

God's Country

Colonial Encounters between Puritans and Indians

Course number: 512.250

Room and time: Seminar Room (Attemsgasse 25, Top Floor), Friday, 1:30-3:00 p.m.

First session: March 13, 2015

Lecturer: Univ.-Prof. Dr. Stefan Brandt · **Office Hours:** Thursdays, 4-6 p.m. (Room DG-0036) · **Email:** stefan.brandt@uni-graz.at

Description: This class examines **early cultural encounters** between European pioneers and 'Indians' on American soil. In a typical account from the 17th century, the 'New World' figured as an '**uncivilized territory**' inhabited by 'heathen tribes.' Such reports were instrumental in endowing the settlers with a firm sense of religious and cultural identity. The self-image of puritan America as a **God-fearing country** was marked by a number of myths and legends that helped shape social and cultural practice in the colonies ('Virgin land,' 'God's chosen people,' etc.). In what way did this **clash of world views and spiritual backgrounds** between natives and settlers influence the rhetorical as well as the political shaping of colonial life? How did Europeans respond to the New World in words and images? We will discuss a number of **foundational texts** of colonial America, especially **sermons, jeremiads, and spiritual autobiographies** as well as documents crafted by Native Americans. Texts will include John Smith's writings on early colonial life (including the infamous Pocahontas episode), Jean de Brébeuf's missionary accounts in New France as well as Mary Rowlandson's tales of her captivity. We will also look at a few films, such as *Black Robe* and *New World*.

Teaching and Learning Method: This is an interactive course. Participation in group discussions as well as contributions to the discussion forum on the Moodle course site will be part of the final grade. Each meeting will be held by 'experts' who organize the session by means of questions, games, illustrations, video clips, and group work. The most relevant facts will be conveyed in a short information block (or, alternatively, a fact file on a handout).

Materials: All relevant texts will be made available on **Moodle**.

Aims: A more profound understanding and knowledge of the impact of America's Puritan past on the literary and cultural practice of 20th- and 21st-century U.S. society.

Assessment: Regular *attendance (no more than 2 absences!)*; active in-class *participation*; presentation as part of an *expert session* plus 3-page handout and online questions; *regular entries in the discussion forum*; 2-page *research proposal* and *final paper* of 10-12 pages.

Deadline for Final Papers: Friday, July 3, 2015 in class. There is no (!) extension of this deadline.

Syllabus

- 13 March** **Introduction: Puritan-Indian Encounters and the Making of 'America'**
Basic texts:
Charles M. Segal & David C. Stineback, "For the Sake of Our Religion." In: *Puritans, Indians, and Manifest Destiny* (1977), pp. 25-39.
Perry Miller, from *Errand into the Wilderness* (1956), pp. 1-15.
Sacvan Bercovitch, "Puritanism and the Self." In: *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (1975), pp. 1-34.
- 20 March** **Pocahontas – The Construction of a (Trans-)Cultural Myth**
Main text (required):
Captain John Smith, from *The Generall Historie of Virginia* (1624), pp. 1-9.
Main film (recommended):
Pocahontas (prod. by Walt Disney Company, 1995).
Additional texts (optional):
Robert S. Tilton, "John Gadsby Chapman's Baptism of Pocahontas." From *Pocahontas* (1994), pp. 93-144.
Kiyomi Kutsuzawa, "Disney's Pocahontas." In: *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 6.4 (2000), pp. 39-65.
Keywords: "Baptism of Pocahontas" (painting); Conversion to Christianity; Indian Princess; Noble Savage.
- 27 March** **Mythologies of Early Encounters between European Pioneers and American Indians**
Film Screening:
The New World (dir. Terrence Malick, 2005).
Additional text (optional):
E. Repphun, "Look Out Through My Eyes: The Enchantments of Terrence Malick."
In: <http://scholarship.usyd.edu.au/journals/index.php/SSR/article/viewFile/711/703>.
Keywords: Aesthetics of Wilderness; Cinematic Representations of Pocahontas; Mythology.



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- 24 April** **“Man Being a Mortall God” – Narratives of a “Divine Empire” on the Soil of the Plantations**
 Main text (required):
 Samuel Purchas, from *A Discourse on Virginia* (1625), pp. 22-33.
 Additional text (optional):
 A. Carden, “The Biblical Basis of the Puritan Way.” In: *Puritan Christianity in America* (1990), pp. 33-46.
 Keywords: Calvinism; Chosen People; Colonialism; Divine Providence; God’s Country; Heathens; Predestination.
- 8 May** **Evangelizing the Heathens – Christianity as a Beacon against ‘Barbarism’**
 Main text (required):
 Jean de Brébeuf, “On the Conversion, Baptism, and Happy Death of Some Hurons” (1636). pp. 1-13.
 Additional text (optional):
 “Attempts to Puritanize the Heathen.” In: *The Puritan Tradition in America, 1620-1730* (1972), pp. 261-271.
 Keywords: Christian Mission; Civilization vs. Wilderness; Conversion; Dichotomy; Heathens; “Other”; White Supremacy.
- 15 May** **The Colonial Community as a “City upon a Hill” – John Winthrop and the ‘Covenant with God’**
 Main text (required):
 Governor John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity.” Sermon held aboard the *Arbella* (1630), pp. 1-9.
 Additional text (optional):
 Michael Warner, “New English Sodom.” *American Literature* 64.1 (March 1992), pp. 19-47.
 Keywords: American Exceptionalism; ‘City upon a Hill’; Community; Conformism; Covenant with God.
- 22 May** **Sermons of a Christian Utopia – John Cotton’s “True Holy Commonwealth”**
 Main text (required):
 John Cotton, from: *God’s Promise to His Plantations* (1630), pp. 58-77.
 Additional text (optional):
 E. Elliott, “The Dream of a Christian Utopia.” *The Cambridge History of American Literature* (1994), pp. 183-204.
 Keywords: Community; ‘Holy Commonwealth’; Plantation Imagery; Salvation.
- 29 May** **Regeneration through Violence – John Underhill’s Account of the Pequot War (1636-37)**
 Main text (required):
 John Underhill, “Newes from America: A New and Experimental Discoverie of New England” (1638), pp. 49-86.
 Additional text (optional):
 R.D. Karr, “Why Should You Be So Furious? The Violence of the Pequot War.” *The Journal of American History* (December 1998), pp. 876-909.
 Keywords: ‘Indian Wars’; Massachusetts Bay Colony; Mystic Massacre; Pequot War.
-  **Deadline Research Proposal TODAY, May 29!**
- 12 June** **The Birth of the American Jeremiad – Michael Wigglesworth and the Community in Crisis**
 Main text (required):
 Michael Wigglesworth, “God’s Controversy with New England” (1662), pp. 229-236.
 Additional text (optional):
 Sacvan Bercovitch, “The American Jeremiad” (1978), pp. 80-88.
 Keywords: Calvinism; Damnation vs. Salvation; Jeremiad; Punishment.
- 19 June** **The Revival of Piety – Mary Rowlandson’s Spiritual Autobiography**
 Main text (required):
 Mary Rowlandson, “A Narrative of Captivity and Restoration” (1682), pp. 1-19.
 Additional texts (optional):
 Kathryn Zabelle, “Introduction to Women’s Indian Captivity Narratives” (1998).
 Alden T. Vaughan & E.W. Clark, “Cups of Common Calamity: Puritan Captivity Narratives as Literature and History.” In: *Puritans among the Indians* (1981), pp. 1-28.
 Keywords: Captivity Narratives; Frontier; Intercultural Contact; “Other”; Redemption; Trial of Faith.
- 26 June** **Indian Captivity as an Instrument of the Dominant Rhetoric – Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia Christi Americana***
 Main text (required):
 Cotton Mather, “New Assaults from the Indians” & “The Condition of the Captives” (1702), pp. 135-144.
 Additional text (optional):
 Cotton Mather, “A Narrative of Hannah Dustan’s Notable Deliverance from Captivity” (1697), pp. 161-164.
 Keywords: Mass Hysteria; Mythology; Salem Witchcraft Trials; Scapegoating.
- 3 July** **Conversions to the Christian Religion – The Native American Perspective**
 Main text (required):
 Samson Occom (Mohegan), from: *A Short Narrative of My Life* (1768), pp. 1-7.
 Additional text (optional):
 Samson Occom, “A Sermon Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul, an Indian” (1772), pp. 1-17.
 Keywords: Assimilation; Christianization; Conversion; Praying Towns.

 **FINAL PAPER DUE**