

THE TEACHING OF AMERICAN STUDIES IN BRITISH UNIVERSITIES, ETC.

Mr. Shepperson, the future editor of the Bulletin, wishes to devote part of a forthcoming number to the status of American Government and Politics in our schools and universities. The present editor is therefore passing on to him some contributions on this topic that have been sent to him by members. He apologizes for having put pressure upon them to a needless degree, and assures them that their words will be treasured by Mr. Shepperson.

He also apologizes for a serious oversight in the notes (Bulletin No.3) on American History at Manchester University. The name of Dr. A.M.Potter should have been included, since he -- as lecturer in American Government & Politics -- has for several years played a considerable part in teaching the courses "Introduction to American Studies" and "Outlines of American History".

And from Oxford, Mr. H.G.Nicholas writes:

I should be grateful if you would allow me to supplement and correct at one or two points what "an Oxford correspondent" writes in the December 1956 issue of the Bulletin about American Studies there. The picture he presents is, I think, a somewhat too gloomy one.

The special subject in American History, Slavery and Secession, is second only to The Commonwealth and Protectorate in popularity amongst the wide range of optional subjects which can be offered in the History School. All the required texts for this are available at Rhodes House at least in duplicate, and often in several copies.

The Harnsworth Professor (an annual appointment) is normally a scholar with special interests in this field and almost invariably both lectures and conducts a class on the special subject, apart from any other topics he may wish to lecture on. Despite such recent losses to American History in Oxford as Professor H.C.Allen and the late Giles Alington, there are available some half a dozen College tutors to provide tuition in the subject.

In the wider context of American studies the importance of the Political Institutions paper in P.P.E. (Philosophy, Politics and Economics) should not be overlooked. This is done by all candidates reading the School (an average of 160-200 p.a.) and treats American Institutions as second in importance only to those of the U.K. And although the emphasis falls primarily on the present-day working of American politics, this obviously involves at least an outline knowledge of the origin and development of the Constitution. Lectures in this subject are given regularly, in most terms, by Max Beloff, Norman Hunt or myself and are (for what it is worth) in general well attended. The subject is also studied at an advanced level by all candidates taking the post-graduate B.Phil. in Politics.

Nottingham University was omitted from Bulletin No.3. Dr.A.W. Coats has supplied this information:

Undergraduates currently studying American History fall into two broad categories:

- (a) First and second year students taking one or other of the three alternative options in American Studies, which counts as a subsidiary subject in Part I of the B.A. degree.
- (b) Third year Honours students in the History Department and the Sub-Department of Economic History

taking optional courses in Part II of the B.A. degree.

(a) The American Studies syllabus consists of three alternative combinations of subjects offered in collaboration by members of the Departments of English, Geography, History and Social Science. The alternatives are:

- i. American History, Economic History, and Constitution.
- ii. American Geography, History, and Economic History.
- iii. American Literature, and Economic and Social History.

The History Department provides a weekly lecture on the political history of the U.S.A. delivered in the first year by Professor A.C. Wood, Head of the Department, who covers the period 1783 to 1865, and in the second year by Dr. J.A.S. Grenville, who covers the period 1865 to 1941 with special emphasis on foreign policy. These two courses are also offered to third year honours students in History who have not already taken American Studies as a subsidiary subject.

The Sub-Department of Economic History provides a weekly lecture to first year students, delivered by Dr. A.W. Coats, surveying the growth of the American economy from 1783 to 1940. This course is common to all three streams in the American Studies programme, but in addition special seminars on topics relating to the economic and social background of American literature are provided for those taking option iii. (This option was described by Dr. D.S.R. Welland in the second issue of this Bulletin. It is to be noted that it comprises two separate 'subjects', whereas the others comprise three.)

Historical references inevitably occur in the treatment of American Geography (in option ii, lecturer Dr. J. Fuller) and in American Constitution (in option iii, lecturer Mr. I. Gowan), but in the latter case they arise incidentally, in reviewing the antecedents of current problems in American government, rather than from a systematic review of constitutional development.

The entire American Studies programme is still in the experimental stage. The collaborators recognise that a more systematic co-operation is desirable, possibly leading to the eventual creation of an integrated, inter-disciplinary course. About ten students are sitting the first Part I examination in American Studies this year, and twelve will sit next year. Two three-hour papers are set for each option.

(b) The courses of lectures by Professor Wood and Dr. Grenville are available to third year honours students in the History Department, as is also a course of lectures on the History of the British Empire to 1783, delivered by Dr. O. Woodward, which incorporates American colonial history. On the average about 20 students take one or other of these alternatives. No student can take more than one.

American Economic History since 1865 is available as an option for third year honours students in Economic

History. This is provided by Dr. Coats, and is more specialised and intensive than the first year lectures given in the American Studies programme. Four students are currently taking this option.

There are, at present, no post-graduate students in American History or Economic History.

And at the University College of North Staffordshire, Professor J.W. Blake tells us, the teaching of American history in the Department of History is organized as follows:

American history is featured in greater or less degree in each of three distinct parts of the whole syllabus:

1. The Foundation Year. This course of some three hundred lectures on the content of modern knowledge with special emphasis on the emergence of Western civilisation is designed to introduce students in their first year to the sort of thing that is going on in the universities and the intellectual world as a whole. In this course attention is paid in one or two lectures to the significance of the rise of American civilisation for the world as a whole. Thus, for example, in the third term I myself give a lecture on the rise of the United States in the nineteenth century.
2. Subsidiary History. Students taking our B.A. degree are expected in addition to reading two principal subjects for their degree to study three subsidiary subjects (each of which is studied for one year), provided that one of the five subjects is drawn from each of the three main groups, the Humanities, the Social Sciences, and the Theoretical Sciences. In the subsidiary history course which this department offers (General History since 1856) emphasis is laid on the importance of the rise of North and South American civilisation.
3. Principal History.
 - a. A course on 'General History since 1890' in which we stress the importance of the emergence of American civilisation; and
 - b. the Special Subject (one of five options), which deals not merely with the American War of Independence, but with the much wider subject of the American Revolution. This Special Subject is one which I teach. I used to teach it in the Queen's University of Belfast between 1944 and 1950 and I am trying to teach it in much the same way here.

Perhaps I should add that another course in the syllabus for Principal History (Modern British History, 1782-1939) also stresses British Colonial and Imperial History and thus makes some reference to the colonial period of North American history and to Canadian history.
