

# AMERICAN CULTURE – HISTORY AND SOCIETY



**Lecturer:** Univ.-Prof. Dr. Stefan L. Brandt  
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**Course number:** 512.321  
**Room and Time:** HS 06.02 (Vorklinik), Fri., 16:00-17:30

**First session:** October 10, 2014

**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

- Oct. 10**      **The Cultural Beginnings – Native Americans, Puritans, Religion / 1490s – 1770s**  
Basic texts (recommended):  
Joyce Appleby et al., "Colonizing America," from: *The American Vision* (2005).  
Perry Miller, from *Errand into the Wilderness* (1956), 1-15.  
Sacvan Bercovitch, "Puritanism and the Self." In: *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (1975), 1-34.<sup>1</sup>
- Oct. 17**      **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).  
Basic 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).
- Oct. 24**      **The American Dream and the Protestant Work Ethic / 1770s - Today**  
Main text (obligatory):  
"The American Dream Then and Now" (2006).  
Basic text (recommended):  
Max Weber, "The Spirit of Capitalism," from *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905).
- Oct. 31**      **'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).  
Basic text (recommended):  
Axel R. Schäfer, "American Immigration" (2006).
- Nov. 7**        **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).  
Basic texts (recommended):  
Howard Temperley, "Slavery and Secession" (2006).  
Edward Ranson and Andrew Hook, "The Old South," from *Introduction to American Studies* (1989).
- Nov. 14**      **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).

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



Basic 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).

Nov. 21

**No class!**

Please join our International Conference "Space Oddities: Urbanity, American Identity and Cultural Exchange"

Nov. 28

**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).

Basic texts (recommended):

James Donald, "City," from: *New Keywords* (2005).

Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean, "The American City" (2006 [1997]).

Dec. 5

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

Main text (obligatory):

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

Basic text (recommended):

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

Dec. 12

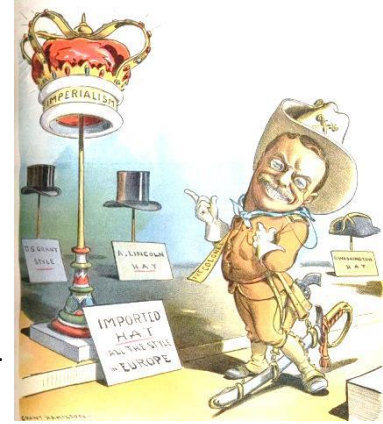
**'Us. vs. Them' – From the 'Red Scare' to the 'War on Terror' / 1930s – Today**

Main text (obligatory):

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

Basic text (recommended):

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



Dec. 19

**Technology and Progress – From the Industrial Era to the Atomic Age / 19<sup>th</sup> Century – Today**

Main text (obligatory):

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

Basic text (recommended):

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

- CHRISTMAS BREAK RELAX AND ENJOY! -

Jan. 9

**Domesticity, Sexuality, and Consumer Culture / 19<sup>th</sup> Century - Today**

Main text (obligatory):

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

Basic texts (recommended):

Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity" (1998);

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

Jan. 16

**The Civil Rights Movement / 19<sup>th</sup> Century – Today**

Main text (obligatory):

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

Basic text (recommended):

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

Jan. 23

**Postmodernity – Into the New Millennium / 1960s - Today**

Main text (obligatory):

Joyce Appleby et al., "Into a New Century," from: *The American Vision* (2005).

Basic texts (recommended):

Richard Crockatt, "America at the Millennium" (2006).

Jean Baudrillard, "Astral America" (2010 [1986]).

Barack Obama, second inauguration speech, Jan. 21, 2013.

Jan. 30

**Final Exam**

