

AMERICAN CULTURE

HISTORY AND SOCIETY

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

Contact: stefan.brandt@uni-graz.at

Course number: 512.321

Room and Time: HS 06.02 (Vorklinik), Fri., 13:30-15:00

First session: October 16, 2015

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

- 16 October** **The Cultural Beginnings – Native Americans, Puritans, Religion / 1490s – 1770s**
Additional texts (recommended):
Joyce Appleby et al., "Colonizing America," from: *The American Vision* (2005).
Perry Miller, from *Errand into the Wilderness* (1956), 1-15.
- 23 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 texts (recommended):
Thomas Jefferson, "The Declaration of Independence" (1776).
J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, "What Is an American?" from *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782).
- 30 October** **The American Dream and the Protestant Work Ethic / 1770s – Today**
Main text (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).
- 06 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" & passim), from: *The American Vision* (2005).
Additional text (recommended):
Axel R. Schäfer, "American Immigration" (2006).
- 13 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).
- 20 November** **The West – Expansionism, Manifest Destiny, and the American Frontier / 1820s – 1890s**
Main texts (obligatory):
Joyce Appleby et al., "Manifest Destiny," from: *The American Vision* (2005).
Diagram "Westward Movement" (2001) & painting *American Progress* by John Gast (1872).



Additional texts (recommended):

Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean, "Approaches to Regionalism – 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).

27 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" & passim), 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]).

04 December Imperialism and Ideology – Becoming a World Power / 1820s – 1920s

Main text (obligatory):

J. Appleby et al., "Imperialism and Progressivism," *The American Vision* (2005).

Additional text (recommended):

Theodore Roosevelt, "The Strenuous Life" (1899).

11 December 'Us. vs. Them' – From the 'Red Scare' to the 'War on Terror' / 1930s – Today

Main text (obligatory):

Joyce Appleby et al., "The Cold War Begins," from: *The American Vision* (2005).

Additional text (recommended):

Brian Holden Reid, "America and War" (2006).

18 December Technology and Progress – From the Industrial Era to the Atomic Age / 19th Century – Today

Main text (obligatory):

Joyce Appleby et al., "The War Ends (section on the Atomic Age)," from: *The American Vision* (2005).

Additional text (recommended):

J. Robert Oppenheimer, "The Atomic Age" (Nov. 22, 1945).

- **Christmas break** Relax and enjoy! -

08 January Domesticity, Sexuality, and Consumer Culture / 19th Century – Today

Main text (obligatory):

Joyce Appleby et al., "The Feminist Movement," from: *The American Vision* (2005).

Additional texts (recommended):

Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity" (1998).

Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean, "Gender and Sexuality" (2006 [1997]).

15 January U.S. American Civil Rights Movements / 19th Century – Today

Main text (obligatory):

Joyce Appleby et al., "The Civil Rights Movement," from: *The American Vision* (2005).

Additional text (recommended):

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

22 January Postmodernity – Into the New Millennium / 1960s – 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.

29 January Final Exam

