

American Revolutionary Literature

Cultural Identity and Literary Imagination in the United States from 1768 to 1800

Lecturer: PD Dr. Stefan L. Brandt, Guest Professor

Basic information: Proseminar, 2 SWS, ECTS-Studium, ECTS-Credits: 7; application at KOS.

Place and time: AR-B 2002 - Tuesdays, 12-14.

First session: April 1, 2008.

Modules: LCMS-BA-M3.1 (Literatur- und kulturgeschichtlicher Überblick) ab 2; AmL-3 (Epochen und übergreifende Traditionsstränge) ab 2; ENG-GHR-1.2 (Gattungspoetik und Gattungsgeschichte) ab 2; ENG-GYM-2.2 (Text im Kontext) ab 2; Sek I & II-B4 (Amerikanische Literatur) ab 2; ENG-BK-M1.3 (Text im Kontext) ab 2.


Maximum number of participants: 50

Short description: This seminar is meant as an introductory course to one of the most crucial stages in American history – the Revolutionary Years. Looking at a wide range of fictional as well as non-fictional texts produced in the period from 1768 to 1800, we will discuss the historical and aesthetic preconditions under which ›American identity‹ developed as a distinctive force in cultural practice. What role did pamphlets such as Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* play in this discourse? How is the emergence of the novel as a new literary form (epitomized by Charles Brockden Brown) linked to the revolutionary impulse of the democratic community? Special emphasis will be put on the literary techniques of self-fashioning in this era which helped bring about the idea of a unique American consciousness. Other sections of the seminar will deal with the notion of heterogeneity cultivated in women's literature (Susanna Haswell Rowson) and African American literature (Olaudah Equiano). Examining recent scholarly work on the American Revolution, we will also ask about the relevance of this group of literary texts for a modern understanding of the nation. In addition, we will watch a movie – *The Patriot* (2000) – to find our way into this fascinating period. Please note that this is not a lecture course. You will be expected to be prepared for each session and participate actively in discussions and expert groups.

Credit requirements:

For 5 or 7 credit points: regular attendance, lively participation in class discussions, and at least 9 entries in the discussion forum before the session (1/3), an oral presentation as part of an expert group (1/3), and a final paper (8-10 pp. / 13-15 pp.) (1/3). For 2 credit points: attendance, participation in class discussions, and 8 entries in the discussion forum before the session (50%), oral presentation as part of an expert group (50%).





Deadline for Final Papers: Thursday, July 31, 2008. Note: There is no (!) extension of this deadline.

Syllabus

- 01. Apr. Introduction: Patriot Voices**
»The Liberty Song« (1768) & »Alphabet« (1775) (online).
- 08. Apr. Early Revolutionary Poetry**
Philip Freneau, »A Poem, On the Rising Glory of America« (1772), 1-11 (online).
- 15. Apr. The Declaration of Independence**
Thomas Jefferson, »The Declaration of Independence« (1776), 1-5 (online).
- 22. Apr. The Cultural Background: The Crisis of Authority in the Revolutionary Age**
Emory Elliott, »The Crisis of Authority in the Revolutionary Age« (1982), 19-54 (online).
Background text: Cathy N. Davidson, from *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (1986), 3-37 (online).
- 29. Apr. African American Poetry**
Phillis Wheatley, »On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield« (1770), 14-15, »To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth, His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for North-America, &c.« (1773), 31-32, »To His Excellency, George Washington« (1776), 1-2 (online).
- 06. May Revolutionary Pamphlets**
Thomas Paine, from *Common Sense* (1776), »Introduction«, 1-2, »Thoughts on the Present State of American Affairs«, 20-34 (online).
- 13. May Pentecost Holiday (Pfingsten)**
Relax and enjoy!
- 20. May The Epistolary Genre**
J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), »Advertisement«, 1-2, »Letter III: What Is an American?« 40-60 (online).
- 27. May Proclamations**
James Madison [Publius], »Federalist Paper No. 10« (1788/89), 1-4 (online).
- 03. June The Novel of Emancipation**
Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative* (1789), ch. I & II, 15-41, ch V, 69-83, ch. VII, 98-109 (online).
- 10. June The American Drama**
Royall Tyler, *The Contrast* (1790), »Prologue«, 8-9, Act I & II, 10-38, Act V, 66-80 (online).
- 17. June The Seduction Novel**
Susanna Haswell Rowson, *Charlotte Temple, A Tale of Truth* (1791/94), preface, 3-4, ch. I, 4-6, ch. VI-VII, 19-25, ch. IX, 27-30, ch. XII, 34-37, ch. XIV, 40-43 (online).
- 24. June The City Novel I (Hope, Disease, and Corruption)**
Charles Brockden Brown, *Arthur Mervyn. Or, Memoirs of the Year 1793*, Book 1 (1799), preface, 2-3, ch. I & II, 4-29, ch. V-VII, 54-83, ch. XXIII, 259-271 (online).
- 01. July The City Novel II (Back to Country Life)**
Charles Brockden Brown, *Arthur Mervyn. Or, Memoirs of the Year 1793*, Book 2 (1800) (online), ch. XXIV-XXV, 272-296, ch. XXXIX, 443-465, ch. XLVIII, 551-566.
- 08. July The American Revolution on Film**
The Patriot (dir. Mel Gibson, 2000) *

* This film is available on DVD. It can be checked out over night at our Sekretariat (Room AR-H 213).