

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A SHORT HISTORY

Albert Desbiens

Translated by Julie McPhail

Albert Desbiens taught American history for more than thirty years at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), and this concise, accessible and always readable history of the U.S.A. is a synthesis of his years of research and teaching.

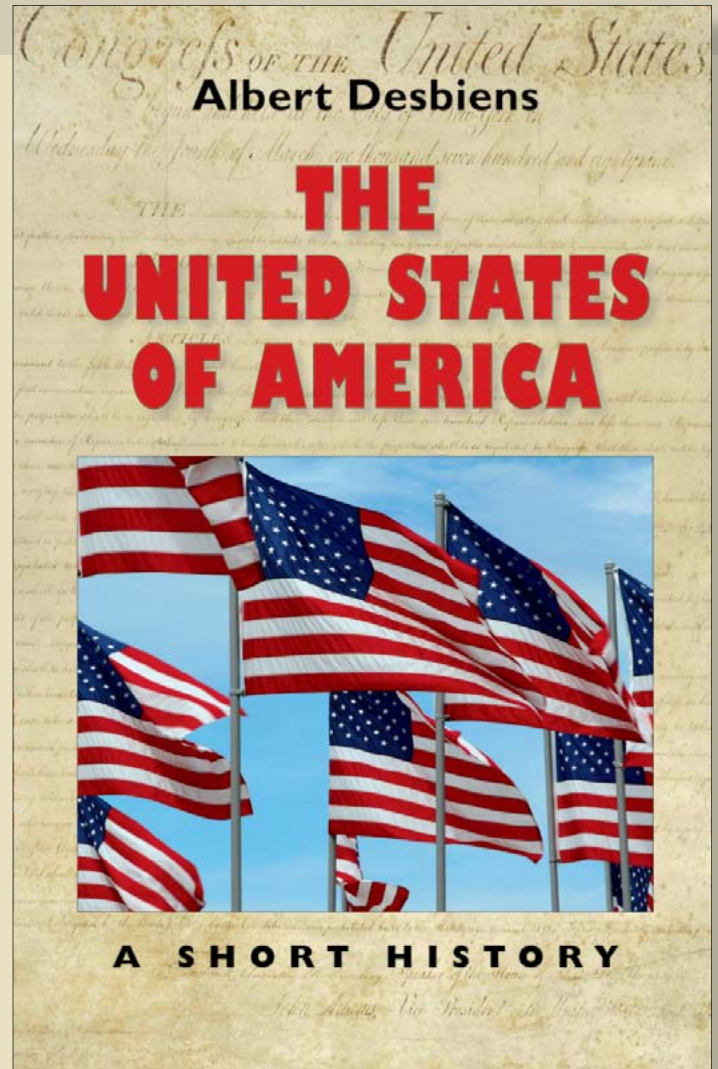
Desbiens covers the sweep of American history from the pre-colonial encounters of European explorers and native peoples and the competition among European powers for empire and enterprise, to the George W. Bush presidency and the war in Iraq. He recounts the establishment of the early British colonies, the beginnings of slavery, relations with the native peoples, and the development of a distinct American society. He describes the changing relations with England that eventually led to the Revolutionary War. The new republic was based on a constitution and declarations of individual rights that were revolutionary at the time and became a model for democratic movements everywhere. Following the break with England came the relentless expansion, through conquest and purchase, of American territory across the continent, and subsequent waves of immigrants to populate it.

The Civil War, over slavery and other societal differences that had widened the gap between south and north, was the test of fire of the young republic and, in lives lost and economic destruction, the most costly war in its history. The author charts the enormous economic expansion of the United States through the later 19th and 20th centuries, with successive booms and busts, as well as its increasing interest in projecting its power overseas, whether to expand and protect its economic interests or to counter the imperial ambitions of the European powers.

Desbiens recounts the ever-growing power of the U.S.A. in world affairs through the two world wars. Even as America championed human rights in the Cold War with the Soviet Union and the communist bloc, profound questions about the form of its own society led to the civil rights movement and internal dissension over the war in Vietnam. The narrative comes up to the present, with the trauma of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Albert Desbiens' history of the United States will appeal to general readers who desire a history written from a sympathetic but non-American perspective, as well as to students.

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Albert Desbiens is retired as an associate professor of history at UQAM (Université du Québec à Montréal). He taught American history for more than thirty years and continues active in American studies.



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