



Imaginary Americas

Literary Self-Fashioning in the USA

from the Revolutionary Era to Modernity (1776-1900)

Dozent

Priv.-Doz. Stefan Brandt

Office hours:

Tue, 4-5, Room AR-H 204

Angaben

Vorlesung, 2 SWS, ECTS-Studium, ECTS-Credits: 7

Unterrichtssprache: Englisch, LCMS BA 3.1, 8.2; GHR 5.1; BK 6.2; Gym: 7.1,7.3;
SI/II B 1,4,5; alter MA: EL3, AmL3; anmeldepflichtig (in AR-H 213)

Zeit und Ort: Do 10:00 - 12:00, [AR-B 2014/2015](#)

ab 20.4.2006

Studienfächer / Studienrichtungen:

ANG-M-AL ab 2

ANG-M-EL ab 2

[LCMS-BA-M3 ab 2](#)

[LCMS-BA-M8 ab 2](#)

ENG-SI-B ab 2

ENG-SII-B ab 2

ENG-GHR ab 2

ENG-GYM ab 2

ENG-BK ab 2

Inhalt

«What then is the American, this new man?» Hector de Crevecoeur famously asked in his «Letters from an American Farmer» (1782). This lecture course will explore the literary images and self-conceptions which were developed in American writing since the Revolution Era in order to describe the nature of «America» and the «American self». To what extent did the process of national self-fashioning change between the Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the disappearance of the Frontier in the 1880s? In how far are concepts such as the American Dream and the Frontier still valid in modern-day visions of America? Among others, we will discuss texts by Benjamin Franklin, James Fenimore Cooper, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, William Dean Howells, and Mark Twain.

ECTS-Informationen:

2 Credits: Regular attendance and participation in class (50%), 1-page Handout (50%)

5 Credits: Regular attendance and participation in class (1/3), 1- or 2-page Handout (1/3), short paper of one session (ca. 10 pages) (1/3)

7 Credits: Regular attendance and participation in class (30%), 2-page Handout (30%), Final paper (ca. 17 pages) (40%)

Syllabus:

- 20. April** **Introduction: What is an American? What is America?**
- 27. April** **The American as Self-Made Man**
Benjamin Franklin, “The Way to Wealth” (1757), “Informations to Those Who Would Remove to America” (1784), *Autobiography* (1771, 1784, 1788/89)
- 04. May** **The American Landscape as Myth and Symbol**
Charles Brockden Brown, *Edgar Huntly, or, Memoirs of a Sleepwalker* (1799)
- 11. May** **Literary Self-Fashioning and the Picaresque Novel**
Henry Brackenridge, from *Modern Chivalry* (1792/1815)
- 18. May** **Escapism and the American Self**
Washington Irving, “Rip Van Winkle”, from *The Sketch-Book* (1820)
- 01. June** **Mythologizing the American Frontier**
James Fenimore Cooper, from *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), and “Notions of the Americans” (1828)
- 08. June** **The New American Self**
Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar” (1837)
- 22. June** **America as a Cultural Prisonhouse**
Nathaniel Hawthorne, from *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)
- 29. June** **Democratic Vista**
Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself” (1871)
- 06. July** **Deconstructing the American Dream**
William Dean Howells, from *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885)
- 13. July** **America as a Reverted Utopia**
Mark Twain, from *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889)