The Great Courses
Audio & Video Lectures from the World’s Best Professors
The American Identity
1 book, 8 DVDs

What defines an American? Is it the love of liberty, the pursuit of justice, the urge to invent, the drive to explore, the quest for spiritual values? The paradox of the American identity is that although the United States is a melting pot of many different traditions, motives, and ideals, there are nevertheless distinctive qualities that define the American character.

In this course, historian Patrick N. Allitt investigates the national character by introducing you to notable Americans from all eras of the nation's history, whose lives speak eloquently about the qualities that make one truly American.

48 Lectures

1 Being American
2 John Smith—The Colonial Promoter
3 William Penn—The Religious Liberty Advocate
4 Cotton Mather—The Puritan
5 Benjamin Franklin—The Improver
6 Francis Marion—The Guerrilla Soldier
7 Thomas Jefferson—The Patriot
8 Abigail Adams—The First Lady
9 Mother Ann Lee—The Religious Founder
10 Rittenhouse and Bartram—The Scientists
11 Eli Whitney—The Inventor
12 Lewis and Clark—The Explorers
13 Charles Grandison Finney—The Revivalist
14 Horace Mann—The Educator
15 Ralph Waldo Emerson—The Philosopher
16 Frederick Douglass—The Abolitionist
17 Edmund Ruffin—The Champion of Slavery
18 Brigham Young—The Religious Autocrat
19 Frederick Law Olmsted—The Landscape Architect
20 William Tecumseh Sherman—The General
21 Louisa May Alcott—The Professional Writer
22 Andrew Carnegie—Conscience-Stricken Entrepreneur
23 “Buffalo Bill”—The Westerner
24 Black Elk—The Holy Man
25 John Wesley Powell—The Desert Theorist
26 William Mulholland—The Water Engineer
27 Samuel Gompers—The Trade Unionist
28 Booker T. Washington—The “Race Leader”
29 Emma Goldman—The Anarchist
30 Abraham Cahan—The Immigrants’ Advocate
31 Isabella Stewart Gardner—The Collector
32 Oliver Wendell Holmes—The Jurist
33 Henry Ford—The Mass Producer
34 Harry Houdini—The Sensationalist
35 Al Capone—The Crime Boss
36 Herbert Hoover—The Humanitarian
37 Helen Keller—The Inspiration
38 Duke Ellington—The Jazzman
39 Charles Lindbergh—The Aviator
40 Douglas MacArthur—The World-Power Warrior
41 Leonard Bernstein—The Musical Polymath
42 Shirley Temple—The Child Prodigy
43 George Wallace—The Demagogue
44 William F. Buckley, Jr.—The Conservative
45 Roberto Clemente—The Athlete
46 Betty Friedan—The Feminist
47 Jesse Jackson—The Civil Rights Legatee
48 Stability and Change

Before 1776: Life in the American Colonies
1 book, 6 DVDs

The history of colonial America is a story of extraordinary scope, with Europeans, Africans, and the native peoples of North America interacting in a drama of settlement and conflict that lasted nearly three centuries. In the midst of it, no one would have predicted that the profoundly different English colonies along the East Coast, separated by religion, politics, economics, and many other factors, would eventually join to form the United States of America.

Yet the seeds for this outcome and the future character of the United States were germinating in developments such as these:

- The Mayflower Compact: As the Mayflower lay anchored in Massachusetts Bay in 1620, the Pilgrims drew up an agreement committing themselves to self-government. No other colony in the New World—French, Spanish, or Dutch—asserted such a right.

- The Quaker colony: America’s core ideals of democracy, fair trade, religious freedom, and social mobility first came together in the 1680s with the founding of William Penn’s Quaker colony of Pennsylvania—“the best poor man’s country in the world,” praised one early visitor.

- The Great War for Empire: Also called the French and Indian War, this global clash of empires began in North America with an attack led by the young militia captain George Washington. Lasting from
1754 to 1763, it ended with England and her colonies as the preeminent power on the continent.

Indeed, the events that led from the first permanent English settlement at Jamestown in 1607 to the Boston Tea Party in 1773, on the eve of the American Revolution, tell us who we are as citizens of the New World, what ideas and traditions shaped us, what our ancestors experienced, and how the United States came to be.

*Before 1776: Life in the American Colonies* tells this epic story in 36 spellbinding lectures by Professor Robert J. Allison of Suffolk University in Boston. An acclaimed teacher, Professor Allison is also an eminent scholar who has served as an advisor to several prestigious museums and historical societies in Massachusetts, including the Commonwealth Museum at the State Archives in Boston.

### 36 Lectures

1. The World before Colonial America
2. Spain's New World Empire
3. John Smith, Pocahontas, and Jamestown
4. Virginia and the Chesapeake after Smith
5. The Pilgrims and Plymouth
6. The Iroquois, the French, and the Dutch
7. The Puritans and Massachusetts
9. The Connecticut Valley and the Pequot War
10. Sugar and Slaves—The Caribbean
11. Mercantilism and the Growth of Piracy
12. South Carolina—Rice, Cattle, and Artisans
13. New Netherland Becomes New York
14. King Philip's War in New England
15. Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia
16. Santa Fe and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680
17. William Penn's New World Vision
18. The New England Uprising of 1689
19. Witchcraft in New England
20. Captives and Stories of Captivity
21. The Indians' New World
22. Family Life and Labor in Colonial America
23. Smallpox, 1721—The Inoculation Controversy
24. France, Senegal, and Louisiana
25. Georgia—Dreams and Realities
26. The Atlantic Slave Trade and South Carolina
27. The New York Conspiracy of 1741
28. The Great Awakening
29. The Albany Conference of 1754
30. The Great War for Empire
31. Pontiac's Revolt against the British
32. Imperial Reform—The Sugar and Stamp Acts
33. North Carolina Regulators Seek Local Rule
34. Virginia—Patrick Henry and the West
35. Destruction of Tea and Colonial Rebellion
36. Independence and Beyond

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**Classics of American Literature**

1 book, 14 DVDs

To truly understand the United States of America, you must explore its literary tradition. Works by Melville, Whitman, Faulkner, Hemingway, and others are more than just masterpieces of Western literature—they're powerful windows into America's spirit. According to Professor Arnold Weinstein, "American classics are wonderfully rich fare. America is a mythic land, a place with a sense of its own destiny and promise, a place that has experienced bloody wars to achieve that destiny. The events of American history shine forth in our classics."

When was the last time you read them? Possibly not as recently as you'd like. Why? Not because you wouldn't love it. But perhaps the demands of your daily life or some other reason have prevented this pleasure. Now, here is the opportunity to gain an extraordinary familiarity with each of these authors within a manageable amount of time, as well as review the great works you may already know.

From *Sleepy Hollow* to *The Great Gatsby*, Professor Weinstein contends that the literary canon lives, grows, and changes. What links these writers to each other—and to us readers today—is the awareness that the past lives and changes as generations of writers and readers step forward to interpret it anew.

### 84 Lectures

1. Introduction to Classics of American Literature
2. Benjamin Franklin's Autobiography—The First American Story
3. Washington Irving—The First American Storyteller
4. Ralph Waldo Emerson Yesterday—America's Coming of Age
5. Emerson Today—Architect of American Values
6. Emerson Tomorrow—Deconstructing Culture and Self
7. Henry David Thoreau—Countercultural Hero
8. Thoreau—Stylist and Humorist Extraordinaire
9. Walden—Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow
10. Edgar Allan Poe
11. Poe—Ghost Writer
12. Poe's Legacy—The Self as "Haunted Palace"
13. Nathaniel Hawthorne and the American Past
14. The Scarlet Letter—Puritan Romance
15. Hawthorne's "A"—Interpretation and Semiosis
16. The Scarlet Letter—Political Tract or Psychological Study?
17. Hawthorne Our Contemporary
Cycles of American Political Thought

1 book, 6 DVDs

America is often described as a nation of doers. Its folk heroes are men and women of action, like Daniel Boone and Annie Oakley, who subdued an untamed wilderness on the way to forging a great nation. But is that the whole story? Is American history really just a tale of dynamic movers and shakers who left philosophizing to their European counterparts?

In *Cycles of American Political Thought*, you’ll examine the often neglected philosophical underpinnings of this nation’s history. With renowned political scientist Professor Joseph F. Kobylka as your guide, you’ll explore how this nation of “doers” has, from its birth, been deeply engaged with the most fundamental questions of political philosophy.

36 Lectures

1 America—The Philosophical Experiment
2 Historical Baggage
3 Theoretical Baggage
4 A Puritan Beginning
5 Expansion and Individualism
6 The Revolutionary Context
7 The Road to the Declaration of Independence
8 A “Natural” Revolutionary—Thomas Paine
9 The Unconscious Dialectic of Crèvecoeur
10 John Adams—“Constitutionalist”
11 A Political Constitution
12 A Philosophical Constitution—Faction
13 A Philosophical Constitution—Structure
14 A Philosophical Constitution—Interpretation
15 Disorganized Losers—The Anti-Federalists
16 The “Genius” of Thomas Jefferson
17 Jacksonian Democracy—The “People” Extended
18 Iconoclastic Individualism—Thoreau
19 Inclusionist Stirrings—Douglass and Stanton
20 The Organic Socialism of Brownson
21 American Feudalism—The Vision of Fitzhugh
22 Constitutionalizing the Slave Class
23 Lincoln’s Reconstitution of America
24 Equality in the Law and in Practice
25 Social Darwinism and Economic Laissez-Faire
26 Looking Backward, Looking Forward
27 Teddy Roosevelt and Progressivism
28 Supreme Court and Laissez-Faire
29 The Women’s Movement and the 19th Amendment
30 Eugene V. Debs and Working-Class Socialism
Where did the America we know today—so different in its fundamental views about almost every aspect of life as to be unrecognizable to our countrymen of two centuries ago—really come from? How, for example, did the colonial idea of the classroom as a place devoted to “breaking the will” and “subduing the spirit” of students, change to that of a vibrant, even pleasurable experience—including innovations such as kindergarten and recess—with children encouraged to participate actively in their own education?

What forces eventually enabled our nation to see slavery as morally abhorrent and unequivocally wrong, when we had once passed a law permitting the capture and return of escaped slaves who managed to make their way to the “free” North? How did the struggle for women’s rights—not just for the right to vote but also to have control over their own aspirations and destinies—gain the momentum to unleash changes still felt today?

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, what is the source of our distinctly American way of experiencing ourselves—confident in our value as individuals, certain of our ability to discover personal truths in the natural world, self-reliant in the face of uncertainty and change?

Answers to questions like these are found in and around Boston and the town of Concord, Massachusetts, which became, little more than five decades after the American Revolution, the epicenter of a profoundly influential movement that would reshape many beliefs and make possible the America we know today.

That movement is Transcendentalism. Drawing on an array of influences from Europe and the non-Western world, it also offered uniquely American perspectives of thought: an emphasis on the divine in nature, on the value of the individual and intuition, and on belief in a spirituality that might “transcend” one’s own sensory experience to provide a more useful guide for daily living than is possible from empirical and logical reasoning.

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consciousness.

But there is more to America’s great best-selling books than the sales figures they rake in. American bestsellers also offer us ways to appreciate and understand particular periods of American culture.

The 24 lectures of Great American Bestsellers: The Books That Shaped America give you a pointed look at key best-selling works and their places within the greater fabric of American cultural history. Guided by award-winning Professor Peter Conn of the University of Pennsylvania, you explore representative bestsellers at various stages of American history, from the first book published in the English-speaking New World to the blockbuster authors who dominate the 21st-century publishing industry.

24 Lectures

1 Why Do Bestsellers Matter?
2 The Bay Psalm Book
3 Common Sense
4 The Last of the Mohicans
5 Uncle Tom’s Cabin
6 Ragged Dick
7 Little Women
8 The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
9 The Virginian
10 The House of Mirth
11 The Jungle
12 Main Street
13 The Maltese Falcon
14 The Good Earth
15 Gone with the Wind
16 How to Win Friends and Influence People
17 The Grapes of Wrath
18 Native Son
19 The Catcher in the Rye
20 To Kill a Mockingbird
21 Catch-22
22 The Woman Warrior
23 John Adams
24 Recent Bestsellers

Masterworks of American Art

1 book, 4 DVDs

A nation’s identity is expressed through its art. Great painters capture the essence of a culture’s brightest hopes, deepest anxieties, and most profound aspirations. They provide an aesthetic road map to a nation’s history, recording the lives of its citizens and reflecting the personality of an entire people. But all too often, Americans themselves are unfamiliar with the great artistic legacy of their own country. Many of us study the great artists of Europe—Leonardo and Rubens, Degas and Monet—but neglect the remarkable painters of our own national tradition. And yet the tradition of American art is filled with spectacular masterpieces that raise intriguing questions:

- How did the founding of this new nation find expression in art?
- Have our democratic ideals influenced the growth and development of American art?
- Did artists in this nascent culture follow time-honored aesthetic models, or did they pioneer new styles to communicate their burgeoning sense of national pride?
- Is there something uniquely “American” about American art?

These are the kinds of questions you explore in Masterworks of American Art. In this sweeping survey, you encounter the brilliant paintings of the homegrown masters who documented the birth of our nation from its colonial roots up to the brink of World War I and the birth of Modernism.

Your guide is Professor William Kloss. A noted scholar and art historian, Professor Kloss has taught more than 100 courses as an independent lecturer for the Smithsonian Institution’s seminar and travel program. Through 24 engaging and informative lectures, he shares his deep passion for the art of this nation while offering remarkable insights into the relationship between America’s history and its art.

24 Lectures

1 Art in the New World
2 18th-Century Colonial Art
3 The Genius of Copley and C. W. Peale
4 A Revolution in Art
5 Portraiture in Federal America
6 Early Historical and Landscape Painting
7 The 1820s—Art in the Era of Good Feelings
8 Thomas Cole and the American Landscape
9 Thomas Cole—The Late Years
10 Other Views, Other Visions
11 American Genre Painting
12 Native Americans and Westward Expansion
13 The Civil War in Art
For most Americans, the history of the United States is built on a set of long-accepted beliefs about events, each of which resonates in the nation’s collective memory. But what if those beliefs—however familiar—don’t really tell the whole story? Our knowledge of history—or what we believe to be history—is the lens through which we view and interpret the world. And when that lens is distorted with misleading information, it has powerful effects on how we perceive the present and how we make decisions in the future, from choosing whom to vote for to interpreting the latest developments in today’s news and opinion pieces.

To take a skeptical approach to American history is not to dabble in imaginative conspiracy theories or doubt the essence of the American experiment; rather, it’s to reframe your understanding of this great nation’s past and actually strengthen your appreciation for what makes American history such a fascinating chapter in the larger story of Western civilization.

Sorting through misconceptions, myths, and half-truths about America’s past is also a chance to revisit some of the country’s greatest episodes, figures, and themes from a fresh perspective and an opportunity to hone the way you think about and interpret the past, the present, and even the future.

In *The Skeptic’s Guide to American History*, you can do just that. This bold 24-lecture course examines many commonly held myths and half-truths about American history and prompts you to think about what really happened in the nation’s past—as opposed to what many believe happened.

Delivered by award-winning scholar and Professor Mark A. Stoler of The University of Vermont, these lectures demonstrate how reconsidering some of the most popular notions of U.S. history can yield new (and sometimes startlingly different) interpretations of political, social, economic, and military events. But more than just debunking commonly accepted accounts, you’ll be able to replace these misconceptions with insightful truths.

24 Lectures

1 Religious Toleration in Colonial America?
2 Neither American nor Revolutionary?
3 The Constitution Did Not Create a Democracy
4 Washington—Failures and Real Accomplishments
5 Confusions about Jefferson and Hamilton
6 Andrew Jackson—An Odd Symbol of Democracy
7 The Second Great Awakening—Enduring Impacts
8 Did Slavery Really Cause the Civil War?
9 The Civil War’s Actual Turning Points
10 The Myth of Laissez-Faire
11 Misconceptions about the Original Populists
12 Labor in America—A Strange History
13 Myths about American Isolation and Empire
14 Early Progressives Were Not Liberals
15 Woodrow Wilson and the Rating of Presidents
16 The Roaring Twenties Reconsidered
17 Hoover and the Great Depression Revisited
18 What Did Roosevelt’s New Deal Really Do?
19 World War II Misconceptions and Myths
20 Was the Cold War Inevitable?
21 The Real Blunders of the Vietnam War
22 Myths about American Wars
23 Who Matters in American History?
24 History Did Not Begin with Us
American Resource Center supports lifelong learning by offering DVD courses for home and educational use free of charge. The Great Courses (TGC) is a series of college-level audio and video courses produced and distributed by The Teaching Company (TTC). Professors in these video lectures are some of the best in their area of expertise, and have distinguished backgrounds as university professors, lecturers, and historians.

Courses, which can consist of even 84 lectures, come with multiple DVDs and a supplemental booklet with outlines of the individual lectures, recommended reading lists, general bibliographies, and questions to consider. Teachers in adult education will benefit from these materials as they can be used both as supplemental materials for classes and background information.

The American Resource Center has acquired eight of these DVD courses on the following themes:

- The American Identity
- Before 1776: Life in the American Colonies
- Classics of American Literature
- Cycles of American Political Thought
- Emerson, Thoreau, and the Transcendentalist Movement
- Great American Bestsellers: The Books That Shaped America
- Masterworks of American Art
- The Skeptics Guide to American History

The DVD courses are available for home and educational use free of charge. Please contact the ARC for more information.