**AMERICAN CULTURE —**

**HISTORY AND SOCIETY**

**Lecturer:** Univ.-Prof. Dr. Stefan L. Brandt  
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**Course number:** V 512.320  
**Room and Time:** HS 06.02 (Vorklinik), Wed., 13:30-15:00  
**First session:** March 13, 2013

**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 question 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**

**Mar. 13** The Cultural Beginnings – Native Americans, Puritans, Religion / 1490s – 1770s  
Basic texts (recommended):  
Perry Miller, from Errand into the Wilderness (1956), 1-15.  

**Mar. 20** Early U.S. History – The American Revolution and National Self-Formation / 1770s – 1820s  
Main text (obligatory):  
Basic texts (recommended):  

**Mar. 27, Apr. 3 & 10** No class! (Easter Holiday)  
Relax and enjoy!

**Apr. 17** The American Dream – Immigration and the Protestant Work Ethic / 1770s - Today  
Main text (obligatory):  
Basic texts (recommended):  

**Apr. 24** The “Problem of the Color Line” – Slavery, the ‘Old South,’ and the Civil War / 1600s – 1860s  
Main text (obligatory):  
Basic texts (recommended):  

**May 1** No class! (Day of Labor)  
Relax and enjoy!

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1 All texts for this course are available on Moodle: [http://moodle.uni-graz.at/construct/index.php](http://moodle.uni-graz.at/construct/index.php).
May 8  The West – Expansionism, Manifest Destiny, and the American Frontier / 1820s – 1890s
Main texts (obligatory):
Basic texts (recommended):
  Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893).

May 15  Urbanity and Civilization – From the Cosmopolitan City to Postmetropolis / 1830s - Today
Main text (obligatory):
Basic text (recommended):

May 22  Imperialism and Ideology – Becoming a World Power / 1820s – 1920s
Main text (obligatory):
Basic text (recommended):

May 29  ‘Us. vs. Them’ – From the ‘Red Scare’ and to the ‘War on Terror’ / 1930s – Today
Main text (obligatory):
Basic text (recommended):

June 5  Technology and Progress – From the Industrial Era to the Digital Age / 19th Century – Today
Main text (obligatory):
Basic text (recommended):

June 12  Domesticity, Sexuality, and Consumer Culture / 19th Century - Today
Main text (obligatory):
Basic texts (recommended):
  Amy Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity” (1998);

June 19  “A Change Is Gonna Come...” – America in the Age of Civil Rights / 19th Century – Today
Main text (obligatory):
Basic text (recommended):
  Martin Luther King, “I Have a Dream” (1963).

June 26  Postmodernism and Hyperreality / 1960s - Today
Main text (obligatory):
Basic texts (recommended):
  Jean Baudrillard, “Astral America” (2010 [1986]).
  Barack Obama, second inauguration speech, Jan. 21, 2013.

July 3  Final Exam