

**Advanced Institute, Spring 2013
IS AMERICA EXCEPTIONAL?
Instructor: William Kristol
Washington, D.C.**

"American Exceptionalism," once a term debated by academics, has entered political discourse. What does or could the term mean? Isn't America based on universal principles? So how can it be exceptional? If it's not (or if it is), what are the implications of so many Americans believing it is?

Wednesday, March 27, 2013, 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm

Readings:

- Declaration of Independence
- Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Roger Weightman, June 24, 1826
- Abraham Lincoln, Speech on the Dred Scott Decision, June 26, 1857
- Abraham Lincoln, Letter to Henry L. Pierce and others, April 6, 1859
- Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863
- Abraham Lincoln, Speech to the 166th Ohio Regiment, August 22, 1864

Discussion Questions:

1. How can the American experiment in self-government be at once exceptional and universal?

Wednesday, April 3, 2013, 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm

Readings:

- Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, The Federalist, Nos. 1, 2, 6, 10, 37, 39, 49, 51, 68, 70

Discussion Questions:

1. How can America be exceptional if the Constitution is based on unexceptional realities of politics?

Wednesday, April 10, 2013, 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm

Readings:

- Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Volume One, Introduction; Volume Two, Parts Two and Four

Discussion Questions:

1. Is America exceptional or is America merely a canvass on which democratic forces will work themselves out?

Wednesday, April 17, 2013, 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm

Readings:

- Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, Volume Two, Part Three, Chapter 18, "On Honor in the United States and in Democratic Societies"
- Robert Warshow, "The Westerner"
- Robert Warshow, "The Gangster as Tragic Hero"
- Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder"

Discussion Questions:

1. Can America be exceptional if Americans aren't?

Wednesday, April 24, 2013, 7:00 pm to 10:00 pm

Readings:

- Daniel Bell, "The End of American Exceptionalism," The Public Interest, Fall, 1975
- David Gelernter, "Americanism--and its Enemies," Commentary, January, 2005
- Herbert Croly, The Promise of American Life, Chapter One

Discussion Questions:

1. Where stands American exceptionalism today?