conflicts with American interests. In my notes I have a quote from President McKinley that was displayed in class, with regards to the US role in the Philippines: "Educate, uplift and Christianize them." Doesn't this quote sum up the thoughts of many Americans in nations we've been involved with recently as well? Perhaps the United States isn't actively trying to make folks in Syria to go church, but America's imperialism has a history of racism and disapproval of non-Christian religions. Somehow it seems unlikely to me that the United States would get in a war with a predominantly white AND predominantly Christian nation but please correct me if it's happened recently.

Hi Kenneth - I'm wondering where you get the idea that white people are mean, but no more mean than any other race of people in early civilization, and if you could expand on that if you get the chance. Genocide is more than mean. I mean, ancient Egyptians knew if they put their boats in front of summer storm winds it'd blow them right across the seas to the Americas and they shared that knowledge with the Greeks, and those races of people didn't commit genocide in the Americas.

(<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2010/02/100217-crete-primitive-humans->

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(White People are Plenty Mean)

by Kenneth Green - Tuesday, April 15, 2014, 9:35 AM

Sorry, just that we are studying US History and it's easy to become depressed by the sins of our fathers. And we should be. But the entire history of mankind is brutal. It's up to all of us to learn from the past so we don't repeat the same mistakes. Including the ones you mention.

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We're #1, We're #1...not anymore

by Laura Newman - Tuesday, April 15, 2014, 9:23 AM

Yes, the government of the United States still uses exceptionalism to practice imperialism. The problem is, we aren't exceptional anymore. The rest of the world has seen the United States' way of conquering other territories and we are met with such resistance, resentment, and anger, not that these characteristics weren't present before, but they are now on a technology platform where these opinions can be heard loud and clear.

I think the larger difference between the administrations 100 years ago and now is the amount of knowledge that is available to the public which clearly demonstrates what the United States is up to. While we rank low in education, have the highest prison population and continually suffer from a large deficit, the United States is more concerned with matters across oceans. I feel that 100 years ago, the focus of such a suffering country would become #1 priority. In this current era, the people of this country don't seem to be a concern to those leading us.

Learning about the turn of the century in history is one of my favorite eras to learn about. The portrait that was painted of the century as a child was one of technology, electricity, and development, resulting in a prosperous nation. Teddy Roosevelt was a strong, charismatic, and likable leader. However, in middle school, imperialism isn't something taught directly in schools, only subliminally.

McKinley, Roosevelt, and Wilson, by example of Great Britain (John Oliver's stand-up explains), through imperialism spread the word of God, education, and civility to other countries with capitalism as a goal. The argument can be made, as is mentioned in the Salon.com article, that the United States has a "moral responsibility" as a leading country to intervene in other countries that are rebellion or crisis. While on the surface it seems we are helpful and fulfilling this duty, where does this moral stem from? Christianity. Nativism. Arrogance.

Lastly,(and this is more of a side note) something that bothered me while reading the Herman Cain speech in which he goes after Obama for claiming that America is just as exceptional as other countries see themselves as exceptional, with a sense of pride and patriotism, I noticed that Cain said, "We see the American story as one of tenacity and triumph, not as one inherently flawed and in need of rewriting." As an educated African American gentleman, he does not think that any part of American history needs rewriting? Really? Not one thing? Ok.

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We're #23rd, We're #18th...



by Kenneth Green - Tuesday, April 15, 2014, 7:12 PM

Wow, I love reading these forums. (I thought I was a Lib, you kids have an amazing perspective.) But, remember the difference between Manifest Destiny and Imperialism. I suppose I have the wrong notion about History that Imperialism is the actual occupation of another Country. (Certainly the Invasion of Iraq in our life-time falls into that catagory in a nuanced way.) Hell with nuance Dick Cheney stated the US will "protect its interest for oil anywhere around the World." Is the only difference between modern "neocons" like Cheney or Herman Cain, and Roosevelt, who believed in "the white man's burden," the fact that we owned enough oil in the time of Roosevelt? So what motivated Roosevelt? I'm asking you. I think you came close to the Answer, "We're #1!"

As a History student, I'm interested less in agreeing with the sentiment, "OMG we sucked and continue to suck," and more about the question, "why did we suck and why do we still suck if we do suck? And how can we not suck?"

That's the importance of studying History to me.

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American Exceptionalism: Then and Now



by Morgan Reid - Tuesday, April 15, 2014, 12:37 PM

Addressing the question on whether or not the United States is still using exceptionalism to practice imperialism, my answer would be absolutely. This country was founded on those two things, in fact, and not much has changed in those aspects. But are we really as good as we once were?

When the term exceptionalism is used, I would say it definitely reflects a "chosen people" context, as another classmate pointed out. This nation is full of flaws, too many to even count, and those flaws contribute to the skewed way many of people in this nation think. We believe we are above everyone else, but is that because that's what we're told, or is it because it's the truth?

I think perhaps the biggest difference between the administrations 100 years ago and the ones now is simply the amount of information that is accessible by the public. We are never fully aware of what the United States is up to at any given moment. It actually seems as though the United States is more focused on what's happening in other countries, thus not always putting nearly enough time or effort in fixing issues here. 100 years ago however, I think it was a different story. 100 years ago, any issue in the United States would become the governments number one priority, regardless of what was happening in other places around the globe.

After reading the Salon.com article, I think its fair to say that the United States has a "moral responsibility" to intervene in other countries that call upon us to do so. But you have to wonder what "moral" even means. It's different to everyone, of course. So does this moral responsibility comes from Christian values? Or perhaps nativism? You tell me.

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American Exceptionalism, good or bad?

by Hao Nguyen - Tuesday, April 15, 2014, 1:15 PM

Yes, of course, the government of the US still maintains the present of Imperialism by using American Exceptionalism in the system. But the question is whether American Imperialism led the country positively or negatively?

In the case of previous Presidents as President McKinley and President TR, they turned most of Alfred Mahan's theory about Imperialism "make US presence felt across the world" into reality, for instance, in Spanish- American war. After 100 years, President Obama continually practices the theory of "American Exceptionalism" as he didn't own any approval from U.N or multilateral coalition in his drone attack in Pakistan or covert bombings in Yemen. Has the US used its exceptionalism to spread out the advanced education, developed economy, Christianity, etc. as a veil to the desire to conquer the world, to prove the American power, to "help out" those nations which are struggling politically? In the past, the negative version of "American Exceptionalism" displayed obviously in racism such as African American's slavery and human dignity, gender prejudice as the women's suffrage revolution, the unfair of immigrants' treatments, etc.

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Re: American Exceptionalism, good or bad?

by Kenneth Green - Tuesday, April 15, 2014, 7:44 PM

Is a drone strike on a Terrorist an example of Imperialism or an Example of American Exceptionalism? Especially under Obama? Are we OCCUPYING

every Country where Terrorists thrive (as we would have done if Obama were never elected) or does the fact we have "exceptional" means (in the words of Liam Neeson, a specific set of skills) give us an obligation to save lives from mass-masses-murderers? A question only you can answer for yourself.

But I'm reading in this forum that drone strikes are examples of Imperialism. (I would only argue its just not the Historical same thing.) But maybe it is?

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That Somebody Told You Are The Best Makes You The Best???



by Linh Tran - Friday, April 18, 2014, 2:35 PM

Looking from the perspective of a foreigner reading about American exceptionalism, I found it is understandable for one to see his or her country with pride and patriotism just as I am very much proud of my beloved Vietnam. Although I have to go: "Really?" to see this pride goes to somewhat of an extremeness for some Americans. The hardest part for me to be persuasive of American ideal of exceptionalism is the given rights from God that makes the country stand out, that triggers it to act as if it is the leader. Talking separation of church and state here. If you tell me you are the best, you'd better show me you are number 1 in education, economy, or military or whatever, just don't tell me you are the best because somebody told you so. Guarantee that will not win me! The Constitution of the United States says: "all men are created equal" (think international level here), then why do you think you are the best or exceptional? Exceptionalism is what Americans were taught rather than the truth. But don't you ever question any conflict in its own ideal while learning it? And if there is just a simple acceptance without distinguishing rights and wrongs, was it teaching or manipulating? On this particular debate, I am totally oppose the conservatives and for Obama that "being exceptional is a standard to meet, not a license for America to capriciously enforce its will upon others."

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Re: That Somebody Told You Are The Best Makes You The Best???



by Linh Tran - Friday, April 18, 2014, 2:36 PM

I like the idea of the bully and the big kid standing up for the little guys that Kenneth stated. Americans tend to think they are the good kid who protects the others but some cases, or many cases prove them wrong. Throughout history, whether or not naming the exceptionalism or imperialism, America always find its way of getting involved with international affair. An example that closely related to me is the Vietnam War. The U.S. entered the war for the reason of what Americans like to think: protecting and saving Vietnam from communism, and of what the Vietnamese people think: using excuses to enter, kill our people and conquer the country. It is "the bully America" who faced strong resistance

and hatred that still exists today in the old generation in Vietnam. Involvement caused by exceptionalism did not stop there and continue until today: the Iraq war, issues in Serbia,... which caused American deaths and casualties for the problems which are none of America's business.

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