Lecturer: Univ.-Prof. Dr. Stefan L. Brandt
Contact: stefan.brandt@uni-graz.at
Course number: 512.320
Room and Time: HS 06.02 (Vorklinik), Fri., 13:30-15:00
First session: March 11, 2016

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: Reading assignments; final exam.

SYLLABUS

11 March The Cultural Beginnings – Native Americans, Puritans, Religion / 1490s – 1770s
Basic text (obligatory):
Additional text (recommended):
Perry Miller, from Errand into the Wilderness (1956), 1-15.

18 March Early U.S. History – The American Revolution and National Self-Formation / 1770s – 1820s
Main text (obligatory):
Additional texts (recommended):

15 April The American Dream and the Protestant Work Ethic / 1770s – Today
Main text (obligatory):
Additional text (recommended):

22 April ‘The Melting Pot’: America in the Age of Mass Immigration / 1820s – Today
Main text (obligatory):
Additional text (recommended):

29 April Slavery, the ‘Old South,’ and the Civil War / 1600s – 1860s
Main text (obligatory):
Additional texts (recommended):

6 May The West – Expansionism, Manifest Destiny, and the American Frontier / 1820s – 1890s
Main texts (obligatory):

Additional texts (recommended):
Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893).

13 May   Urbanity and Civilization – From the ‘City upon a Hill’ to the Postmetropolis / 1830s – Today
Main text (obligatory):
Additional texts (recommended):

20 May   Imperialism and Ideology – From the Monroe Doctrine to the War on Terror / 1820s – Today
Main texts (obligatory):
Additional text (recommended):

3 June   No class!
Join the International Conference “In-Between: Liminal Spaces in Canadian Literature and Culture”

Read at HOME!

Progress and Technology – From the Industrial Era to the Atomic Age / 19th Century – Today (PPT)
Main text (obligatory):
Additional text (recommended):

10 June   Domesticity, Sexuality, and Consumer Culture / 19th Century – Today
Main text (obligatory):
Additional texts (recommended):

17 June   U.S. American Civil Rights Movements / 19th Century – Today
Main text (obligatory):
Additional text (recommended):
Martin Luther King, “I Have a Dream” (1963).

24 June   Postmodernity – Into the New Millennium / 1960s – Today
Main text (obligatory):
Additional texts (recommended):
Barack Obama, second inauguration speech, Jan. 21, 2013.

1 July    Final Exam