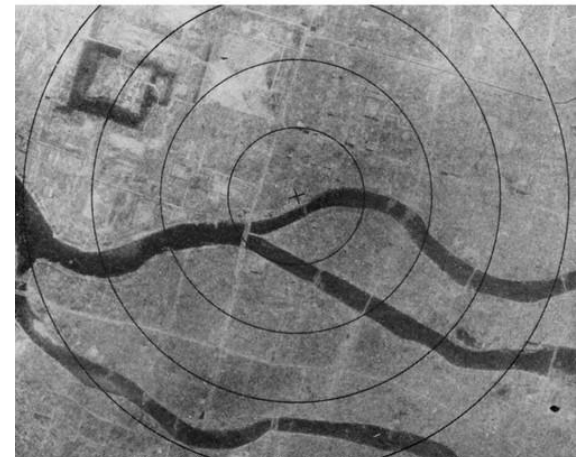
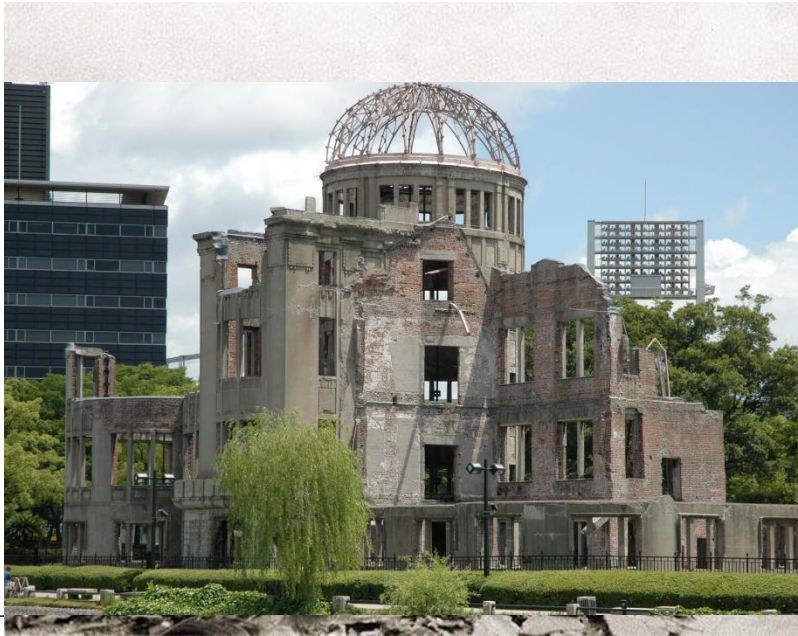


Introduction to American Studies

An Introduction

Historical Dates

- August 6, 1945
 - Hiroshima
- Hiroshima Peace Memorial
 - Designed by the Czech architect Jan Letzel in 1915 as the Hiroshima Prefectural Exhibition Hall



Hiroshima before and after bombing on Aug. 6, 1945

Source: <http://biblio.org/hyperwar/AAF/USBS/AtomicEffects/AtomicEffects-2.html>

Santa Margherita di Liguria, Italy



Historical Dates

- October 12, 1492
- Christopher Columbus leading a group of 3 ships – The *Niña*, *Pinta* and *Santa María* – lands on an island in the Caribbean
- He names the island “San Salvador”



What is the power of words?

- The island's residents knew it as "Guanahani"
- What is the power of naming?
- What is the significance of the word "discovery"?
 - 1 *a*: to make known or visible: expose
 - *b* *archaic*: display
 - 2 *a*: to obtain sight or knowledge of for the first time: find
 - *b*: find out

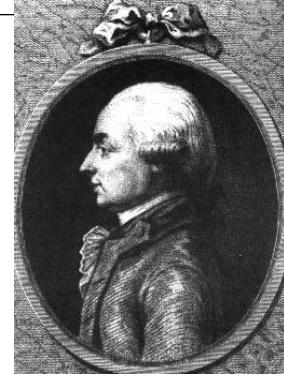
What are Columbus's words?

- “So that they are good to be ordered about, to work and sow, and do all that may be necessary, and to build towns, and they should be taught to go about clothed and to adopt our customs.”
 - 16 December 1492, *Journal of the First Voyage*
- “From here one might send, in the name of the Holy Trinity, as many slaves as could be sold, as well as a quantity of Brazil [timber]. If the information I have is correct, it appears that we could sell four thousand slaves, who might be worth twenty millions and more”
 - September 1498, *Journal of the Third Voyage*

Basic questions for this course

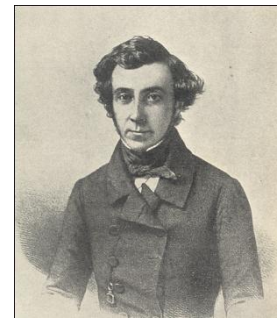
- How similar are Americans and Europeans?
- If throughout its history, the majority of the people of the United States have either been immigrants from Europe or their descendants, why are the attitudes, outlooks, perspectives, senses of identity, etc. of Americans and Europeans so different?
- The search for the answers to this question has been one that has long employed American and European scholars, writers and thinkers.

1782



- J. Hector St. John De Crevecoeur (1735-1815)
- Immigrated to America in 1755
- In 1782, he published *Letters from An American Farmer*
- Letter III:
 - “What then is the American, this new man?...He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He has become an American by being received in the broad lap of our great Alma Mater. Here individuals of all races are melted into a new race of man, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims.”

1835



- Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859)
- *Democracy in America*
 - First published in French as *De la démocratie en Amérique* in two volumes (Volume 1 in 1835 and Volume 2 in 1840)
- “Everything is extraordinary in America, the social condition of the inhabitants as well as the laws; but the soil upon which these institutions are founded is more extraordinary than all the rest. When the earth was given to men by the Creator, the earth was inexhaustible; but men were weak and ignorant, and when they had learned to take advantage of the treasures which it contained, they already covered its surface and were soon obliged to earn by the sword an asylum for repose and freedom. Just then North America was discovered, as if it had been kept in reserve by the Deity and had just risen from beneath the waters of the Deluge.”
 - Volume 1, Chapter VIII

- “The position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one. Their strictly Puritanical origin, their exclusively commercial habits, even the country they inhabit, which seems to divert their minds from the pursuit of science, literature, and the arts, the proximity of Europe, which allows them to neglect these pursuits without relapsing into barbarism, a thousand special causes, of which I have only been able to point out the most important, have singularly concurred to fix the mind of the American upon purely practical objects. His passions, his wants, his education, and everything about him seem to unite in drawing the native of the United States earthward; his religion alone bids him turn, from time to time, a transient and distracted glance to heaven.”

○ Volume 2, Chapter IX

- “THE principal aim of this book has been to make known the laws of the United States; if this purpose has been accomplished, the reader is already enabled to judge for himself which are the laws that really tend to maintain the democratic republic, and which endanger its existence. If I have not succeeded in explaining this in the whole course of my work, I cannot hope to do so in a single chapter. It is not my intention to retrace the path I have already pursued, and a few lines will suffice to recapitulate what I have said.
- Three circumstances seem to me to contribute more than all others to the maintenance of the democratic republic in the United States.
 - The first is that federal form of government which the Americans have adopted, and which enables the Union to combine the power of a great republic with the security of a small one.
 - The second consists in those township institutions which limit the despotism of the majority and at the same time impart to the people a taste for freedom and the art of being free.
 - The third is to be found in the constitution of the judicial power. I have shown how the courts of justice serve to repress the excesses of democracy, and how they check and direct the impulses of the majority without stopping its activity.”

○ Volume 1, Chapter VIII

What are some possible causes?

- “City Upon a Hill”
- American exceptionalism
- Manifest Destiny
- The Frontier Hypothesis
- The Melting Pot
- Slavery and race