

anglo saxonism us history

Anglo Saxonism US History: Exploring the Roots and Impact

anglo saxonism us history is a fascinating topic that intertwines the cultural, racial, and political ideologies that have influenced the United States throughout its formation and expansion. Understanding Anglo Saxonism not only sheds light on the early American mindset but also provides insight into how certain ideas about race, identity, and nationalism shaped policies and social attitudes in the U.S. This article will delve into the origins of Anglo Saxonism, its role in American history, and its lasting effects on society.

What Is Anglo Saxonism?

Anglo Saxonism refers to a belief system rooted in the idea that the Anglo-Saxon people—those of English descent primarily—represent a superior cultural and racial lineage. This ideology emerged from 19th-century European and American contexts, where it was used to justify social hierarchies, imperialism, and even racial discrimination. In the United States, Anglo Saxonism became a pervasive narrative that tied the nation's identity to English heritage and Protestant values.

The Historical Origins of Anglo Saxonism

The term "Anglo-Saxon" originally described the Germanic tribes that settled in England after the fall of the Roman Empire. By the 19th century, however, the concept had evolved beyond its linguistic roots to symbolize a racial and cultural archetype. Writers and thinkers like John Fiske and Theodore Roosevelt popularized the idea that Anglo-Saxons were inherently destined to lead and civilize. This belief was intertwined with Social Darwinism, suggesting that Anglo-Saxon dominance was natural and beneficial.

Anglo Saxonism and American Identity

In the context of US history, Anglo Saxonism became a cornerstone of national identity, particularly among the ruling elite. It was often used to distinguish Americans of English Protestant descent from other ethnic groups, including Irish Catholics, African Americans, and later immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. This sense of Anglo-Saxon superiority influenced immigration policies, educational curricula, and political rhetoric throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The Role of Anglo Saxonism in US Expansion and Imperialism

One cannot discuss Anglo Saxonism in US history without addressing its influence on American expansionism and imperialism. The ideology provided a moral and cultural justification for territorial

growth and overseas interventions.

Manifest Destiny and Anglo Saxon Ideals

Manifest Destiny, the 19th-century doctrine that the United States was destined to expand across the North American continent, was deeply entwined with Anglo Saxonism. Proponents believed that Anglo-Saxon Americans had a divine right to spread their civilization, governance, and culture. This often came at the expense of Native American populations and Mexican territories, whose rights and cultures were marginalized or dismissed as inferior.

Anglo Saxonism and Overseas Imperialism

As the US emerged as a global power in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Anglo Saxonism helped justify overseas imperial ventures. The annexation of the Philippines, interventions in Latin America, and the colonization of Pacific islands were framed as efforts to bring “civilization” and “order” to “lesser” peoples. This paternalistic attitude underpinned policies that prioritized Anglo-Saxon cultural norms and political structures.

Anglo Saxonism’s Influence on Immigration and Race Relations

The impact of Anglo Saxonism extended deeply into the realms of immigration policy and race relations, shaping who was considered truly “American.”

Immigration Restrictions and the Anglo Saxon Ideal

Throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, immigration laws reflected Anglo Saxonist biases. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Immigration Act of 1924, which severely limited immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, were influenced by fears that non-Anglo-Saxon peoples would dilute the nation’s racial and cultural purity. Preference was often given to immigrants from Northern and Western Europe, seen as more compatible with the Anglo-Saxon heritage.

Racial Hierarchies and Segregation

Anglo Saxonism also played a role in reinforcing racial hierarchies in American society. The ideology supported segregationist policies and the disenfranchisement of African Americans, Native Americans, and other minority groups. It fostered a belief in white supremacy that permeated social, legal, and political systems, laying groundwork for systemic racism that would persist well into the 20th century.

The Decline and Legacy of Anglo Saxonism in Modern America

While Anglo Saxonism as a formal ideology has declined significantly, its historical legacy continues to influence American culture and politics in subtle ways.

The Shift Toward Multiculturalism

The civil rights movement and subsequent immigration reforms in the mid-20th century challenged the racial and cultural exclusivity that Anglo Saxonism promoted. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, for example, abolished national-origin quotas, opening the doors to a more diverse influx of immigrants and signaling a move away from Anglo Saxon-centric policies.

Enduring Cultural Influences

Despite this, the echoes of Anglo Saxonism remain embedded in certain cultural narratives about American identity, exceptionalism, and nationalism. Discussions about immigration, race, and national heritage sometimes revive themes reminiscent of Anglo Saxonist thought—though typically repackaged in contemporary terms.

Understanding Anglo Saxonism for a More Inclusive Future

Recognizing the historical role of Anglo Saxonism in US history is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. By critically examining how ideas of racial and cultural superiority shaped policies and attitudes, Americans can better appreciate the country's diverse roots and work toward dismantling lingering prejudices.

Key Takeaways About Anglo Saxonism in US History

- Anglo Saxonism is a belief in the superiority of Anglo-Saxon heritage, deeply influencing American identity and policies.
- The ideology justified territorial expansion, imperialism, and racial hierarchies throughout US history.
- Immigration laws and race relations in the 19th and early 20th centuries reflected Anglo Saxonist biases.
- While its formal influence has waned, Anglo Saxonism's cultural legacy persists in various forms.

- Understanding this history is vital for promoting diversity and inclusiveness in modern America.

Exploring Anglo Saxonism in US history reveals much about the forces that have shaped the nation's complex identity. It also challenges us to reconsider narratives of heritage and belonging in a way that honors the full spectrum of American experiences.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Anglo-Saxonism in the context of U.S. history?

Anglo-Saxonism is a 19th-century belief that people of Anglo-Saxon descent were superior and destined to dominate other races and cultures. It influenced U.S. policies on expansion, immigration, and cultural identity.

How did Anglo-Saxonism influence American imperialism?

Anglo-Saxonism justified American expansionism by promoting the idea that Anglo-Saxon Americans had a duty to civilize and govern less 'developed' peoples, leading to support for overseas territories like the Philippines and Hawaii.

What role did Anglo-Saxonism play in U.S. immigration policy?

Anglo-Saxonism contributed to restrictive immigration policies by favoring immigrants from Northern and Western Europe while discriminating against those from Southern and Eastern Europe, who were considered less 'Anglo-Saxon' and less assimilable.

Who were some prominent figures associated with Anglo-Saxonism in U.S. history?

Figures such as Josiah Strong, a clergyman and author of 'Our Country,' and Theodore Roosevelt promoted Anglo-Saxonism ideals, advocating for American expansion and racial superiority in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

How did Anglo-Saxonism affect racial and cultural attitudes in the United States?

Anglo-Saxonism reinforced racial hierarchies and cultural biases, promoting the idea that Anglo-Saxon culture and institutions were superior and should be preserved and spread, often at the expense of indigenous peoples and other ethnic groups.

Is Anglo-Saxonism still relevant in modern discussions of U.S. history?

Yes, Anglo-Saxonism is studied to understand the roots of racial and cultural ideologies that shaped

American history, including imperialism, immigration policies, and racial discrimination, providing context for ongoing debates about identity and inclusion.

Additional Resources

Anglo Saxonism in US History: An Analytical Review

anglo saxonism us history is a complex and often controversial theme that traces its roots back to the early cultural and racial ideologies influencing the United States' development. Originating from ideas tied to the Anglo-Saxon peoples of early medieval England, this concept evolved into a framework used to justify social hierarchies, immigration policies, and notions of national identity throughout American history. Understanding Anglo Saxonism requires an exploration of its intellectual origins, its impact on political rhetoric, and the lasting effects on American society and policy.

The Origins and Intellectual Foundations of Anglo Saxonism in the United States

The term “Anglo-Saxon” originally referred to the Germanic tribes that settled in England after the fall of the Roman Empire. However, by the 19th century, the concept morphed into an ideological construct used in the United States to promote the cultural and racial superiority of people of English descent. Anglo Saxonism in US history became intertwined with emerging ideas of race science, ethnocentrism, and nationalism.

American intellectuals and politicians in the 19th century drew heavily on racial theories that classified human beings into hierarchical groups, with the Anglo-Saxon race placed at the top. This belief was partly fueled by the writings of figures like John Fiske and William Graham Sumner, who argued that Anglo-Saxons embodied traits such as industriousness, moral character, and political freedom that were essential for the progress of civilization. These ideas found fertile ground in a young America grappling with its identity amid waves of immigration and territorial expansion.

Anglo Saxonism and Manifest Destiny

One of the most significant manifestations of Anglo Saxonism in US history is its connection to Manifest Destiny—the 19th-century doctrine that the United States was destined to expand across the North American continent. Proponents of Manifest Destiny often used Anglo-Saxonism to justify territorial conquest and the displacement of Native American peoples, as well as to assert cultural dominance over Mexican territories.

The ideology was not merely about territorial expansion but also about spreading what were perceived as Anglo-Saxon values: democracy, Christianity, and civilization. This rationale masked the underlying racial assumptions that Anglo-Saxons were inherently superior and therefore entitled to dominate other peoples and cultures. The language used by politicians and newspapers of the time often reflected this belief, portraying Anglo-Saxon heritage as a civilizing force.

Impact on Immigration Policies and Racial Attitudes

Anglo Saxonism significantly influenced immigration policies in the United States, particularly during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As the country experienced a surge in immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, many policymakers and social commentators expressed concern that these new arrivals did not share the “Anglo-Saxon” traits deemed necessary for the nation’s success.

This anxiety contributed to the implementation of restrictive immigration laws, such as the Immigration Act of 1924, which set quotas favoring immigrants from Northern and Western Europe while severely limiting those from other regions. The underlying rationale was shaped by racial and cultural biases rooted in Anglo Saxonism, which prioritized the preservation of an Anglo-Saxon-dominated society.

Influence on American Racial Hierarchies and Segregation

Beyond immigration, Anglo Saxonism reinforced existing racial hierarchies within the United States, particularly in relation to African Americans and Indigenous peoples. The belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority was often used to rationalize segregation, disenfranchisement, and discriminatory laws.

For example, the Jim Crow laws that institutionalized racial segregation in the South during the late 19th and early 20th centuries operated within a social context where Anglo-Saxonism was a dominant ideology. It provided a pseudo-intellectual justification for maintaining white supremacy and excluding non-Anglo groups from political and social power.

Anglo Saxonism and Its Legacy in Contemporary America

Although overt references to Anglo Saxonism have diminished in mainstream discourse, its legacy persists in various forms within American culture and politics. The ideology’s emphasis on a particular racial and cultural identity has influenced debates on immigration, multiculturalism, and national identity well into the 21st century.

Contemporary Political Rhetoric and Identity Politics

In recent years, elements reminiscent of Anglo Saxonism have surfaced in political rhetoric emphasizing “traditional” American values and identity. Discussions about border security, immigration reform, and cultural assimilation sometimes evoke underlying themes of preserving a certain heritage aligned with Anglo-Saxon ideals.

Moreover, certain nationalist and populist movements have drawn on the imagery and symbolism associated with Anglo-Saxonism to articulate their visions of America’s future. This connection reveals how deeply embedded such historical ideologies can be, even when repackaged or reframed in modern contexts.

Critiques and Reassessments of Anglo Saxonism

Scholars and activists have increasingly critiqued Anglo Saxonism for its exclusionary and often racist implications. Contemporary historians emphasize the need to understand this ideology as part of a broader narrative of racialization and power dynamics in US history.

Reassessments also focus on highlighting the diverse contributions of various ethnic and cultural groups who have shaped the United States, challenging the notion that Anglo-Saxon heritage is the sole or superior foundation of American identity. This reexamination is crucial for fostering a more inclusive understanding of history and identity.

Key Features and Consequences of Anglo Saxonism in US History

- **Ethnocentric Ideology:** Anglo Saxonism promoted the belief that Anglo-Saxon culture and race were inherently superior and destined to lead.
- **Justification for Expansionism:** It provided ideological support for Manifest Destiny and American imperialism.
- **Influence on Immigration Policy:** It contributed to restrictive immigration laws favoring Northern and Western Europeans.
- **Foundation for Racial Segregation:** It reinforced social hierarchies and discriminatory practices, particularly against African Americans and Indigenous peoples.
- **Enduring Cultural Impact:** Elements of Anglo Saxonism continue to influence debates on national identity and cultural preservation.

Comparative Perspectives

When compared to other racial or cultural ideologies in US history, such as the “Melting Pot” or “Multiculturalism,” Anglo Saxonism stands out for its exclusivity and emphasis on racial hierarchy. While the “Melting Pot” ideal suggested blending diverse cultures into a unified American identity, Anglo Saxonism resisted this plurality by prioritizing a specific ethno-cultural lineage.

In contrast with the later civil rights movements advocating racial equality and inclusion, Anglo Saxonism represented a worldview that actively sought to maintain racial boundaries and dominance. Understanding this contrast is essential for grasping the evolution of American social and political thought.

The complex history of Anglo Saxonism in the United States reveals how deeply entwined ideas of race, culture, and national destiny have shaped the nation’s trajectory. Its influence extends beyond

simple historical curiosity, continuing to inform contemporary discussions about who belongs in America and what it means to be American. As the country navigates its diverse and pluralistic future, grappling with the legacies of Anglo Saxonism remains a necessary part of the conversation.

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14-jähriger Forschungsarbeit vermittelt Markus Osterrieder hier ein umfassendes Verständnis des Ersten Weltkriegs. Es ergeben sich ganz neue Zusammenhänge und Erkenntnisse zur Politik der beteiligten Kriegsmächte, zu ihren Motiven und geheimen Zielen. Ergänzt durch die scharfsichtigen Analysen Rudolf Steiners, zeigen sich die tieferen Ursachen des Ersten Weltkriegs in ihren tragischen und weitreichenden Konsequenzen. Zu Recht gilt der Erste Weltkrieg als Urkatastrophe des 20. Jahrhunderts. In den Folgen der von ihm eingeleiteten Umbrüche lebt die Menschheit noch heute. Rudolf Steiner verglich diese Zäsur mit dem Untergang des Römischen Reiches; er wies darauf hin, dass durch den Krieg eine vollständige Zertrümmerung der menschheitlichen Vorstellungen und aller Kultur erfolgt sei, aber auch etwas ganz Neues seinen Anfang genommen habe. In der internationalen historischen Debatte sind in den letzten Jahren wichtige Neuinterpretationen erfolgt (etwa von Christopher Clark), die zeigen, dass die Verantwortlichkeit für den Ausbruch des Krieges nicht ohne starke Vereinfachungen und Verzerrungen auf ein einziges Land abgewälzt werden kann. Zwei Themenbereiche werden anhand der Haltung Rudolf Steiners besonders erörtert: das ungelöste mitteleuropäische Nationalitätenproblem sowie die Weltordnungsvorstellungen, die z.T. kriegsauslösend waren oder erst während des Weltkriegs heraufzogen: Wie sollte die nächste Zukunft nicht nur der europäischen Menschheit gestaltet werden? In diesem Buch erschließen sich viele Hintergrundmotive der einzelnen Weltmächte, und es entsteht ein detailliertes Gesamtbild dieser dramatischen Zeit des Umbruchs.

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with the full cooperation and approval of Kraus, has thoroughly revised and brought up to date the text of the 1953 edition. The clarity and evenhandedness of Kraus's text has been carefully preserved. The last three chapters add entirely new material, surveying the massive and complex body of American historical writing since World War II: Consensus: American Historical Writing in the 1950s, Conflict: American Historical Writing in the 1960s, and Complexity: American Historical Writing in the 1970s-and Beyond. Michael Kraus, Professor Emeritus at City College of New York, received the Ph.D. from Columbia University and in his long career established himself as one of America's foremost historiographers. Davis D. Joyce is Professor Emeritus of History, East Central University, Ada, Oklahoma, and is the author of HOWARD ZINN: A RADICAL AMERICAN VISION and ALTERNATIVE OKLAHOMA: CONTRARIAN VIEWS OF THE SOONER STATE. He teaches part-time at Rogers State University, Claremore, Oklahoma.

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with the pursuit of justice.

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