Contents

Chapter 1:	: Essential USA	(
-	America and the USA	(
	The geography of the United States	9
	The population of the United States	15
	The American identity	18
Chapter 2:	The Constitution of the United States of America	2 1
	Historical background to American democratic tradition	21
	Basic aims of the Constitution	24
	Changes to the Constitution	26
	The significance of the Constitution for Americans	28
Chapter 3:	Political System	30
	The system of government	31
	The legislative branch (Congress)	32
	The executive branch (The President)	34
	The judicial branch (Supreme Court)	37
	Relationship between national and state government	39
	The political parties	40
	Presidential elections	4 3
	Characteristics and trends in US politics	45
Chapter 4:	The American Dream	48
-	The early settlers' vision of America	48
	Secularization and politicization of the American dream	50
	The American dream and the frontier spirit	51
	Mobility and progress in the American dream	52
	The flexible American dream	53
	Dream and reality: the American dream today	55
Chapter 5:	Immigration and Integration	58
-	Immigration	58
	Assimilation in theory and practice	66
	Cultural pluralism	68



Chapter 6:	Ethnic Groups	72
	White Americans	72
	American Indians and Alaska Natives	74
	Blacks or African Americans	78
	Asian and Pacific Islanders	84
	Hispanics or Latinos	88
Chapter 7:	Social Structure	94
	Social class	94
	Characteristics and trends in the social structure	96
	Social policy and the welfare state	102
Chapter 8:	The Economy	106
	Historical influences on the United States' economy	106
	Agriculture	110
	The United States' rise to leading industrial nation	
	of the world	112
	The post-industrial economy	116
Chapter 9:	Education	121
	The role of public education in the United States	121
	The school system – an overview	121
	School issues today	124
	System of higher education	128
	Issues in higher education	130
Chapter 10:	Religion	135
	Religious tradition	135
	Religion today	139
Chapter 11:	Mass Media	146
·	The press	146
	Radio and television	149
	Mass media in the digital age	152
Chapter 12:	The USA's International Role	156
	The USA's historical global orientation	156
	International relations after 1945	158
	New orientation in a post-Cold War world	161