

American culture

This brief orients you to the civic and everyday culture of the United States. European American backgrounds have their own brief. Minnesota culture is next. This is not a civics course.

History and place

Origins and the Founding of a People

Indigenous nations first. Any American origin story that starts with a ship and no land is already a politics. The United States is a settler state on Native land, a republic that wrote equality into a document while holding people as property, and a nation of immigrants who arrived under rules that kept changing.

Colonial and founding

Colonial British North America is not the only colonial story — Spanish, French, Dutch, and Russian claims also sit on this map. The Revolution (1776) and the Constitution (1787) created a civic religion of documents: rights, law, amendments, courts.

Slavery was not a Southern footnote. It was a labor system, a legal regime, and a wealth engine. The Civil War and Reconstruction are founding events as much as 1776. Jim Crow, the Chinese Exclusion Act, the 1924 immigration quotas, the 1965 Hart-Celler Act, and the ongoing fight over who belongs are later chapters of the same origin.

Many origins, one civic frame

Crèvecoeur asked “What is an American?” in 1782 and answered with a melting story that erased Indigenous nations and enslaved Africans. That story still operates as common sense. Takaki’s later mirror is the correction: many origins, one civic frame, a racial hierarchy that was built on purpose.

What people brought: languages, churches, foodways, legal ideas, capital, and labor. What they met: a state that demanded English in public, a market, a racial order, and a promise that the self could be remade. History is literacy for the meeting. It is not a speech you give the family.

The civic creed

The civic creed is a set of propositions: that persons have rights; that government is legitimate by consent; that law is written; that the self may be remade. Those propositions were never evenly applied.

Hold the creed and the record in one hand. Drop the creed and you get cynicism that cannot work a public program. Drop the record and you get a room that treats everyone the same and cannot see who the form was built for.

Labor, empire, frontier

Colonial labor was Indigenous, African, European indenture, and later free European. The nineteenth century added a continental empire (Mexico 1848; the Plains wars; Hawai’i; the Philippines). American

culture includes that expansion as “frontier” in its own hymns — Turner’s thesis — and as dispossession in Native and Mexican memory. Both are American history. Only one has usually been the school hymn.

The twentieth century and after

The twentieth century made a mass consumer culture, a standing military, a federal administrative state (New Deal, Great Society), and a civil-rights reconstruction that is unfinished. The twenty-first opened with war, financial crisis, and a demographic shift in which the unmarked majority is no longer the future of every county. Date the Census. A future demographic is not a threat story and not a comfort story.

1619 and 1776 are both American origins. You do not have to pick a slogan. You do have to know why a household might not experience a public form as a document of freedom.

Geography

The United States is not one region.

Regions

New England civic and Yankee residue. The South — Black Belt, Appalachia, Gulf, Texas as its own scale. The Midwest — industrial cities and farm counties; Minnesota sits here and is not Ohio. The West — aridity, public land, Pacific ports. Borderlands with Mexico. Alaska and Hawai’i as states with different Indigenous and colonial facts. Puerto Rico and other territories are American legal facts that the fifty-star map hides.

Internal difference

Internal difference is culture: honor and evangelical density in much of the South; Lutheran-civic and conflict-avoidance in much of the Upper Midwest; informality and boom-bust in parts of the West. A national average that calls America “low-context” is not a Texan and a Minnesotan.

Name the region. A national form is not locally native. Open Minnesota culture for this state’s hymn. Rural as place is a different brief. The eleven nations have geographies that are not states.

Cities and suburbs

Cities and suburbs wrote a later American culture: commuting, malls, then logistics sprawl; Black urban neighborhoods shaped by Great Migration and by highway and redline; immigrant inner-ring suburbs as the new gateway. The unmarked professional often lives in a suburb and thinks of it as no place. It is a place.

Climate and territories

Disaster and climate are geography now: flood, fire, heat. Mobility hymns meet people who cannot move a grandmother. Human services will meet that collision as a case.

Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Islands — American legal geography that the continental hymn forgets. If a household’s kin are there, this is not foreignness.

Migration and Foundational Events

American culture is a culture of movement — forced and chosen.

Forced and chosen

Removal of Native nations. The Middle Passage and the domestic slave trade. European immigration in waves (colonial; 1840s–50s Irish and German; 1880–1924 southern and eastern European; post-1965 global). Chinese labor and exclusion. The Great Migration of African Americans (about six million, 1916–1970, National Archives). Bracero and later Latino labor. Refugee acts after war. Internal moves toward jobs, sun, and housing.

The mobility story

The cultural story is: you can leave and start over. That story is real for some and a cruelty for others. Dakota exile after 1862 is not “mobility.” Hmong resettlement after a Secret War is not “the immigrant bargain.” Open the people page.

Civic events

Foundational civic events you cannot skip: Revolution; Constitution; 1861–65; 1865–77 Reconstruction; 19th Amendment; 1924 and 1965 immigration regimes; 1964 Civil Rights Act; 1965 Voting Rights Act; 1990 ADA. Not “in the past.”

After 1965

Post-1965 immigration remade metropolitan America. Minnesota’s Somali, Hmong, Karen, Liberian, and Latino plant-town stories are American migration stories with specific wars and labor markets. They do not make those peoples “the same as Ellis Island.” The hymn that says we are all immigrants skips 1862, slavery, and a Secret War when it is used that way.

Undocumented status is American structure, not a culture. Collect the status the work requires, not more. Fear of the lobby is an access fact. Open Latino, Mexican, and other people pages.

Civil Rights Memory

The civic memory is a fight: 1776’s promise, 1863, 1865–77, 1954 Brown, 1964, 1965, ADA 1990, and the record that did not close. King named the Dream as a promissory note. That is American culture — not a minority add-on.

The record

A DHS badge is not automatically help. A training does not cancel the record. Civil rights statutes did not close the record for a Native household. Floyd is not closed for a Black household. This chapter does not replace Somali.

Amendments, courts, and statutes are this culture’s way of changing itself. Other cultures change through other means. You still follow the statute in front of you.

Contested memory

Memory is contested: 1619 vs 1776 as slogans; Confederate monuments; school boards; whose street name. The job in the lobby is not to win a culture war. It is to know that the form sits inside a country that

has not agreed on its story, and that some households have bodies and kin in the part of the story the hymn skips.

King, 1963: the note was a promise to pay. Douglass, 1852: what to the slave is the Fourth of July. Those are American texts. They belong on this page so that “American culture” cannot mean a comfortable majority memory.

Culture and everyday life

People, place, and perspective

This brief orients you to the civic and everyday culture of the United States. European American backgrounds have their own brief. Minnesota culture is next. This is not a civics course.

Who this is

American culture is the civic and national grammar people in this country live inside to different degrees: English as the public language; the individual as the unit of law, medicine, and the form; time as a commodity; identical process as the fairness story; rights language; mobility as a virtue; work as identity; race as a founding structure that is not the whole of the culture and is not optional history.

African Americans are American. Jazz, the Constitution’s unfinished business, Black churches, and the English spoken in this country are American. This page does not swallow the African American brief. Somali Minnesotans live inside this grammar on Tuesday and remain Somali. The eleven nations predate the United States. They meet this grammar in a county building. That meeting is not everyone’s immigration story.

A community portrait of Americans is not one socioeconomic slice and not one race. Scientists, clerks, farmers, soldiers, artists, nurses, truckers, attorneys, plant workers, and people on waivers are Americans. People of color are not visitors in someone else’s nation. Dominant culture does not get to delimit who counts as American.

Who this is not

This is not the European American brief. It is not Minnesota culture. It is not a substitute for Somali, Hmong, African American, or the eleven nations.

All people have culture. In this department, and in much of the United States, people who sit in the unmarked majority still say they do not. That is how a form becomes “just how we do things,” how a clock becomes morality, how first-middle-last becomes nature, and how a household that does not fit is called non-compliant.

How to read this

Read it as an orientation. Regional, racial, religious, and class variation is the point. Always defer to the person in front of you. A full mosaic is not a stereotype. A stereotype is when this page becomes the person in the lobby.

If you are studying your own culture, start here, then Minnesota culture, then the streams you actually come from — German, Norwegian, African American, Somali, Ojibwe. If you are studying other cultures,

stay with this page too. Other cultures in the United States are in conversation with this grammar every Tuesday. You will misread them if you think only they have culture.

The facts that follow are meant to help you meet people well — how family is named, what a greeting carries, what a form may land on. History is here so the meeting is clearer, not so you deliver a lecture.

Family

The unmarked American household on a form is nuclear: two adults, their minor children, one address, one last name. Elders often live elsewhere. Adult children move for work. Privacy of the couple is a virtue. “Just the parents” is already a design choice.

Who is in the household

That form never described everyone. Extended kin, othermothers, mixed-status households, multi-generational immigrant homes, and Native kinship systems have always been here. The culture’s fairness story still writes the nuclear unit into waivers, taxes, and who may speak at a meeting.

Ask who should be in the room. Marriage as a love-choice (not a family alliance) is a strong American script, later than people think, and still not universal. Divorce is common and morally loaded depending on church and class. Children are often the project of the household — education, sport, “opportunity.”

A scientist, a factory worker, and a grandparent raising grandchildren are the same American family landscape. Community portrait means all of that. “Broken family” is what the English form says when the household is not nuclear.

Childhood

American unmarked childhood is age-graded, school-centered, and often activity-saturated (sport, lessons). Children as decision-makers (“what do you want?”) can shock households where elders decide. Reverse: a child who translates for a parent is a gate and a burden this culture still uses.

Aging

Nursing homes and “independence” as love. Contrast cultures where elder care in the home is the test of a child. Neither is the only moral. The form still assumes the first.

Love and sex

Companionate marriage, dating as a market, later marriage, non-marriage. LGBTQ families are American families. They are not a sidebar to a nuclear hymn.

Minnesota — open the next brief

This page is the national water. It is not enough for a desk in St. Paul.

The next brief

Minnesota culture is the drill-down: Minnesota Nice as the civic hymn; this land and the eleven nations; German-Norwegian unmarked plus everyone who is Minnesota; metro and Greater Minnesota; progressive self-image next to racial gaps that are among the widest in the country. Rural is place. European American is named streams. Those three are not this chapter.

Open Minnesota culture next. Then the household's people page. A land acknowledgment without the Minnesota brief and without the Office of Indian Policy is still a speech.

Heart of the Culture

The heart of unmarked American culture is the individual — a self that is supposed to be free, self-made, equal before the law, and responsible for its own outcome. “I don’t have a culture; I’m just me” is that heart speaking. It feels like nature. It is culture.

Hymns of the self

Related hymns: the American Dream (mobility as moral); progress (the future will be better); equality as sameness (treat everyone the same); freedom as choice (consumer, career, belief); sincerity (be yourself). Bellah’s Habits of the Heart named expressive and utilitarian individualism as the common language. Tocqueville already saw the restlessness.

This heart is why a majority-white American institution defaults to common humanity as the whole story: common humanity is real and is used to skip deep difference. It is why a unit can say “we don’t see color” and mean virtue. It is why a clock and a form feel like professionalism rather than a German-Yankee-bureaucratic inheritance.

Du Bois wrote that the American Negro wished to be both Negro and American without bleaching either. The unmarked American often wishes to be only American, with no hyphen and no culture. That wish is the problem this brief exists to name — not to mock, not to cancel belonging.

People are not asked to leave one self at the lobby. That is this heart dressed as a dress code.

A good life, as Americans talk it

Habits of the Heart (Bellah and colleagues, 1985) remains useful because it named how Americans talk when they talk about a good life: freedom, fairness, success, and love, almost always as individual projects. Communities, traditions, and biblical or republican languages still exist, but they are often translated back into “what works for me.” A public program has to speak both: the individual who has a case number, and the household that actually lives.

The Dream as sorting machine

The American Dream is a hymn of mobility. It is also a sorting machine. When it works, people tell origin stories of parents who sacrificed. When it fails, this culture reaches for character explanations — effort, choices, “personal responsibility” — faster than for structure. Equity work in a human-services department is constantly arguing with that reflex. Naming the reflex as culture, not as truth, is the job of this page.

Sincerity

Be yourself, speak from the heart, authenticity as virtue. That hymn clashes with cultures that prize face, role, and appropriate speech by age and gender. It also clashes with code-switching, which African American intelligence already named as fatigue. Unmarked Americans often do not notice they code-switch toward “professional.” They call it being adult.

Core Concepts

These concepts recur. They express differently by region, class, race, religion, and generation. They are hypotheses about the unmarked grammar — not a script for the person in front of you.

The individual as the unit

Law, medicine, school, and the form address one person. Family and clan are “private.” The work is seeing when the unit is actually a household.

Sameness as fairness

Identical process is this culture’s justice story. Targeted channels look like favoritism from inside this concept. Universal goal, targeted channel is the equity correction — it is not intuitive here.

Monochronic time

The appointment is a moral fact. Late is character. CPT as a joke in Black social life, and elastic time in other communities, hit this concept as disrespect. Keep medical and legal time. The two grammars are not the same.

Doing over being

Work, achievement, busyness as virtue. “What do you do?” is a greeting. Rest can look like failure. Disability and unemployment hit this concept as a moral problem unless you interrupt it.

Low-context ideal

Say what you mean. Put it in writing. Email as the real meeting. High-context speech from another culture is read as evasion. Minnesota Nice complicates this — reserved, indirect no — open that page.

Rights and legalism

Problems become claims, forms, and due process. The Constitution as civic scripture. A form is a legal object. Relationship-first cultures hit a wall of paper.

Privacy and personal space

The body, the salary, the family fight, the diagnosis — not for the lobby. Hair touching, standing close, asking clan — offenses here that are not offenses everywhere.

Merit and self-reliance

Pulling yourself up. Help as last resort. “I don’t want charity.” Public programs are morally noisy in this concept even when people use them.

English as the public language

Other languages are private, festive, or a problem to be solved with an interpreter line. CLAS exists because this concept closes doors.

Race as structure

Not the whole culture. Not optional. Whiteness as unmarked; Blackness as hyper-visible; Native nations as mascot or past; immigrants as probationary. A training does not cancel this.

Informality

First names, smiles, “just call me.” Titles in other cultures are read as stiffness. Reverse: first-name speed can be disrespect.

Volunteerism and associations

Tocqueville’s America of groups. Boards, churches, PTAs, nonprofits. Engagement in this culture often means a meeting and a 501(c)(3). Nations and mosques are not that object by default.

Optimism and future

The past is prologue; the next quarter is real. Historical trauma as a present tense is hard for this concept to hold.

You work with these. You do not perform a flag. Minnesota Nice is a regional intensification of several of these — conflict-avoidance, sameness, reserved warmth — not a replacement. Open that brief.

Conflict

Unmarked American professional culture prefers disagreement without raised voice, and a close with action items. Some American regions (and some American peoples) are more agonistic — argument as engagement. Minnesota Nice is the Upper Midwest intensification: the no that sounds like a yes, the meeting that ends in smiles and no decision. Open Minnesota culture. Conflict-avoidance is not the whole nation.

Money

Talk of salary is often rude; talk of hustle is not. Debt is common and morally noisy. Public benefits sit in a shame field this culture built. A worker who uses SNAP and a worker who does not may share the same hymn and still police each other. Shame does not belong in the lobby.

Gender

The unmarked script moved from male-breadwinner to two-earner and still loads care on women. Title IX, #MeToo, and backlash are current. Ask who cares for the child. The mother is not automatically the case.

Disability

ADA (1990) is American civic culture at its legal best — a rights frame. Olmstead is living law. The culture still moralizes independence. A waiver is not a character test.

Generations

Youth as the future; elders as optional. Contrast every people page in this program where elders speak first. The American form often cannot see the grandmother as the household.

Religion and Civil Religion

American culture is religiously plural and still marked by Protestant residue: conscience, work, the sermon as public speech, suspicion of too much ritual, the idea that belief is a choice.

Pluralism

Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Native traditional, and other lives are American. The unaffiliated share is large and growing, especially among the young — Pew orders of magnitude, date the vintage you cite.

Civil religion

Civil religion — Bellah — is the civic sacred: founding documents, flags, national funerals, “God bless America,” Super Bowl as liturgy. It is not a denomination. It can bless a public form.

Church and state are separated in law and tangled in practice. Clergy are the case plan when this family asked. Open the religion track in this program. A mosque, a Black church, a Lutheran parish, and a lodge are not one chapter.

Belief as choice

The First Amendment is a cultural fact: you may change churches, leave, or never go. That voluntarism is not how religion works in every people this program studies. A Somali Muslim or a Dakota traditional household may not treat belief as a preference like a gym.

Prosperity gospel, megachurches, Black churches, Catholic parishes, mosques, gurdwaras, temples, and storefronts are all American religious geography. The “nones” still do funerals and weddings in religious rooms. Date Pew when you cite a percentage.

Greetings

Handshake (firm, brief) in many rooms. Smile. First name faster than in much of the world. “How are you?” as a greeting not a question — the expected answer is fine. “Have a good one” as close. Eye contact as honesty.

Titles

Titles (Mr./Mrs./Dr.) still matter with elders, in the South, in Black American rooms, and in many immigrant households. The unmarked professional American room dropped them. First-name speed is not the standard for every household.

This room

A handshake is not required. A Somali or Hmong greeting is not flavor for this page. Follow this room. The Black nod is not this page — it is African American intelligence sitting inside America.

Naming

First, middle, last. One surname passed down or taken at marriage. The database was built for Mary Ann Jones.

What the form misses

Patronymics, three-part Somali names, Hmong clan names, Spanish two surnames, Native enrollment names, and no-last-name households hit this system as error.

Ask how to say it. A last name is not something you invent. A joke about a name is a closed door. The form that only fits Mary Jones is a gate built inside this culture. That sentence belongs on every people page because the gate is American.

Dates and Calendar

The civic year: New Year's Day; MLK Day (January, federal); Presidents' Day; Memorial Day; Juneteenth (federal since 2021); July 4; Labor Day; Indigenous Peoples' Day / Columbus Day (contested); Veterans Day; Thanksgiving (civic harvest myth on Native land — literacy, not a speech at the table unless you are asked); Christmas as both religious and civic close of the year.

Other calendars

Work and school run this calendar. Ramadan, Lunar New Year, Eid, Hmong New Year, and Dakota/Anishinaabe seasons have to fit it. That fitting is a gate. A calendar click is literacy. It is not engagement. Open the people page for the calendar this family actually keeps.

Etiquette

On time as moral for appointments, courts, and clinics. Queue. Personal space. Tipping in service as a moralized custom. "Please" and "thank you" as the grease. Don't make a scene — a national preference, louder as Minnesota Nice.

Hospitality

Hospitality is real and often lighter than in many of the communities this program studies: a drink, not a feast; a short visit. Accepting a plate in another culture is not this culture's default.

Keep medical and legal time. A household whose time grammar is different is not a character test. A home is not a photograph for color.

Food

Fast, portable, sweet, portion-large; also every immigrant table. The unmarked American meal is not a feast of obligation. Refusing food in another household can offend; in this culture refusing is often polite. Learn which room you are in.

Alcohol

Legal, commercial, morally split (temperance residue vs. happy hour). A toast is not assumed. A dry household is still American.

Communication

The ideal is: say what you mean, in English, in writing if it matters. Small talk (weather, weekend, sport) opens. Disagreement is supposed to be about the issue, not the person — and is still avoided in Minnesota Nice.

The real meeting

Email and the portal are the real meeting. Phone tag is failure. Silence is often read as assent or as a problem. High-context no's are missed.

AAVE is a systematic variety of American English. It is not broken English in a lobby or a case note. Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Ojibwe, and Dakota in Minnesota are not “failure to assimilate”; they are the country’s actual linguistic life. Book what they ask for.

Directness from another culture is not rudeness. Indirectness is not consent. Ask whether they agree.

Humor

Humor is a lubricant and a weapon. Sarcasm, irony, and roasting sit next to “just kidding.” In-group humor copied by an outsider lands as insult. Black verbal art is not this page; it lives in African American intelligence and is still American.

Feedback

“I have some feedback” is a ritual. The compliment sandwich. The documented conversation. Other cultures hear that ritual as fake or as a prelude to exclusion. Be plain without being cruel. Write what you would read aloud.

Meetings

Agenda, parking lot, next steps. People who need relationship first experience this as cold. People inside this culture experience relationship-first as delay. Knowing which meeting you are in is the work — not forcing one American template on a nation-to-nation consult or a mosque partnership.

LGBTQ

Legal change (Lawrence, Obergefell, state variation) and backlash both live here. Named variation by region, church, race, and generation. Use the name and pronouns. Outing someone to family is not “American culture” and not anyone else’s culture.

Other pages

This is not the African American LGBTQ chapter and not Two-Spirit. Open those pages. The people-page rule is the workplace rule.

Hair and Dress

“Professional” hair and dress in American institutions were built on Euro-American unmarked rules: short hair or controlled hair for men; straightened or “neat” hair for women; suits; uncovered heads. CROWN Acts exist because those rules harmed Black hair. Hijab and ribbon skirts hit the same unmarked.

In the room

Hair is not a professionalism test. Hair is not for touching. A lab coat, a uniform, a ribbon skirt, and a hijab can all be American on a Tuesday.

Music

American music is one of the country's actual gifts: spirituals, blues, jazz, country, rock and roll, hip-hop, pop as export. Much of the global soundtrack is African American invention inside American industry. A playlist is not engagement.

Not one soundtrack

Country is not “real America” with hip-hop as other. A symphony is not more cultured than a drum. Prince is Minnesota and American. Open people pages for the rest.

Sports

Football, basketball, and baseball as civic liturgy. Title IX and women's sport. Friday night in some towns. Fandom as identity. Over-representation of Black athletes in some sports is not a personality and not the only excellence.

Not the only excellence

The kid may not play. Sport is not the ladder story for children of color. A scientist and a linebacker can be siblings.

Literature

Founding documents as civic literature. Canon (Emerson, Whitman, Dickinson, Hemingway) and counter-canon (Douglass, Hurston, Baldwin, Morrison, Erdrich, Anzaldúa). This is not a people without letters.

Who was left out

You do not need to quote in the lobby. Literacy includes who was left out. Population of a group is not culture size — that rule applies to this page too: American letters are not only the majority's.

Art

Hollywood as industrial art. Museums. Design. Vernacular (quilts, signage, yards).

Guest

Guest. Pay. A festival is not consultation. A design is not a logo for the unit.

Diaspora and Adjacent

This page is the grammar inside the United States. Americans abroad are not the object.

Adjacent doors

European American streams, African American, the eleven nations, Somali, Hmong, rural place, and Minnesota culture are adjacent doors — not synonyms.

This is not one diversity module. “American” is not a mash that makes the people pages optional. Open the next brief.

Services, opportunity, and participation

Education

Public school is a civic religion: the common school, the pledge, the sports Friday, the idea that education is the ladder. College is a class story and a mass expectation that is not equally funded. Standardized tests as merit. English-only as default.

Other schools

This is also the country of HBCUs, tribal colleges, Catholic schools, yeshivas, and Saturday language schools. The unmarked story hides them.

A parent who needs a language is not illiterate. An English-only IEP is this culture's gate. A degree is not the only intelligence. Scientists and people without diplomas are both this portrait.

School as assimilation

The school as assimilation machine is an American project: English, punctuality, the pledge, the hidden curriculum of raising your hand. It produced literacy and produced harm — boarding schools for Native children are American education history. Open the eleven nations. That history is not only on the tribal page as if the school system were innocent.

Tracking, discipline gaps, and who is gifted are structure. A scientist from a people of color is not an exception that proves the hymn. Community portrait: teachers, professors, trades, and people the school failed — all American.

Other Considerations

Class is American culture: Edina is not the Iron Range is not a Delta county. Region is culture. Race is structure. Gender and disability sit inside the individual-as-unit and often lose.

Not one American

Gun culture, sport culture, and military culture are civic in large parts of the country. They are not the whole. A coastal professional is not the only American.

Unvarnished: this culture's fairness story has coexisted with slavery, exclusion, redlining, and mass incarceration. Naming that is literacy. Using it to skip a household is another closed door. Using it to say "everyone has culture so outcomes are even" is the same.

Follow law. Still see a person. Do not out anyone.

Media

A common national culture was once three networks; it is now fragmented feeds. People in the same building do not share a news hymn. Political disagreement in the country and disagreement about culture in a meeting are not the same object. A department has to work when staff and households do not share facts.

Conspiracy and anti-government strain are American, from the beginning. A DHS badge can activate that strain. It can also activate histories of real harm. Listen before you lecture.

Health

The unmarked American health culture is biomedical: diagnosis, specialist, pill, procedure, individual patient, insurance card. Mind and body split. Mental health as a growing but still stigmatized field. “Take care of yourself” as a moral.

Insurance and disparity

Insurance tied to employment is structure, not a personality. Date disparities on the people pages — Black maternal mortality, American Indian outcomes, uninsured Latino patterns. A national rate invented here to sound complete does not belong.

Believe reported pain for everyone. The unmarked clinic is this culture’s clinic: English, clock, one patient, family in the waiting room. Ask who should be in the room.

Population health

Opioids, alcohol, and methamphetamine are American population health, including in Greater Minnesota. Date local. Addiction is not a racial type. “Personal responsibility” is not the first sentence.

Maternal health, disability, and aging are where the individual-as-unit fails hardest. Ask who is actually providing care. Olmstead still applies.

Business and Work

Work as identity. Career as a story. At-will employment in most states. The meeting, the email, the performance review. Hustle as virtue. Weekend as earned.

Who works here

Staff are not unpaid culture tutors. Identity is not a staffing plan. A financial analyst, a scientist, a plant worker, and a county case manager are the portrait — including people of color in all of those seats.

Time at work is this culture’s time. A plant shift, a farm season, and a Ramadan fast have to fit it. That fitting is a gate.

More than one economy

Corporations and small business both sit in the hymn. At-will, at-shift, gig. Unions are American too — Iron Range, plants, public sector. A coastal startup is not the economy.

Human services work is American public culture: the administrative state meeting a household. The form is a cultural object. If you cannot see that, you will call every mismatch a client problem.

Healthcare Encounters

Appointment, copay, consent, HIPAA, one patient. Family may wait outside. Ask who should be in the room. Believe pain. Book the language they ask for. Gender match if they want it.

Help-seeking

Mandated reporting still exists. Help-seeking that becomes a child-welfare petition is a pattern some communities already know. That fact is not a speech about “American medicine.”

Statistics

U.S. Census Bureau: date the vintage. 2020 Census: about 331 million residents. Race and Hispanic origin are administrative categories — they are not culture. Non-Hispanic White remains the largest single category and is no longer the unmarked future of every county. Hispanic/Latino origin is an ethnicity in Census terms; people still live it as culture. Black, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Two or More Races are the other federal race boxes. Date any percentage you put in a report. This page is not a “white culture share.”

Minnesota objects

Minnesota Compass cultural-community profiles are Minnesota objects. They belong on people pages. This umbrella does not replace them.

A rate is not the person.

Date the vintage

Date 2020 Census and later ACS when you write a number into a report. About 331 million in 2020. Hispanic origin ~19% (ethnicity, any race). Black alone ~13–14% depending on vintage and “alone or in combination.” Asian the fastest-growing large category in many metros. American Indian and Alaska Native counts jump when “in combination” is used — Compass Minnesota Native American ~162,216 (ACS 2019–2023) is a Minnesota object, not this page.

Foreign-born share nationally is on the order of 14% in recent ACS vintages — date it. Minnesota’s foreign-born share is lower than some coastal states and still remade whole neighborhoods and plant towns. Language other than English at home: on the order of one in five nationally; Minnesota State Demographic Center cited 11.7% of Minnesotans age 5+ in 2018. Date it. CLAS exists because that 11.7% is not a rounding error at the desk.

Resources

This program: Minnesota culture next; then European American streams; eleven nations; African American; CLAS communities; rural as place; religion track.

Public doors

Census; founding documents; National Archives; Pew on religion; people-page organizations.

Learn on your own time. A colleague is not an unpaid American-culture tutor. Open Minnesota culture.

Read with this page

Read with this page, not instead of it: Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (selected); Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*; Takaki, *A Different Mirror*; Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (American and Negro); King, “I Have a Dream” and “Letter from Birmingham Jail”; the 1964 Civil Rights Act as a text; Pew Religious

Landscape (date the wave). These are literacy, not a shrine.

Then stop reading and open Minnesota culture. Then a people page. Then Tuesday.

Connections to human services

Workplace culture and service delivery are both candidates.

The packet was built inside this culture. Hour caps, exception processes, and “treat everyone the same” are not culturally empty. If the family cannot run the exception in English, the cap is the policy. Name who the packet was built for.

This is a starting point for intercultural development — personal and professional — not an IDI score and not the only assessment. Completing this brief is not Adaptation.

Open Minnesota culture next. Then the household’s people page. If you skip those because you “understand America now,” this failed.

Continue the connection

- **Equity Analysis Toolkit** — program page </learn/equity-toolkit>
- **Community engagement and connections** — program page </learn/community-connections>
- **Learning and resources** — program page </learn>