Study guide for Gerber, American Immigration
HIST4726, Fall 2017; see syllabus for exam date

We will mostly consider immigration to the United States thematically rather than chronologically. Immigration also involves a wide variety of issues—legal, social, cultural, economic, etc. For these reasons, it is important to get your bearings early in the semester. Larry Gerber’s *American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction* helps you do that. We will deepen our understanding of most of the questions he notes in the book as the semester progresses. Spending time with this now and making sure you have a good grasp of the broad outline of immigration to the United States will make your work for the rest of the semester easier.

You will complete an exam on the book on D2L. In preparation for the exam, you should read this study guide and the book and take notes. We will also spend a full class period on clearing up any confusions and clarifying the issues Gerber discusses. You should read this study guide and the book before that class period.

I also encourage you to write out a timeline for yourself where you note major turning points in immigration law and in the types of immigration into the United States. (Yes, there are lots of timelines on the internet etc., but the act of making one for yourself is what helps you clarify and remember the outline.)

A note on critical reading

Although we are mostly using Gerber’s work to help us orient ourselves in the long history of immigration and legislation related to it, the text is not a mere recounting of facts but also presents a viewpoint. As always, it behooves us to remain alert and critical toward the interpretations offered and choices made in the text. Therefore, please do the following:

• Note places where Gerber clearly advances an interpretation rather than stating simple facts, and consider whether you find the interpretation justified and why.
• Consider whether there are questions Gerber sidesteps or contexts he ignores or downplays.
• Pay attention to stylistic and language choices, as these are often clues to where implicit interpretation is happening. For example, is the language generic or vague in some places, and what questions does that prompt? Can you tell from Gerber’s tone or from his explicit statements what positions he supports regarding immigration policy?

The structure of the exam

The exam will involve multiple choice questions (40 percent), short answer (fill-in-the-blank or one-sentence answer) questions (30 percent) and an essay answer (30 percent).

You will have access to the exam for 24 hours, and once you start, you will have 75 minutes to complete it. Obviously, since it is on D2L, it is an open-book exam. However, don’t assume that you will be able to do well on the exam without studying first.

Below, questions in **boldface and marked with an asterisk (*)** are questions that you should study with a view toward answering an essay question on the topic. The essay questions will not necessarily be phrased the same as the questions below. Also, relevant detail and evidence addressed by other questions should of course be incorporated in your answer.
Reading questions

Introduction

1. Roughly how many Europeans came to the United States during the “century of immigration” from 1820 to 1920? What proportion of European emigration in that period did they represent?

2. * How does the mythology derived from that century of immigration misrepresent the experiences of large groups of immigrants, and whose experiences does it particularly misrepresent?

3. What percentage of European immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were turned back? What was the corresponding percentage for Chinese immigrants?

Part I introduction and Chapter 1: Unregulated immigration and its opponents from Colonial America to the mid-nineteenth century

4. In its first century or so, how would you characterize U.S. immigration law?

5. * Under the Naturalization Act of 1795, who could become a citizen and how?

6. What was the attitude of Americans toward immigrants in the first century of American independence? How did it fluctuate?

7. Was knowledge of English always a requirement for naturalization?

Chapter 2: Regulation and exclusion

8. Where was anti-Chinese agitation centered?

9. What does Gerber cite as evidence for the racist nature of anti-immigrant sentiment directed at the Chinese?

10. * How long was the Chinese Exclusion Act in force and who did it prevent from entering?

11. What was Angel Island?

12. In what ways was racialist thinking central in immigration and naturalization policy? Give at least two examples.

13. * How was women’s citizenship treated differently from men’s?

14. Who favored restricting immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and for what (different) reasons?

15. Who opposed restricting immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and for what (different) reasons? What does Gerber say about business leaders in this context?

16. * How were the national quotas in the 1924 Quota Act calculated and why?

17. How did U.S. immigration law compare to international trends in the late 19th and early 20th century?

Chapter 3: Removing barriers and debating consequences in the mid-twentieth century

18. What did the McCarran-Walter Act (1952) change—and what did it not?

19. What factors led to the reconsideration of the national origins quota system (note several)?

20. Was the Immigration and Nationality Act popular among the general American population? Did it pass easily or only barely?

21. * What major changes did the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 introduce?
22. Why did policymakers not expect the 1965 act to result in substantial changes in immigration?
23. What changes in immigration to the United States resulted from the 1965 Act and why?
24. What, if any, has the impact of the post-1965 immigration been on crime?
25. What context does Gerber highlight in the debate over immigration and unauthorized entry in the 1980s and 1990s? (Can you think of contexts he does not really mention but that might be relevant?)

Part II intro and Chapter 4: Mass population movements and resettlement, 1820–1924

26. * Gerber writes that “attempting to know emigrants by nation alone may actually limit our understandings of them” (68). What does he mean?
27. How were European population trends linked to European emigration and what were those trends rooted in?
28. How did the composition of European immigration change in the late 19th century?
29. How was immigration different on the West Coast than in the East in the late 19th century?

Chapter 5: Mass population movements and resettlement, 1965 to the present

30. To what does Gerber attribute the popularity of the United States as a destination of migrants?
31. How has post-1965 immigration changed the ethnic composition of the U.S. and of specific regions within it?
32. * Are contemporary immigrants socioeconomically different from immigrants in the past? Explain.
33. What changes in gender roles does Gerber identify as accompanying present-day migration?

Part III intro and Chapter 6: The widening mainstream

34. * How does Gerber explain the role of ethnicity, ethnic enclaves, and lobbying related to their “homelands” in immigrant lives? Does he see them as problematic?
35. How does Gerber characterize the (shifting) relationship between immigrants and labor unions?
36. What is Samuel Huntington’s critique of immigration (as recounted by Gerber)?
37. Gerber writes, “There is no cultural essence to be internalized; there is instead a life to be lived and material aspirations to be realized” (124). What does he mean?
38. What critiques does Gerber offer of pessimistic predictions about current immigrants’ unassimilability?

General questions

39. Define the following terms (Gerber mentions all but you may need to use other resources to clarify the definition): nativist, birthright citizenship, Know-Nothing (American) Party, eugenics, Dillingham Commission, Americanization, internment camps, Bracero program, Angel Island, emigration/immigration/migration, eugenics, Ku Klux Klan, potato famine, H1-B visa
40. * How have the volume of immigration and the sources of immigrants changed since the founding of the United States? (Sketch out a graph or chart of these for your use.)
41. * What, according to Gerber, has been the the role of modernization in stimulating emigration?
42. * Gerber writes, “As law structures immigration, it structures the composition of societies. In doing so, it shapes the imaginations of peoples within them in ways that are often not completely admitted to consciousness” (16). What do you think he means?