

AMERICAN CULTURE HISTORY AND SOCIETY

Lecturer: Univ.-Prof. Dr. Stefan L. Brandt

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Course number: ENM.01512UB

Room and Time: HS 07.02 (Vorklinik), Fri., 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm

First session: 15 October 2021

Course description: This survey course will deal with key developments, timelines and topics in American cultural history over the past 500 years. Aspects to be discussed include Puritanism, the 'American Dream,' the Melting Pot, Slavery, Urbanity, and the 'West.' We will take a closer look at the specifics of what is commonly called 'American exceptionalism' and address questions such as: What makes America unique? In how far is American society indebted to influences from other nations and cultures? How can we explain the enduring fascination with myths and fantasies grounded in America?

Methods: Interactive presentations of important timelines and themes in American history and society.

ASSESSMENT:

Weekly reading assignments (all texts are available on the Moodle course site).

Final Exam (computer-based). The exam may encompass single-choice & multiple-choice questions as well as gap texts and image riddles.

Dates: You can choose from three exam dates (one of them being January 28). The follow-up exams will take place on March 4 and June 24.

Important note: Alternatives to the scheduled exam dates are not possible!



SYLLABUS

15 October 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), 1-15.¹

22 October Early U.S. 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).

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

- 29 October The American Dream – U.S. Capitalism and the Protestant Work Ethic / 1770s – Today**
 Main texts (obligatory):
 “The American Dream Then and Now” (2006).
 Additional text (recommended):
 Max Weber, “The Spirit of Capitalism,” from *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905).
- 5 November The ‘Melting Pot’ – America in the Age of Mass Immigration / 1820s – Today**
 Main text (obligatory):
 Joyce Appleby et al., “Urban America” (section on “Immigration”), from: *The American Vision* (2005).
 Additional text (recommended):
 Axel R. Schäfer, “American Immigration” (2006).
- 12 November 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 Andrew Hook, “The Old South,” from *Introduction to American Studies* (1989).
- 19 November 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):
 Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean, “The West and the South” (2006 [1997]).
 Joyce Appleby et al., “Settling the West,” from: *The American Vision* (2005).
 Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893).
- 26 November Urbanity and Civilization – From the ‘City upon a Hill’ to the Postmetropolis / 1830s – Today**
 Main text (obligatory):
 Joyce Appleby et al., “Urban America” (section on “Urbanization” et al.), 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]).
- 3 December 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).
- 10 December Domesticity, Sexuality, and Consumer Culture / 19th Century – Today**
 Main text (obligatory):
 J. Appleby et al., “Postwar America (esp. ch. on “Popular Culture”), from: *The American Vision* (2005).
 Additional texts (recommended):
 Amy Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity” (1998).
 Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean, “Gender and Sexuality” (2006 [1997]).
- 17 December 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” (Nov. 22, 1945).
- 14 January U.S. American Civil Rights Movements / 19th Century – Today**
 Main texts (obligatory):
 Joyce Appleby et al., “The Civil Rights Movement,” from: *The American Vision* (2005).
 Joyce Appleby et al., “The Politics of Protest,” from: *The American Vision* (2005).
 Additional text (recommended):
 Martin Luther King, “I Have a Dream” (1963).

21 January Into the New Millennium – U.S. 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).

28 January Final Exam

Location: Schuhmeister Room, Merangasse 70 (WALL), between 2:30 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.