

American Immigration History: People, Patterns, and Policy

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Course Description

Widely considered a wellspring for US greatness, immigration has also been an abiding site of our deepest conflicts. The republican foundation of the United States, with its promises of democracy and equality for all, seems to strain against the high numbers of immigrants from parts of the world barely imagined by the Founding Fathers, much less as sources of new citizens. What is the breaking point for the assimilating powers of US democracy, and how much does national vitality rely upon a continued influx of diverse immigrants with their strenuous ambitions and resourcefulness? Today we remain divided by competing beliefs about how immigration shapes our nation's well-being and to what ends we should admit, exclude, or grant citizenship to immigrants, and in what numbers. Professor Madeline Y. Hsu's course enables students to better understand the terms by which immigration functions as a core aspect of US national identity.

Lecture Videos

This course consists of approximately 12 hours of instruction presented by Professor Madeline Hsu, split into 25 lecture videos ranging from 19 minutes to 40 minutes long. Below are the lecture titles and major themes as identified by Professor Hsu. The videos provide the content needed to answer the course quizzes.

1. Natives and Migrants in Colonial America: Major Themes in Immigration and Ethnic History (2 videos)
 - The challenges of conceptualizing, enacting, and enforcing immigration controls
 - Key concepts in U.S. migrations studies
 - Migration patterns and flows

2. Colonial Migrations and Citizenship in the New Republic (2 videos)
 - Non-immigrant Americans: Aboriginal or Indigenous populations
 - Competing forms of empires and colonization: Spanish, French, Dutch, and British migrations and settlements
 - Globalization
 - Introduction and institutionalization of slavery
 - US Revolution and early Republic
 - Who is counted as a person in the 1790 census and restrictions on citizenship
3. Old Stock Immigration before the Civil War (2 videos)
 - “Old Stock” immigration: Western and Northern Europeans
 - “Manifest Destiny”: Westward migrations and national expansion
 - Removal of noncitizens: Native Americans and free Blacks
 - Nativism and tensions over citizenship for immigrants: Catholics and the poor
 - The Civil War and Reconstruction: African Americans, immobility, and citizenship
4. Manifest Destiny and Pacific Migrations (2 videos)
 - The United States becomes transcontinental
 - Westward migrations and manifest destiny
 - Transpacific migrations and “yellow peril”
 - West Coast economic development and labor recruitment
 - Racial ideologies and Asian assimilability
 - Justifications for immigration restriction
5. Enacting Immigration Regulation (2 videos)
 - Justification for immigration regulation
 - Legal strategies for enacting restriction, with implications for enforcement
 - Authority and sovereignty to enact and enforce immigration regulations
 - Who can become US citizens and what are the status and rights of resident non-citizens or “aliens”?
 - What mechanisms were developed to enforce immigration regulations?
6. “New Stock” Immigration and America’s Expanding Empire (2 videos)
 - Increasing levels of immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe
 - “Old stock” v. “New stock” immigration
 - Industrialization of the US economy

- Rural v. urban settlement; increasing numbers and density; visibility in urban settings
 - 1898 and the dramatic expansion of US empire; Hawai'i, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and the Philippines
7. Quantitative Restriction, Remote Control, and Border Matters (2 videos)
- Immigration “crisis” of early 1900s: eugenics, “Red” Scare and the Dillingham Report
 - Immigration restriction based on individual capacities
 - Immigration restriction based on quantitative caps
 - Remote control and the offshoring of visa applications and approval procedures
 - Citizenship by naturalization and racial categories
 - Monitoring the southern border
8. Crucibles of War (2 videos)
- Racial ideologies and citizenship
 - Borderlands and immigration regulation
 - Human rights and immigration policy
 - International relations and immigration policy: allies and enemies
9. The Cold War and the 1965 Immigration Act (2 videos)
- Military service as a path to claiming immigration
 - “Military Necessity” and dividing lines between citizens and foreign aliens
 - International political pressures to reform immigration laws
 - Cold War racial liberalism
10. Refugees and Asylum- 3 videos
- Immigration regulation as a selective mechanism: Whom shall we welcome?
 - 3 pathways to legal immigration: employment/investment, family reunification or chain migration, refugee or asylum
 - Changing composition of immigration to the US
 - Changing levels of immigration to the US
 - The challenge of enforcing immigration regulation at shared borders
11. Enforcement/Employment (2 videos)

- Civil Rights Movement and struggles for a multiracial United States: resisting the melting pot
- The model minority as a defense against affirmative action

12. Post 9/11 and the Department of Homeland Security (2 videos)

- Immigrant entrepreneurs, access, and multiculturalism
- Border crossings and arrivals and their regulation
- Education and US-born generations
- 9/11 and national security

Note: Course lectures were originally recorded for the Gilder Lehrman Institute's online graduate program. You can disregard references to assignments, other coursework, and the use of content in classrooms discussed in the videos. They are not part of the History U program.

Resources

Select the Resources link for information about the primary and secondary resources, videos, and websites referred to in the course. Please note: History U participants are not required to read or purchase print materials. All quiz questions are drawn from the lectures.

Quizzes

The purpose of the 12 short quizzes is to review your knowledge of the material covered in the lectures. No outside reading is required to answer the questions successfully. After watching each video in the course, select and complete the corresponding quiz to test your knowledge and qualify for the Certificate of Completion.

Certificate of Completion

After you finish watching all of the lectures, score an 80% or higher on each quiz, and complete the feedback survey, you will be able to download your certificate.

Please email historyschool@gilderlehrman.org with any questions.