

Douglas K. Stevenson **American Life
and
Institutions**

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Preface

American Life and Institutions is an up-to-date introduction to the United States of America and her people. At an intermediate to advanced level of language difficulty, it provides an integrative view of American society, history, economics, politics, media, and culture. Written with a predominantly European readership in mind, it challenges established ideas of what America is, documents current trends, and attempts to place in context the often fragmented information about the U.S. found in many textbooks and conveyed through the media.

The volume is suitable, therefore, both as a classroom reader and as a reference work providing foundation for further study. The detailed index allows readers to locate information quickly, and less familiar terms are explained in the alphabetical vocabulary. The questions for

discussion focus attention on important aspects of American life and institutions, and stimulate comparative, intercultural perspectives. The first chapter is an essential introduction. Each of the other nine is a self-contained unit, presenting one complete aspect of American society. These nine chapters need not be read in order.

To distill the complex and rapidly changing nature of America and American life into a balanced survey is a daunting task. This is especially so as "what America is" is a question that has been continually argued for over two hundred years. The greatest appreciation is therefore given to those colleagues, American and European, and especially to Hartmut K. Selke, who lent their patient support, insights into things American, and critical intelligence.

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