

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

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American Exceptionalism
by [Joe Escobar](#) - Friday, April 12, 2019, 9:40 PM

This thread is for discussions on the American Exceptionalism topic.

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American Exceptionalism the differences between the 20th & 21st century
by [Matthew Berry](#) - Sunday, April 14, 2019, 12:49 PM

From the beginning of the 20th century our country's leaders had a strong to the core belief in "American Exceptionalism", you see this example in leaders such as Theodore Roosevelt (see Ch. 22, pages 734-740). In the 21st century our leaders have more of a everyone is exceptional in their own way type of attitude, not that America is the greatest country in the world. Some leaders of the early 21st century have in some ways been reluctant to push the "American Exceptionalism" point of view (see Video of President Obama). Under President Obama we even saw a fear to push back against communistic expansion, example being Russian aggression against Crimea, or the intervention of Russia in Syria. I personally think that this is due to the fact that the leaders we have elected are weak, not nearly as strong as our forefathers. Not willing to be true patriots as the ones that lead before them. There is a sense of the need to be "Politically Correct" in this day and age even when leaders of other country's express their personal hatred and rhetoric towards our leaders in extreme and public ways, in comparison to the times of President McKinley when just the publication of The De Lôme Letter (see Ch. 22 pages 722-723) described President McKinley as "a cheap politician" and a "bidder for the admiration of the crowd" this small slight towards our President along with the explosion of *The Maine*, pushed the United States into the Spanish-American War. In comparison to today, when we have leaders of other countries vowing not only to kill our President but to completely destroy America yet we do little to nothing in return. I don't see leaders such as McKinley or Roosevelt allowing such blatant disrespect of our country or its leadership to go unpunished. I do believe that Theodore Roosevelt's views of American Exceptionalism are finally being pushed by our current Chief and Commander,

President Trump. All though not everything he says are things that I agree with I do believe that he most closely represents the views of the early 20th century leaders, things like "America First" or "Make America Great Again" are right in line with the leadership, and speech styles of Presidents McKinley, Roosevelt, & Wilson.

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Retraction
by [Matthew Berry](#) - Sunday, April 14, 2019, 2:06 PM

After some addition research I needed to retract my statement on my view of President Trumps view on American Exceptionalism, it is not historically accurate as brought out in articles such as "Trump Against Exceptionalism" (Wither Pax Americana Ch. 9 The Sources of Trumpian Conduct by Stephen Wetheim, Columbia University).

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Re: American Exceptionalism
by [Aidan McNarie](#) - Sunday, April 14, 2019, 5:45 PM

National exceptionalism is such a broad concept in general that it could be argued that all nations at any given time period have it present. The question shouldn't be "Does X or Y believe or justify their actions with exceptionalism", it should be, "What reasons are given for that exceptionalism?" Both sides of the spectrum, I would argue, experience or use American Exceptionalism, but justify it in different ways.

Obama's statements, at their core, are simply making this argument. Conservatives, I'm sure, would give a separate example for what makes America great than Progressives or Liberals. Obama didn't say that America is any worse off because of Exceptionalism. He was simply saying that it's everywhere, across all nations, across all political divides. Just because a British person feels happy to be British doesn't mean that you shouldn't be proud to be American. Every country has good things about it, things that make it unique and exceptional. There's nothing wrong with that. There is nothing wrong with being proud to be American; no matter what reason is given or how grounded or based in reality your reason is.

On the political level, one could use the example of the American Civil War. Both sides saw themselves as true Americans and patriots, and both sides had different reasons for thinking so, I'm sure in some way, they thought of America as exceptional and would have cited different reasons to support this.

Moving on, I would argue that for the most part, while American exceptionalism was a definite reason or cause behind decisions made by politicians in the past, even at the turn of the 20th century they had to come up with a logical argument behind their actions, usually complementing or building on American exceptionalism. While we've learned over time that maybe the best most logical argument isn't simply "because we're exceptional", however, Exceptionalism is still present in our decision making. It's still present in everyday life. It may be tainted by bad feelings following WWI or Vietnam or Iraq or any other place that American Exceptionalism played a key role in events, but Exceptionalism, as a concept, will never really go away. I would even consider it an important part of national identity as a whole.

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Re: American Exceptionalism
by [Owen McCoy](#) - Tuesday, April 16, 2019, 10:15 PM

You bring up an interesting point that liberals and conservatives might have different interpretations of American Exceptionalism. However, I think that it is indeed a broad concept with several different aspects that make or have made America unique as a nation. When addressing American exceptionalism, a liberal might refer to the presence of many ethnic groups and religions as a characteristic that makes America special, whereas a conservative might emphasize the significance of the second amendment guaranteeing the right to bear arms.

Interestingly, both the survey found in the materials and the survey taken in class showed that individual freedoms and liberties and "certain unalienable rights" ranked very highly among the options. In short, it appears that despite differences in interpretation, a lot of Americans can agree on being proud of their country being "the land of the free."

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Re: American Exceptionalism
by [Brayden Lane](#) - Thursday, April 18, 2019, 10:52 PM

To start with I really like and agree with the idea of both sides of the spectrum have different ways of using and justifying American exceptionalism. What are the differences do you think between how each side views American exceptionalism? To me The idea of American exceptionalism that were unique among nations but also believe were the best nation in the world and our past proves it. Its also certain god given right and to me why Obama came under so much fire for his comments is that he made it seem like our nation is not unique nor better than others and to me that's no American exceptionalism. The difference between him and other leaders of today versus leaders of 100 years ago is they believed in the idea of America being the greatest notion and also the most unique. Today It seems to me in the voices of our leaders there trying to make our nation great again or they like being the same as some others. To me that's the difference between the idea of American exceptionalism and why I think it isn't as strong as 100 years ago compared to now's ideals versus then. However when watching the five different speakers in the you tube clip, one person stood out to me about having the ideals the same as Theodore Roosevelt and others. That was Ted Cruz, he described the uniqueness of every individual living in America and described American exceptionalism as god given rights which is behind the idea of American exceptionalism. Id like to hear your thoughts back.

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Re: American Exceptionalism
by [Aidan McNarie](#) - Saturday, April 20, 2019, 11:24 PM

I just want to start off saying that I love this response.
What I was saying was that just because America may not be alone in how we view ourselves (i.e. National Exceptionalism), that doesn't mean that we can't still have it. What I think Obama was saying was simply that we can't lose sight that every nation sees itself as exceptional. As such, his answer was very diplomatic.

In response to your first bit,

The presence of American Exceptionalism on both sides can be categorised (in a grossly over-generalized way) by the following;

1. The Left : Pride of America's heritage as a country of Immigrants, its diversity, and its place on the world stage. It seems to be founded on the idea that in our diversity we are strong. This subscribes to many enlightenment ideals, as well. A sort of rationalism, and through it, the idea that man is regent over law.
2. The Right : Pride of America's heritage of small government. The right also draws on religious protestant ideals. Like Ted Cruz said, "The idea that,... our rights; they did not come from man, they come from god..."

The God V. Man debate is a good example of how American Exceptionalism exists on both sides of the aisle, with both sides having very different ideas of what the very basis of the power vested in the government and the people is. Both, like Mr. Cruz here, will no doubt take bits said by founding fathers or great Americans past to support their argument and both are not entirely wrong. It's all a matter of perspective.

Lastly I would like to say that change happens. No matter the ideals, things always change. They say *Rome wasn't built in a day*, but I put to you Rome wasn't always an empire. It wasn't always a republic. It wasn't always free to govern itself.

Things change. But Roman Exceptionalism seemed to always remain. And here again, I put to you, did a republican (in roman terms) have any less of a reason to believe in Roman Exceptionalism than a supporter of the empire? Wherever Nationalism goes, Exceptionalism follows, and even if we pretend that we don't subscribe to either. both might be lurking under the surface. Even a radical looks to the future and takes pride in what they envision their country becoming.

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Exceptionalism vs. Progressivism
by [Owen McCoy](#) - Sunday, April 14, 2019, 11:22 PM

It quickly became apparent to me that the author of the first article had a conservative take on the issue. Cain writes that "We [Americans] see the American story as one of tenacity and triumph, not as one inherently flawed and in need of rewriting." This statement aligns closely with the "my country, right or wrong" ideology that we saw to be on the right side of the political spectrum. (class lecture notes)

What really struck me was the author's claim that "at its very core, progressivism rejects American Exceptionalism." I found this to be interesting because as we've seen in class and in our textbook readings, presidents Roosevelt and Wilson both ran on a progressive campaign and both also showed their commitment to American Exceptionalism. For example, the American people believed in the founding principles of their country and how it was exceptional and "they continued to believe with Wilson that they had a mission to spread the democratic values of 1776 to the farthest reaches of the earth." (textbook p.744)

Is this another case where a discrepancy among definitions is leading to inaccuracy? Alternatively, perhaps the definitions of progressivism and exceptionalism have changed over time? Cain's interpretation of American exceptionalism emphasizes individual liberty and limited government more than anything else. "Our exceptionalism is forever ingrained in our founding documents that spell out exactly the roles of the federal government in relation to individual rights and states' rights." The results of the barna.com survey seem to back this up with these ideas displaying much importance. Perhaps Cain's objection to progressivism is based on the fact that it requires the federal government to accrue more power and exercise more authority in order to bring about reform. This issue was extremely prevalent at the turn of the century. "In the eyes of anti-imperialists, the United States seemed to be becoming the kind of nation that many Americans had long despised—one that valued power more than liberty." (textbook p. 716-717) Nevertheless, the progressive impulse has carried the day both then and now. Roosevelt and Wilson both carried out their agenda, and it doesn't look like there will be a return to small government anytime soon.

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Re: Exceptionalism vs. Progressivism
by [Zachary Oswald](#) - Tuesday, April 16, 2019, 11:48 PM

I suspect that the discrepancy between definitions of American Exceptionalism ends at our own borders and is directed toward a domestic audience. Obama's definition of exceptionalism as mere patriotism is ordinary and expected, as Evan Sayet pointed out (exceptionalism video 0:33). However, I think you are correct to highlight the phrase "spread the democratic values of 1776 to the farthest reaches of the earth." This seems to be the more important aspect of American Exceptionalism.

Our recent wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya all received bipartisan support and had the stated goal of spreading democracy and freedom. The justifications for occupying Iraq and Afghanistan especially, aren't too different from McKinley's justification for occupying the Philippines, "to educate, uplift, and civilize them." Though conservatives and liberals may disagree about whether America is exceptional or why it is or isn't exceptional, there is bipartisan agreement around forcibly exporting our system of capitalist democracy to other countries. McKinley's campaign poster which stated, "The American flag has not been planted in foreign soil to acquire more territory but for humanity's sake" could have served as a campaign poster for Clinton, Bush, or Obama ([week 2 lecture images](#)).

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Differences and Similarities in American Exceptionalism
by [Zachary Oswald](#) - Sunday, April 14, 2019, 11:51 PM

Of the five speakers in the video, the one who appeared to most closely echo American exceptionalism as expressed by Roosevelt, Taft, or Wilson was Charles Murray. He even repeated Turner's Frontier Thesis (exceptionalism video 3:30). However, I believe that Bacevich most clearly expressed the core conceit of American exceptionalism, that America possesses the unique moral authority to influence other countries (exceptionalism video 7:00). This definition seems to capture the version of American exceptionalism that Americans believed in during the 1900s, that America isn't just unique, but better and obligated to spread our ideals to other countries.

The major difference I see between believers of American exceptionalism now and 100 years ago, is that modern leaders equate small government and economic success with American exceptionalism. This seems foreign to the perspectives of Roosevelt, who used government power both to aid striking miners (textbook, pg 706) and

consistently advocated for American involvement overseas. Overall, modern speakers seem to emphasize economic freedom more than democracy as the source of American exceptionalism, whereas leaders 100 years ago cited democracy and civic life as the primary source of America's exceptionalism.

Of the five speakers in the video, I found Evan Sayet's argument to be the vapidest and uninteresting. His argument that America's success is proof of America's exceptionalism, is a radically ahistorical and ideological perspective (exceptionalism video 2:15). A country's success and moral authority are unconnected.

Bacevich's perspective seems the most correct to me. Whether America is great or unique isn't particularly important, most countries believe that they are great and unique. The more important question is whether the American system is universally great and that our system should be exported to other countries, possibly by force (exceptionalism video, 8:00). This is a disastrous and dangerous idea. It's the same idea that leads us to export our version of capitalist democracy to countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan, where our system is neither wanted or appropriate.

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Religious Freedom In Both Polls

by [Nicolette D Erazo](#) - Monday, April 15, 2019, 6:28 PM

In the barna.com survey, the greatest percentage of people said that America is great because it allows you the opportunity to become who you want to. In our class survey, the largest percentage was distinctly bigger than the other answers at 30% saying that our God given rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness made America great. The fact that religious freedom is also a factor in what makes America great, according to both polls, is also worth noting. The barna.com survey includes more individuals voicing their opinion, however in both populations: our class survey with 15% voting for religion, and the barn.com poll, voting 20% for having the freedom to express your religious beliefs, is something that many individuals see as important as seen by being the second and third highest percentages on the surveys.

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Trump and American Exceptionalism

by [Cristian Alamo](#) - Monday, April 15, 2019, 6:55 PM

Theodore Roosevelt sent "Great White Fleet" of navy ships over to Japan to show our military strength (text book pg.740) and also believed the United States ruled over the Western hemisphere and would be the only country to ever do so (in class lecture). Politicians' in current day use American exceptionalism much differently than Theodore Roosevelt did back in the 1900's. Senator Ted Cruz speech was an great example of current day exceptionalism. Sen. Cruz talks about the "American dream" and how someone can turn into someone big thanks to America. In this same video, we meet Andrew Bacevich and he talks about why America is no longer "the greatest country in the world" and how it's action no longer make it the greatest country in the world. Another author, Charles Murphy believes in American Exceptionalism but believes it is on the decline due to how the country is run. Out of Murphy and Bacevich, I have to agree with Bacevich. The United States is no longer the greatest country in the world and I look at the country's problems with gun violence and the mess that is foreign affairs under the Trump administration to show how we are not the greatest country on earth. Also immigrant has been steadily getting worse and worse even though our country is built on the on the backs of immigrants.

For once I have agreed with Trump on something and it is the idea of "Exceptionalism" and I believe it is outdated as a whole. The United States has nothing to prove anymore we are a superpower in the world's eye and American Exceptionalism back in the Roosevelt, McKinley presidency made much more sense. The United States back in the 1900's and 1910's were trying to become a superpower and the "America is the greatest country on earth" mentality is what eventually made it a major player in the world it is today. But in current day politics, it just doesn't make sense to me. Our main goal shouldn't be to prove we are better than other countries or "believe" we are better. As President Trump said "it is rude" (video). Which I believe is true, and President Trump's comment I could imagine stirred controversy within the deeply conservative groups because according to the Washington Post, 92 percent of of Republicans are extremely proud to be American.I truly believe President Trump's comments are signalling the end of American Exceptionalism in politics.

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Re: Trump and American Exceptionalism
by [Zachary Oswald](#) - Thursday, April 18, 2019, 11:46 PM

I suspect that the difference between Trump or other Republican views of exceptionalism and the vast majority of Republicans may reflect a general divide between party leaders and the base. According to the Gallup poll, not only are rank and file Republicans overwhelmingly believers in American Exceptionalism, their belief is stable. This hints to me that they believe in American Exceptionalism for reasons unrelated to whatever the country does, otherwise we would expect to have seen a dip in the Obama years (gallup poll from forum materials).

On the other hand, candidates and party leaders have an incentive to harp on the loss of American Exceptionalism, this act as a call to arms. Murphy and Cruz's statements both held an implied message that their suggestions would "Make America Great Again." I expect that instead of a belief in American Exceptionalism declining, we will see regular Republicans' belief in American Exceptionalism rising and falling based on politics and whether America is "Becoming Great Again." Also, I suspect that Democrats' belief in Exceptionalism will rise and fall in the opposite directions.

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Difference in American Exceptionalism
by [Dylan Thomas](#) - Monday, April 15, 2019, 8:58 PM

I believe the leaders of today are trying to hold onto the idea of our country’s leaders and continue their belief of American Exceptionalism, but can’t exactly hit the mark as our predecessors had. In our past, our leaders used strong patriotism to rally and reinforce certain aspects of what they wanted done. Certainly wars and even propaganda arose to give americans the thought of being exceptional compared to other countries. Today, similar strategies remain, but the outcome isn’t as impactful as it was before. This can likely be attributed to the world’s social aspect of news and resources. Trying to rally up americans with exceptionalism is harder than ever because the people of America have news sources and information from other countries/ sides to one story that may make them reevaluate their motives.

Ted Cruz may have had the most realistic approach about american exceptionalism to my mind. He said, “I want to talk to you this morning, about reigniting the promise of America”(11:16 in Exceptionalism speaker video). From this stand and what I got from it was that we have an image of what the American Dream could be, and for most of us, it is just too far from our reach. It gives a sense of we could have that dream like our ancestors may have had before us, but it may take some time for us to get to a point where that can actually happen.

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What Makes America Great?
by [Kaleah Holmes](#) - Monday, April 15, 2019, 11:06 PM

I definitely agree with "Opportunity to become who you want to be" is/should be the top vote, highest vote of 24% (fact found from the What Makes America Great? graph) on the graph. If I had taken this poll that is what I would have chosen. I think that really encompasses all the amazing things about America. America lets people who work hard make their way into high positions at work. This is amazing to me because other countries do not work this way and I am grateful to live somewhere where it doesn't matter your background or how much money your family has. These factors don't matter and you can still get a decent job. America is great because you are able to, through a lot of hard work and determination, get the job of your dreams that you maybe would not be able to accomplish anywhere else in the world.

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The Decline of American Exceptionalism
by [Anthony Nguyen](#) - Monday, April 15, 2019, 11:51 PM

Of the arguments in the video clip, I most agree with President Obama. I agree with him because as he stated many countries also believe that they are exceptional. I believe that it’s human nature to tend to think of oneself as special even when they aren’t that “exceptional” when compared to others. I don’t believe that The United States is as exceptional today as it once was as the authors in the video explained. At the beginning of our country’s time we were ahead in many

aspects such as limited government, strong ideals of freedom and democracy. Where as now our government is not as unique or dedicated to these principals as it once was. Therefore I strongly disagreed with Ted Cruz’s comments about American exceptionalism. Today the most developed countries are more even and are all exceptional in their own ways.

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America's unique ideology

by [Chris Freese](#) - Monday, April 15, 2019, 11:55 PM

Watching the video of different speakers on the idea of “American Exceptionalism” was very insightful. I was able to form my own opinion best after hearing Charles Murray explain in detail why he believed America was exceptional and is no longer. What his definition of exceptionalism seemed to be specifically uniqueness, and how America was unique in its’ ideology. He praised the limited government America had, and is far from now. That part of America’s ideology I believe is exceptional because that was unique in the way it gave its' people freedom. However, I’m not sure how people can say that they want to go back to how amazing America was. The same America that supported/participated in slavery and forced Native Americans out of their way of living, while I’m pretty sure that isn’t what most people are referring to, I find it hard to ignore that part of America’s exceptional ideology. My point is that America really didn't practice the freedom as it was advertised, they consistently contradicted that ideal whether that be religion, immigration, etc.

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Re: America's unique ideology

by [Chris Freese](#) - Friday, April 19, 2019, 8:13 PM

I'd like to add to what I previously said with a quote from Ted Cruz in the same video with different speakers "What is the promise of America...of which that our country was founded on which our rights, they don't come from man, they come from God almighty." I don’t think that this quote is a good example of the freedom of religion that America is supposed to support. However, it is a good example of how America really is, for example, the mentions of God in our currency and national anthem. I am a Christian myself, but I don’t believe in forcing certain beliefs on anybody, especially if we claim to do the opposite.

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Re: America's unique ideology

by [Owen McCoy](#) - Saturday, April 20, 2019, 4:59 PM

It's true, the Protestant Christian roots of this country are still visible after four hundred years. America was founded on the principle of separation of Church and state, and yet it is tradition for the president to take the oath of office with one hand on a bible. You're absolutely right that at times, America hasn't fully lived up to its full potential. This harkens back to what we saw at the end of chapter 22 when Americans judged their country "either in relation to the foreign policies of rival world powers or against America's own democratic ideals." (textbook p. 743) But I agree that freedom is perhaps the cornerstone of American Exceptionalism.

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Patriotism

by [Kaleah Holmes](#) - Wednesday, April 17, 2019, 11:39 PM

I think America is a great country with great values. Even though I think that, I don't think President Obama should have gotten as much grief as he did when he said American Exceptionalism is not special and that other countries feel that way too (see video with Obama). All countries should be proud of themselves, maybe not all of their history, but they should be proud of their accomplishments. Other countries are proud because they deserve to be, but America is special. America has certain freedoms other countries do not have. Here we are allowed to practice whatever religion we choose and speak our mind. In America we believe in certain freedoms. Although other countries do not have that they should be proud of where they are from. It was unfair that Obama got such negative reviews because he is right. Other countries are patriotic and they have a right to be. Yes America is special but other places are too. All countries should be celebrated for their uniqueness and accomplishments.

On the other hand extreme exceptionalism can be dangerous. If one country has too much pride wars can start. "Problematic Exceptionalism-How Americans view themselves, their country, and the world in ways that reflect potentially unbridgeable, persistent gaps in opinions on important issues." (see The Problem of American Exceptionalism article).

It is important to love your country. Wanting to overthrow other countries because you want to add square footage to your country since you love it so much is not healthy patriotism.

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Re: Patriotism
by [Owen McCoy](#) - Saturday, April 20, 2019, 12:46 PM

Over the course of history, nationalism in excess has led to problems. Germany, Russia, and China are a few examples that come to mind. In such cases, the national government will often gain more and more power until it starts to infringe upon the rights of its citizens. As we've seen, the United States has also hovered on the far right of the spectrum, particularly during war-time but even in times of peace. (class lecture notes) "In summer 1918, Eugene V. Debs, the 62-year-old head of the Socialist Party, received a 10-year jail term for making an antiwar speech in Canton, Ohio." (textbook p. 763) This is just one example of how nationalism led to a crack-down on civil liberties.

That said, I don't think that American Exceptionalism and nationalism are the same, although they are definitely related. Exceptionalism pertains to America's uniqueness among nations and, judging by the results from both surveys, emphasizes American democratic values. We saw how McKinley, Roosevelt, and Wilson were all proponents of American Exceptionalism and turned their eyes overseas in order to "spread the democratic values of 1776 to the farthest reaches of the earth." (textbook p.744) This is where I think that it starts to become nationalism.

American Exceptionalism is less relevant today than at the turn of the 20th century because more countries have since embraced democratic or republican systems of government. I think that in his comments, Obama was speaking about American Exceptionalism as if it was specifically nationalism, which it is not. I can see and appreciate what he was trying to say but I don't think he put the best way. While I disagreed with most of the arguments he made, Evan Sayet actually said what I was trying to say here, which is that American Exceptionalism is more than simply nationalism. (American Exceptionalism video)

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100 years ago to now
by [Brayden Lane](#) - Thursday, April 18, 2019, 5:03 PM

It seems to me its pretty clear we don't use exceptionalism as the leaders of the early 20th century did. There is still both similarities and differences however. In the video conservative Evan Sayet said "If America isn't exceptional then how is somebody like Barak Obama to explain Americas success, our success is unjust if were nothing special and given that were the most successful nation in human history". He then goes on to say how liberals believe we are the greatest injustice in human history. That being said It is seen as different today than 100 years ago, our leaders such as Trump believe in American nativism. Along with the quote given by Obama stating basically there is nothing exceptional about America now a days. That is far different from the views of the leaders 100 years ago. They believed America was exceptional and unique and that there is certain god given rights that are unalienable about us. Differently Ex republican nominee Ted Cruz said "Our rights don't come from man but from god almighty." That is similar to the thoughts of leaders 100 years who believed are rights were god given.

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The variance of ideas on what makes America great.
by [Cassie Skrepetos](#) - Friday, April 19, 2019, 6:32 PM

In our class' survey on what what makes America great, the highest chosen answer for "what makes America great" was the the idea that everyone has a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, this varies slightly, due mostly to word usage from the barna.com survey that said that the "opportunity to become who you want to be" was what gives America it's excellence, In my opinion, these are very similar, because to become who you want to

be takes life, liberty and the pursuit of what makes YOU happy. For my choices, I said that what makes America great is our religious liberty under the constitution (1st amendment), and the ethic of self-government and personal responsibility. For me, the ability to make your own choices and build your own life is very important, because without personal choice, how are you supposed to live a life that's truly yours? As a Christian I may be a little biased, but what did puzzle me on the barna.com survey was that only a mere 11% of people said that America's christian values and origins made it great. With 91.9% of religious people in America being of a Christian religion (https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_the_United_States), I figured that number would be higher. I'm not sure if those surveyed were primarily non-Christian, they had other choices they valued more, or if they just don't see the United States reflecting Christian values and morals. Feel free to discuss this idea with me in the comments, I'm genuinely interested in what role you think religion plays in America and if you think it reflects a Christian belief system in our nation.

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2

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Re: The variance of ideas on what makes America great.

by [Anthony Nguyen](#) - Saturday, April 20, 2019, 11:21 PM

I also chose that the ethic of self-government and personal responsibility is one of the values that makes America great, for similar reasons that you stated. Also, because I believe it's important that Americans hold themselves accountable and are self-sufficient and contribute to society.

As for why so little people responded that they valued America's Christian origins, I believe that is probably because the Americans questioned simply valued the other choices more. For example, without the protections provided in the Constitution, Americans might not have the freedom to practice religion, therefore it makes sense to value the Constitution most because without it they might not be able to practice Christianity at all. Additionally, the separation of Church and State in the US government is another reason why people may not say that America is great for its Christian values, because Christianity shouldn't have any part in the government. Even Christians can see the value in the separation between Church and State. The separation also allows for the practice of ALL religions and doesn't push a Christian agenda upon Muslims, Catholics, etc.

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1

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Melting Pot Idea

by [Nicolette D Erazo](#) - Saturday, April 20, 2019, 10:51 AM

It's very interesting, more so than my other thoughts on the polls, how in the barna.com survey, it states that 13% voted that America being a "melting pot" made it great. As Joe has mentioned in class, our society is not a "melting pot" at all because it is still very clear to distinguish individuality. Rather, we are a "salad bowl" for these reasons, and the fact that 13%, sitting very steadily in the middle of the poll percentages, are expressing that they believe America is great for false ideas.

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1

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The uproar of American exceptionalism.

by [Brayden Lane](#) - Saturday, April 20, 2019, 6:20 PM

Historically, all presidents, regardless of party, have been supporters of the concept of American Exceptionalism. That is why President Trump’s “rejection” has caused such an uproar. How do you analyze/parse/dissect the claims being made in these articles?

President Trump said he does not like the term American exceptionalism for many different reasons. One of which being that he doesn't think were exceptional yet and he is going to get us to be there. In Politico magazine they said "better. Trump has replaced it, at least temporarily, with an angrier tag line that conveys the same sense of national power and entitlement—America First," It is the term American exceptionalism being defines in the article and saying how Trump has denounced the term and basically replaced it with America first. I do not agree with this however to me the term America first isn't the same as American exceptionalism, America first isn't being used in the sense that were number one and better then all but instead saying he is putting America in first priorities over every other country. The magazine then goes on to say "When America is first, it owes little to everyone else. It’s a more Trumpian way of

saying what other politicians often mean." Which to me is a good point because he doesn't like the term American Exceptionalism instead he does believe we will get there and uses different terms to describe American exceptionalism.

Source: Politico Magazine

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Comparisons between class poll and barna.com survey.

by [Kate Adkisson](#) - Saturday, April 20, 2019, 8:56 PM

While looking over the results of our class poll concerning what makes American great, we can see that 30% of those who answered the survey chose the “the idea that all human beings have a God-given right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” option out of two they could pick. This option was chosen the most frequently, which I think says something important about the class as a whole. Despite our split of political ideologies, as was shown in the spectrum poll, we, for the most part, agree on this subject. The next two most-voted for options were “religious liberty” and “the ethic of self-government and personal responsibility”. So, from this poll, we can see that our class values freedom and the ability to choose what you want to do with your life, rather than have choices thrust upon you. The options that got chosen the least amount were “the culture of private charity for those in need” and “the system of free enterprise”. It’s interesting to me that both of these options deal with some sort of money exchange. Comparing these results to the barna.com survey, we see that the options presented in this survey compared to ours vary a little, but the general high scorers are the same. Freedom of religion ranks high on the barna.com survey, as well as the Constitution, which includes the 14th amendment, which states “ no State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States ;nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law”. So I would say the results of the two survey given the options were pretty similar.

Looking back on the choices I made for the survey, the two options I ticked were both “religious liberty” an the “the idea that all human beings have a God-given right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”. The options I picked coincide with the class and the barna.com survey. I think these were the best options because even though I don’t totally agree that America has always upheld these ideas in the past and even now, I believe these ideas make a country or nation great. A question I struggled with on the survey was “Do you agree that America is a great nation?”. My immediate thought was no, and I clicked no. I clicked no because I think using the word “great” carries a lot of meaning. We are great in size, great in power, and great in a lot of other areas. But are we good? Are we ethical? I believe we have a lot of potential, that our country is still young and doesn’t have everything figured out yet. So, in terms of greatness, we have great potential. Looking at my answer compared to the rest of the class, I can see that I am in the minority, with 5 other people who chose no, and about 9 who weren’t sure/didn’t know. I can understand the reasons why 45 other people chose “yes”, because saying that your country is not great could seem a little controversial or not patriotic. I understand and respect my classmate’s choices.

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3

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