

# AMERICAN CULTURE HISTORY AND SOCIETY

- Lecturer:** Univ.-Prof. Dr. Stefan L. Brandt
- Contact:** [stefan.brandt@uni-graz.at](mailto:stefan.brandt@uni-graz.at)
- Course number:** ENM.01512UB
- Time and place:** Fri, 1 :30 – 3 :00 p.m. / **UniMeet:** <https://unimeet.uni-graz.at/b/bra-lq7-ltv-cbe>
- Office Hours:** Thur, 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. (<https://moodle.uni-graz.at/course/view.php?id=24980>)
- Course tutor:** Moritz Prettenhofer ([moritz.prettenhofer@uni-graz.at](mailto:moritz.prettenhofer@uni-graz.at))
- Course description:** This survey course will explore the major cultural developments, themes, and trends in American history spanning over the last five centuries. Through an in-depth analysis of key topics, including Puritanism, the American Dream, Slavery, Urbanization, and the Western Frontier, we will investigate the underlying cultural, social, and economic forces that have shaped American identity and society. Throughout the course, we will critically examine the concept of American exceptionalism and its implications in contemporary society. By the end of the course, students will have gained a deeper understanding of American cultural history and the diverse factors that have contributed to its development. We will also explore the enduring appeal of myths and fantasies rooted in American culture, and the ways in which these narratives shape our perceptions of the United States.
- Methods:** Interactive presentations of important timelines and themes in US history and society.

## ASSESSMENT:

- Requirements:** Reading assignments on a weekly basis (all texts are on Moodle).
- Final Exam:** Computer-based, with single-choice questions & multiple-choice questions & image riddles.
- Exam dates:** **June 30, 2023** (Fri) / **Oct. 6, 2023** (Fri) / **Jan. 26, 2024** (Fri)
- Important note:** **Alternatives to the scheduled exam dates are not possible!**

## SYLLABUS

- 17 March**     **The Cultural Beginnings – Native Americans, Puritans, Religion / 1490s – 1770s**  
Basic text (obligatory):  
Joyce Appleby et al., “Colonizing America,” from *The American Vision* (2005).  
Additional text (recommended):  
Perry Miller, from *Errand into the Wilderness* (1956), 1-15.<sup>1</sup>
- 24 March**     **Early US History – The American Revolution and National Self-Formation / 1770s – 1820s**  
Main text (obligatory):  
“The American Revolution,” from *World History: Patterns of Interaction* (2006).  
Additional text (recommended):  
Thomas Jefferson, “The Declaration of Independence” (1776).

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<sup>1</sup> All texts for this course are available on Moodle: <http://moodle.uni-graz.at/construct/index.php>.

- 31 March    The American Dream – US Capitalism and the Protestant Work Ethic / 1770s – Today**  
 Main texts (obligatory):  
     "The American Dream Then and Now" (2006).  
 Additional text (recommended):  
     Max Weber, from *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905).
- 21 April        The 'Melting Pot' – America in the Age of Mass Immigration / 1820s – Today**  
 Main text (obligatory):  
     Joyce Appleby et al., "Urban America" / "Immigration," from *The American Vision* (2005).  
 Additional text (recommended):  
     Axel R. Schäfer, "American Immigration" (2006).
- 28 April        Slavery, the 'Old South,' and the Civil War / 1600s – 1860s**  
 Main text (obligatory):  
     Joyce Appleby et al., "The Crisis of Union," from *The American Vision* (2005).  
 Additional texts (recommended):  
     Howard Temperley, "Slavery and Secession" (2006).  
     Edward Ranson and A. Hook, "The Old South," from *Introduction to American Studies* (1989).
- 5 May        The West – Expansionism, Manifest Destiny, and the American Frontier / 1820s – 1890s**  
 Main text (obligatory):  
     Joyce Appleby et al., "Manifest Destiny," from *The American Vision* (2005).  
 Additional texts (recommended):  
     Joyce Appleby et al., "Settling the West," from *The American Vision* (2005).  
     Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1893).
- 12 May    Urbanity and Civilization – From the 'City upon a Hill' to Postmetropolis / 1830s – Today**  
 Main text (obligatory):  
     Joyce Appleby et al., "Urban America," from *The American Vision* (2005).  
 Additional texts (recommended):  
     James Donald, "City," from *New Keywords* (2005).  
     Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean, "The American City" (2006 [1997]).
- 26 May        Imperialism and Ideology – From the Monroe Doctrine to the War on Terror / 1820s – Today**  
 Main texts (obligatory):  
     J. Appleby et al., "Imperialism and Progressivism," from *The American Vision* (2005).  
     Joyce Appleby et al., "The Cold War Begins," from *The American Vision* (2005).  
 Additional text (recommended):  
     Brian Holden Reid, "America and War" (2006).
- 2 June        Domesticity, Sexuality, and Consumer Culture / 19<sup>th</sup> Century – Today**  
 Main text (obligatory):  
     J. Appleby et al., "Postwar America," from *The American Vision* (2005).  
 Additional texts (recommended):  
     Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity" (1998).  
     Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean, "Gender and Sexuality" (2006 [1997]).

**9 June**

**Progress and Technology – From the Industrial Era to the Atomic Age / 1820s – Today**

Main text (obligatory):

Joyce Appleby et al., "Industrialization,"  
from *The American Vision* (2005).

Additional text (recommended):

J. Robert Oppenheimer, "The Atomic Age" (1945).

**16 June US American Civil Rights Movements / 19<sup>th</sup> Century – Today**

Main texts (obligatory):

Joyce Appleby et al., "The Civil Rights Movement" and  
"The Politics of Protest," from *The American Vision* (2005).

Additional text (recommended):

Martin Luther King, "I Have a Dream" (1963).

**23 June Into the New Millennium – US Politics, Protest Movements, and Elections in the Postmodern Era / 1980s – Today**

Main text (obligatory):

Joyce Appleby et al., "Into a New Century,"  
from *The American Vision* (2005).

Additional texts (recommended):

Richard Crockatt, "America at the  
Millennium" (2006).

Barack Obama, second inauguration speech  
(Jan. 21, 2013).

**30 June Final Exam**

Location: Schuhmeister Room, Merangasse 70 (WALL), between 1:00  
and 5:00 p.m.

Exact time: You will receive an email regarding your 1-hour slot.

Note: In addition to the required and additional texts listed in this syllabus, you can find further useful texts for research on the subject of American Culture and Cultural Studies on the Moodle course site.