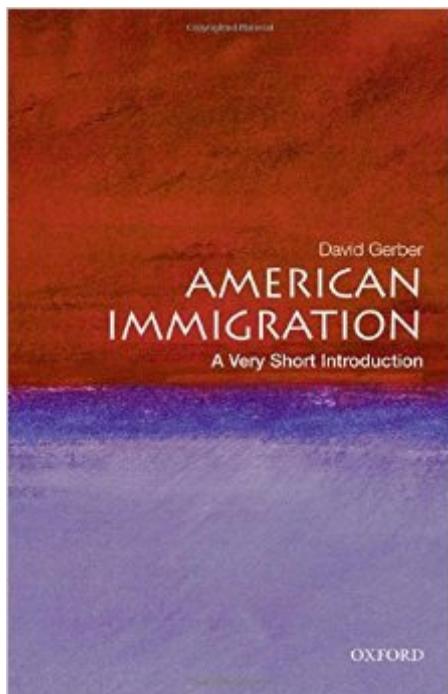


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American Immigration: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

Americans have come from every corner of the globe, and they have been brought together by a variety of historical processes--conquest, colonialism, the slave trade, territorial acquisition, and voluntary immigration. A thoughtful look at immigration, anti-immigration sentiments, and the motivations and experiences of the migrants themselves, this book offers a compact but wide-ranging look at one of America's persistent hot-button issues. Historian David Gerber begins by examining the many legal efforts to curb immigration and to define who is and is not an American, ranging from the Naturalization Law of 1795 (which applied only to "free-born white persons") to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Emergency Quota Act of 1921, and the reform-minded Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which opened the door to millions of newcomers, the vast majority from Asia and Latin America. The book also looks at immigration from the perspective of the migrant--farmers and industrial workers, mechanics and domestics, highly trained professionals and small-business owners--who willingly pulled up stakes for the promise of a better life. Throughout, the book sheds light on the relationships between race and ethnicity in the life of these groups and in the formation of American society, and it stresses the marked continuities across waves of immigration and across different racial and ethnic groups. A fascinating and even-handed historical account, this book puts into perspective the longer history of calls for stronger immigration laws and the on-going debates over the place of immigrants in American society. About the Series: Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I happened on this book by accident, while exploring the term "short introduction" in my local library. This book turned up, one of an Oxford UP series, and having read other in the series that were quite good, I read this. It is exactly what the title says, and it is an excellent review of America's immigration history. There is a likelihood that immigration will become an explosive issue in coming elections, and whatever your position on specific policy proposals, an understanding of the history of the issue is important. Gerber provides an objective history. I think there is a slight pro-immigration bias. My own feeling is that immigrants are our secret weapon for withstanding huge social changes, but that is another story. He breaks the history into three general periods. The first is from colonial times to the mid-1800s, when immigration was unregulated. The second is "Religion and Exclusion," roughly mid 1800s to 1924, and the third, 1965 to the present. You will note an era between 1924 and 1965, which saw highly regulated immigration, as an outcome of the second general period Gerber discusses. This may sound like a dry sort of approach, but the book also, and to me most interestingly it looks at how immigrants saw themselves and also anti-immigration sentiment, both over time. The writing is excellent, the data reliable. The book provides context and information and is essential background to understand the issues. Whether this book provides you with information, or you choose some other source, read about it.

This exceptional primer on American Immigration provides a nuanced, balanced, and insightful chronicle of how immigrants have entered, adapted to, and often contributed to American society. Written by a British expert in immigration and labor policies, this 146-page overview focuses on illuminating statistics, revealing stories, and a wide range of expert opinions. Avoiding dogma and prejudice, the book documents the many positive aspects of immigration while acknowledging the negative aspects of illegal immigration for many working class American citizens. Unfortunately, the rational ethos behind this book has been sadly absent from too many current political debates over immigration debates in 2016 where extreme voices have dominated. Hint: technology, history, geography, and globalization make immigration reform a crucial issue. We must find compromises that balance humanistic values, economic aspirations, and national needs. If I could cajole our political leaders to read one book on the history and significance of American immigration, I would

choose this thin masterpiece of clarity, focus, and perspective. It's an exceptional title in the often outstanding OUP Very Short Introduction series. Read it!

This is a great, short intro to the basic facts of immigration in America. Most people have already taken sides on how they feel policy should be decided, but this only gives you historical background and context. It's a good primer for people who are looking for a broad, objective overview.

If you wish to have an excellent perspective from which to view the current immigration debate, this is the book for you. Well balanced, informative and to the point.

An excellent and insightful short history of American immigration law, policy, and experience "on the ground." Well done! Clearly written and sophisticated!

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