

дає реальність та ілюзорність як амбівалентність впливу на присутніх. Зрештою, феноменологія свята реалізує функції свята, які виступають концептами в її феноменології. Оскільки сама феноменологія перетворюється в дослідження та опис перетворення думок у знання, суб'єктивного в об'єктивне, власного (мого) в загальнозначиме, в своєрідний "життєвий світ", котрий пов'язує цілісно всі проекти (естетику, етику, культурологію, філософію повсякденного та політичного життя).

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AMERICAN STUDIES AND CULTURAL PERCEPTION OF THE USA IN BELARUS

Purpose of Article. The purposes of the article are to define features of cultural perception of the USA and analyse general tendencies in the development of American studies in modern Belarus. **Methodology.** The research methodology is based on using descriptive method and the method of system analysis, which allow us to describe and analyse necessary training programs, the contest of materials, publications in mass media, and interviews, conducted by the author. Structural and functional, historical, anthropological, and axiological scientific methods provide a comparison of the American and Belarusian cultural spaces in their integrity. Deduction and induction, abstraction, generalization were also used. **Scientific novelty.** This article is devoted to the cultural perception of the USA and American Studies development in the contemporary Belarus. **Conclusions.** In Belarus, the most part of people knows about the USA too little. Negative and positive cultural perceptions of the USA exist among Belarusian citizens in parallel. After intensive development in 1990-s, American Studies in Belarus have been falling since 2000-s. Nowadays, American Studies are only a part of several predominantly culturalogical, historical and literature university courses. There are no any special courses or training programs on American Studies, neither any statistic nor analyses on the issues. To develop constructive Belarusian-American cultural dialogue it is hence necessary to provide more objective information about the U.S.. New American Studies courses and training modules for universities (including regional) can become the serious step in that direction.

Keywords: American Studies, cultural perception, modern Belarus, USA.

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Американистика и культурное восприятие США в Беларуси

Цель – определение основных особенностей культурного восприятия США и тенденций развития американистики в современной Беларуси. **Методология** исследования базируется на применении описательного метода и метода системного анализа, позволивших описать, систематизировать и проанализировать университетские учебные программы и планы, материалы конкурса об американской культуре, публикации в масс-медиа, интервью, проведенные автором. **Научные методы** (структурно-функциональный, исторический, антропологический и аксиологический) обеспечили сопоставление американского и белорусского культурных пространств в их целостности. Показаны также общенаучные методы дедукции и индукции, абстрагирования, обобщения. Научная новизна. Показаны особенности культурного восприятия США и основные тенденции развития американских исследований в Беларуси на современном этапе. **Выводы.** Знания об Америке значительной части белорусов весьма ограничены и необъективны, что питает негативное культурное восприятие США. Параллельно в белорусском обществе существует и очень позитивный культурный образ Америки. Период интенсивного развития американских исследований в 1990-е годы в Беларуси сменился периодом их спада с 2000-х гг. Сегодня научные знания о США присутствуют в составе нескольких университетских курсов, преимущественно культурологических, исторических и литературных. Какие-либо специальные учебные курсы или программы, как и аналитическая статистика по вопросу американских исследований в Беларуси, отсутствуют. Новые учебные курсы и модули американистической направленности для вузов (в том числе региональных) могут стать серьезным шагом в развитии конструктивного белорусско-американского диалога и включения Беларуси в западный (и шире – мировой) научный и культурный контекст.

Ключевые слова: американистика, культурное восприятие, современная Беларусь, США,

Topicality. As far as we can see from mass-media and from dozens interviews with representatives of different strata of contemporary Belarusian society, conducted and analyzed by the author for last 9 years, the United States in the mass consciousness in Belarus is sometimes perceived negatively, as the country is mistakenly associated with using violent methods to solve international conflicts and promoting only their own economic interests. That perception is supported by reflections on the dangers of establishing a unipolar international system, the destructiveness of globalization, the devastating impact of the primitive mass culture (or subculture) that is allegedly imposed by the West, as well as the envious claim that America prosperity is only achieved because the United States buys foreign brains, thus organizing brain drain from other countries. Such thoughts arise because people lack knowledge about the United States for several reasons. First of all, there are very few scientific and educational books about the USA in the bookstores. Secondly, personal and professional contacts with American colleagues are weak and opportunities to visit the USA are scarce. Finally and the most importantly, there is much anti-American propaganda and the Soviet legacy.

However, since this mass consciousness values material well-being most highly, the economic achievements and potential of the United States make it very attractive, even for those advocates who actively and publicly encourage hostility toward America. Furthermore, people from Belarus who have been able to get permanent residence in the United States do not complain about the American society. The complaints against American lifestyle seem to be based on Soviet traditions and patterns of behaviour associated with the expectation of almost complete authority paternalism [6]. Interestingly, the citizens who live in the Belarusian national cultural context have a positive perception of Western values, including American values [5].

Our goals are to define the features of cultural perception of the USA and analyse general tendencies in American Studies development in contemporary Belarus.

Main part. As it was demonstrated by the nationwide contest "American culture: what does it like?", conducted by the Centre for Intercultural Dialogue in 2011-2012, there are two main stereotypes about American culture in Belarusian society. First of all, American culture is a popular culture or a pseudo-culture or, in the best-case scenario, a street culture. Secondly, America is a melting pot where cultural identity is completely lost and an image of a homogeneous American character is formed. However, people who know more about American cultural life argue that the United States remains a "nation of nations" – a multifaceted, multicultural country, where the issue of unity and disunity has become a central issue of cultural life [3, 11-17].

The participants of the contest argue that the cultural field is the second sphere (and today, perhaps, the first) after the economic one where U.S. leads most obviously. That success is due to the fact that American culture is better adapted to pace, character, temptations and challenges of modern life. Today, people's lives are largely formed under the influence of America. The cult of success and wealth, happiness and daily "happy smiles", television shows and Hollywood movies, fairy tales, fast food, and the fight against obesity—these are the "building blocks" of global mass culture with a clear American origin. Today, the main U.S. export is not manufactured goods, or even green paper with portraits of presidents, but the products of American culture. It is not just movies, music, literature, science, or mass media, but also political, legal and everyday culture that has become common in the United States, but remains an "unattainable-model" for the majority of the world. This futurism, this focus of American culture on the future, or rather, the existence of the threshold between what is possible and what is impossible, is one of the reasons for America's world popularity. Europe, burdened by thousands of years of history and classical heritage is not able to keep up with the young America.

The participants of the contest identified the phenomenon of the American lifestyle (and success) using the following concepts:

- Freedom and Democracy
- Tolerance
- Human Rights, Nation and Culture
- Dignity and Patriotism
- The Combination of Technology, Tradition, and Nature
- Global Approaches
- Diversity, Pluralism, Multi-culturalism
- Lack of Discrimination: Age, Sex, Race
- Personality
- Charity, Kindness
- Democracy, Absence of Arrogance and of the Grounds for Corruption
- Cult of Work, Success, Entrepreneurship
- High Standards of Living
- All is great: Dreams and Ideals, Distance and Area, Apartments, Cars, Amount of Food [4].

In general, the Belarusians envy the American spirit, character, strength and determination. The Americans are seen as a proud nation that has a great sense of dignity, patriotism, and an unusual love of freedom. This freedom-loving idea manifests in everything: in the absence of excessive ceremonies, in democratic manners, in the simplicity of daily life. Americans are a nation that values pragmatism. This concept consists of accuracy, initiatives, the ability to find the most rational solutions, great competence, independence of judgment and decision-making. Americans are characterized by openness of character, vigor, vitality, innocence, spontaneity, humour and, of course, the famous American smile [1]!

American business is based on the principle that only organized freedom and equal opportunities for all the people can push the initiative and enterprise towards progress. It was this premise that President Franklin Roosevelt followed when he had to overcome the Great Depression, when he was elected to office in 1933. His ambitious reform program for the establishment of social justice provided favourable conditions for doing business that included code of "fair competition", and increased the responsibility of the federal government, while also mainstreaming social activism and national solidarity [3]. America found harmony among the individualism, minimalism, and decentralization, prized by Republicans and the collective responsibility and equal opportunities for everyone, which were vitally importance to the Democrats [4].

The Belarusians (or at least the project participants) believe that American success is ensured not only by dedication to globalization, militarism, and the principle of deterrence, but also through the spread of universal norms of rational behaviour to weak countries and at the same time the establishment of norms among strong countries for the regulated and constrained use of power and force.

US studies are important in shaping the cultural image of the United States.

American Studies as a scientific discipline first appeared in Belarus at the beginning of 1990s. There were three Centres, created to conduct researches in the field. The first one was created in the European Humanities University under the supervision of Prof. Y. Stulau. After that two other Centres appeared: one at the Belarusian Pedagogical University named after M. Tank, under the supervision of Prof. T. Kamarouskaya, and one at Hrodna State University, under the supervision of Prof. V. Malyshava.

Little by little, in Belarus American, as well as Belarusian Studies began to decline, and that became more evident in the last several years. The number of different programs, supported by the US Embassy in Belarus began decreasing. As we can see from unpublished university training documents (they are training programs, training plans, educational standards, etc.) as well as from personal communication with university professors today American Studies in Belarus is predominantly limited to history and geography of the USA, both of which are learned under the framework of courses known as "Country Studies" (Minsk State Linguistic University), "American literature" (philological specialties), and "Cultural Studies" (Belarusian State University).

Although studied over a period of 12 classroom hours at all universities offering philology specialties, American literature is generally represented holistically, in the context of American history and social life and its forms and genres. American literature since the Enlightenment (17th-18th centuries), which had a significant influence on the formation of the "American Ideal" is also considered. Students get acquainted with Benjamin Franklin as a satirist and writer, with the Declaration of Independence and the role of Thomas Jefferson, with Thomas Paine's pamphlet "Common Sense", as well as the "Age of Reason", with the flowering of a mass political poetry, such as patriotic ballads, during the era of the Revolutionary War.

Early American Romanticism (1810-1830) illustrates the creativity of Washington Irving as the founder of the American short story, James Fenimore Cooper as the founder of the American historical novel, Edgar Allan Poe as a poet and theorist of poetry, Nathaniel Hawthorne, the founder of the psychological novel, and his moral-psychological direction as evidenced in his novel *The Scarlet Letter*, Herman Melville's philosophical direction and development (novel *Moby Dick*), Ralph Waldo Emerson as the head of the transcendental school, Harriet Beecher Stowe and social issues (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*), as wells as Walt Whitman and his poetic collection *Leaves of Grass*.

Literature invoking the idea of critical realism emerged during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Works emblematic of the Victorian Era and the turn of the century include the novels, essays and stories of Mark Twain, the psychological novels of Henry James and the naturalism of Jack London and Theodore

Dreiser. The 20th century is associated with the works of William Faulkner and playwrights Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, and Tennessee Williams.

The most complete and comprehensive American Studies courses are held at the Faculty of International Relations of the BSU and in the historic faculties of Belarusian universities, in the speciality of "English language" through the discipline "geography", as well as in the speciality of "Cultural Studies" (specialization "American Studies", with an emphasis in American literature). The most classroom hours are devoted to the United States in the course "World History", which is studied in high schools and at historical faculties of universities (all other are limited to the specialty course "History of Belarus"). The history of the United States begins with the subject "History of the Middle Ages in Asia, Africa and America" (34 classroom hours, from 4 to 6 of which are devoted to the process of settlement of the Americas, the Olmec civilization, the Zapotecs and others, the Postclassic Maya civilization and the Aztec state). Within this course the dichotomy "Western man – Eastern man" is regularly emphasized. "Ideology" tends to justify the place of Belarus in the Eurasian Union, even though Belarusians, unlike the Russians, do not have Asian features, a fact that is confirmed by our history and culture.

Modern History (136 lecture hours, 4 semesters) from late 18th through the early 20th century is paid quite a lot of attention. Subjects covered include: the discovery of America, the issue of slavery, the formation of the American nation, the American Revolution, the role of George Washington, Declaration of Independence and its principles, the basic principles of the American Constitution, the abolition of slavery, the Mexican-American War, the American Civil War and Reconstruction, the output of the U.S. economy for the first position in the world, and so.

In my opinion, it would be useful to illustrate American history through reference to the materials of national American museums, especially of the National Museum of American History and the various national museums situated on the National Mall in Washington, DC. These museums clearly exhibit the most significant events in American history, including among other things, the history of the American flag which is not addressed in the course of world history (especially here in Belarus where the current state with the national flag is disputable). It would not hurt to learn about some interesting facts, such as the history of the Statue of Liberty. And most importantly, it would be reasonable to focus students attention on how Americans respect their national heroes, particularly past presidents Washington, Lincoln, and Roosevelt, and Reagan, as well as what it means to be a President in America. Since Lincoln's slogan "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master" is relevant not only for the mid-19th century United States, we must show how it is developing today in U.S. Lincoln studies, a different course of study which is not only scientific, but also educational and enlightening.

The Belarusian university course "History of Modern Times" (152 classroom hours, the third year) examines the period from 1918 until today, both as a stage for strengthening the democratic principles of social development and as a stage for the cruel tyranny of totalitarian regimes. The course is based on examining two opposing political systems (the USA and the USSR), their transformation and finally the collapse of the Soviet model of socialism.

The course rightly reveals the change in the international financial situation and the United States after World War I and the policies of different presidential administrations, such as Wilson, Harding and Coolidge. It also examines how the theory of "American exceptionalism" arose, how the theory of "democratization of capital" was propagated, what factors contributed to worsening economic and social problems, Roosevelt's "New Deal", and so on.

The section "Basic trends of socio-economic and political development of the West in the second half of the 20th – the beginning of 21st centuries" (18 classroom hours) is dedicated to, among other things, the strengthening of the leading position of the U.S., the U.S. policy on the conservation of Western values, the essence of the welfare state, overcoming political discrimination of the African-American population, and the "Cold War".

Generally, in reviews of the history of the U.S., the post second world war events are treated more or less objectively. The policy of each of the presidents is consistently shown in relation to its impact on socio-economic development and foreign policy, including relations between the U.S. and the USSR. These reviews also rightly refer to the normalization and development of these relations in the late 1980s, during the presidency of George H. W. Bush. Beginning from the 1990s, the United States is considered in the context of a unipolar world.

In the 2000s, the 9.11 terrorist attacks on the United States, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the 2008 presidential election, and relations with Russia are mentioned and justified. However, only a few words are dedicated to Americans relationship with the independent Republic of Belarus. For example, little attention is paid to the sharp reduction of the number of American diplomats in Minsk – a decrease from 35 or more to 5 people.

A separate section "Development of science and culture in the second half of the 20th – beginning of the 21st century" is fairly allocated and dedicated to the transformation of science into a direct productive force. Fortunately, the education system in the U.S. is included, because the Bologna Process actually began in America, where in the middle of the 20th century the transition to the two-level system of higher education started. Unfortunately, the culture of the USA is not almost considered and knowledge about American culture is often drawn from thrillers and TV propaganda. However, American culture and education are studied under the framework of the discipline "Country studies" (speciality "English language"), as well as geography, historical features of the formation and development of the United States, the state of the political system and the economy – all this within 12

classroom hours. Only in the course "Actual problems of international relations and foreign policy of the states" (specialization "international relations" with 102 classroom hours or "linguistically country studies" with 34 classroom hours) the development of the dialogue between Belarus and the United States in various fields, including the economic and humanitarian, is mentioned. As part of this course of study the role of the USA in the world economic system and geopolitics and the interaction between the United States and different countries is evaluated. Additionally, America's attitude to global and regional issues, and, above all, to terrorism is clarified.

The course "History of International Relations" (speciality "international relations" with 256 classroom hours, the period of the 2nd half of the eighteenth century – the end of the 20th) addresses the issues insufficiently covered in the course of world history. The course covers such topics as the war of the North American colonies for independence, the state-creating activities of Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton and others, and U.S. relations with other countries. U.S. foreign policy is treated like colonial policy, in the manner of "dollar" and "big stick" diplomacy.

Part of the course, "National and international security" (speciality "International relations", 34 classroom hours), relates to the questions of agreements on nuclear security and disarmament, including the U.S. treaty with the Russian Federation. U.S. national security strategy is also considered.

Within the discipline of "Constitutional Law of Foreign Countries" (speciality "Law", "Politics", "International Law" with 68 classroom hours), two seminars are devoted to the U.S. Constitution, and within the discipline of "Theory and Practice of Intercultural Communication" (specialty "Russian Philology" with 34 classroom hours), affected few words are said about the history of the formation of intercultural communication in the United States.

What is interesting is that there are several World History textbooks by Belarusian authors, but they are only for secondary schools. Almost all the scientific literature on U.S. for universities are Russian editions. As an exception, some materials on U.S. foreign policy by Ales Tsihamirau [2] were published in Minsk.

While not very active, the "Belarusian Association of American Studies" led by prof. Yuri Stulau does operate in Belarus [7]. The necessity of developing American Studies in Belarus motivated the initiation, establishing and running of the Institution "Intercultural Dialogue" (2010) [8] that tries to implement research, educational and public projects, such as the project "Belarusian-American Cultural Dialogue: Strategy of Development" (2011-2012) [1] and others.

Scientific novelty. This article is devoted to the cultural perception of the USA and American Studies development in the contemporary Belarus.

Conclusions. Most people in Belarus know about America too little. Negative and positive cultural perception of the USA exist among Belarusian citizens in parallel. After intensive development in 1990-s, American Studies in Belarus fell sharply since 2000-s. Now American Studies are present only as a part of several predominantly culturological, historical, and literature university courses. There are no any special courses or training programs on American Studies, neither any statistic nor analyses on the issues. To develop constructive Belarusian-American cultural dialogue it is hence necessary to provide information about the U.S. that is more objective. New American Studies courses and training modules for universities (including regional) can become the serious step in that direction.

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