

Masterstudiengang JFKI:

Kultur-Modul A

(*Amerikanische Ideengeschichte und Theorien amerikanischer Kultur*):

Vorlesung

**Lecture Course A2:  
A Revolutionary Culture:  
Sources of the U.S. Political Imaginary**

Prof. Dr. F. Kelleter

Online Course – Lecture Uploads: Tuesdays  
(Summer Semester 2021)

This lecture course deals with sources of the U.S. political imaginary, focusing on documents, debates, and artifacts from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Topics include the emergence and consolidation of a “republican” elite during and after the American Revolution, the cultural work of *The Federalist*, the French Revolution in America, the parallel appearance of political parties and a national political press, the Haitian Revolution and racial capitalism, anti-blackness and slavery, settler colonialism and the impact of the American Revolution on Indigenous peoples, early trans-Atlantic feminism, the advent of the novel and its early genres (sentimental, Gothic, historical) as well as other issues.

The lecture course serves as “**Vorlesung**” of Culture-**Module A** (*Amerikanische Ideengeschichte und Theorien amerikanischer Kultur*) in the M.A. program. **Registration:** All participants need to be registered via Blackboard *and* Campus Management by the first session. If you cannot register online, please contact Prof. Kelleter before the beginning of the term. **Requirements and Online Organization:** See Syllabus and Course Description (on Blackboard and below). All communication about and within this class will be channeled through the course’s Blackboard site; please make sure you’re registered there. **First session:** April 13.

13 April 2021

**Introduction: Dominant Discourses and Ideologies of the  
American Revolution**

Reading: John Dickinson, from *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*: “Letter I”; from *The Letters of John and Abigail Adams* (selections); Thomas Paine, from *The Age of Reason* (selections); Thomas Jefferson, from “The Autobiography of Thomas Jefferson” (selections).  
Suggested: Frank Kelleter, from *Amerikanische Aufklärung*: chapter 7 (381–429) (\*).

20 April 2021

## **Consolidation of the Revolutionary-Republican Elite (1): From the French and Indian War to *Common Sense* and the Declaration of Independence**

Reading: Thomas Paine, from *Common Sense*: “Thoughts on the Present State of American Affairs”; [Thomas Jefferson et al.,] *The Declaration of Independence*; Frank Kelleter, “1776: John Adams Disclaims Authorship of *Common Sense* but Helps Declare Independence.”

27 April 2021

## **Consolidation of the Revolutionary-Republican Elite (2): The Cultural Work of *The Federalist Papers***

Reading: Alexander Hamilton, “The Federalist No. 1”; James Madison, “The Federalist No. 10.”

Suggested: *The Constitution of the United States of America*; Frank Kelleter, from *Amerikanische Aufklärung*: chapter 8.2 (474–500) (\*).

Further Suggested Reading: Frank Kelleter, from *Amerikanische Aufklärung*: chapters 8.3 (500–533) and 8.4 (533–46) (\*).

4 May 2021

## **The French Revolution in America**

Reading: Edmund Burke, from *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (selections); Thomas Paine, from *Rights of Man* (selections); Noah Webster, from *The Revolution in France*: chapter “Religion”; John Adams, *Discourses on Davila* (selections).

11 May 2021

## **Newspaper Wars and the Beginnings of Party Politics**

Reading: “The Alien and Sedition Acts”; Thomas Jefferson, “Draft of the Kentucky Resolutions”; [James Madison,] “Virginia Resolutions Against the Alien and Sedition Acts”; selections from *Aurora General Advertiser*, *Porcupine’s Gazette*, *Gazette of the United States* and other sources.

Suggested: James Madison, “Report on the Alien and Sedition Acts.”

18 May 2021

## **The Haitian Revolution(s) and the United States: Racial Capitalism, Bio-Politics, and the Invention of “Whiteness” in the Revolutionary Atlantic**

Reading: Selections from Laurent Dubois, John Garrius, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean, 1789–1805*, specifically: from the 1685 *Code Noir*; [Louis-Sébastien Mercier, Denis Diderot,] “Prophesies of Slave Revolution (1771 and 1780)”; Julien Raimond, from *Observations on the Origin and Progression of White Colonists’ Prejudice against Men of Color*; The National Assembly, from “Law on the Colonies”; Jean-François and Biassou, “Letters to the Commissioners”; The National Assembly, from “Law of April 4, 1792”; Léger Félicité Sonthonax, from *Decree of General Liberty*; The National Convention, from “The Abolition of Slavery”; from *The Plantation Policies of Étienne Polverel*; Toussaint Louverture, from *A Refutation of Some Assertions in a Speech Pronounced in the Corps Législatif by Viénot Vaublanc*; Thomas Jefferson, from *Letters 1797–1802*; Toussaint Louverture, from *Constitution of the French Colony of Saint-Domingue*; Napoléon Bonaparte and Charles-

Victor-Emmanuel Leclerc, from *Letters 1802–1804*; [Jean-Jacques Dessalines/Louis Boisrond-Tonnerre,] *The Haitian Declaration of Independence*; from *The Haitian Constitution*; Charles Brockden Brown, “St. Domingo.”

Suggested: “Major Revolutionary Figures and Groups,” “A Chronology of Events Related to the Slave Revolution in the Caribbean (1635–1805)” [from Dubois, Garrius, *Slave Revolution in the Caribbean*].

Note: These are a lot of texts but they are all very short. If you can, please read all of them, because the documents elucidate each other. Together, they trace the most important stages of the revolution(s) in Saint-Domingue/Haiti.

25 May 2021

## **The Beginnings of Non-Revolutionary Ethnic Identity Politics**

Reading: Olaudah Equiano, from *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself*: “To the Lords Spiritual and Temporal,” selected chapters; William Apess, “An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man.”

1 June 2021

## **Republican Poetry and Agrarian Nationalism**

Reading: Joel Barlow, *The Hasty Pudding*.

8 June 2021

## **Republican Poetry and Settler Colonialism**

Reading: Timothy Dwight, from *Greenfield Hill*: “The Flourishing Village,” “The Destruction of the Pequods” (selections); Phillis Wheatley, “On Being Brought from Africa to America,” “To the University of Cambridge, in New England”; Philip Freneau, “The Wild Honey Suckle,” “The Indian Burying Ground.”

Suggested: Oliver Goldsmith, “The Deserted Village”; George Crabbe, “The Village” (selections); Phillis Wheatley, “On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield, 1770.”

15 June 2021

## **Nationalist Agrarians, “Vanishing Indians”**

Reading: Thomas Jefferson, from *Notes on the State of Virginia*: selections from “Query VI: A Notice of the Mines and Other Subterraneous Riches”; François Marbois, “Journey to the Oneidas”; Philip Freneau, “The Indian Student, or Force of Nature”; William Cullen Bryant, “The Prairies.”

22 June 2021

## **The South, Anti-Blackness, and Slavery: From Jeffersonian Racism to Nineteenth-Century Plantation Romanticism**

Reading: Thomas Jefferson, from *Notes on the State of Virginia*: selections from “Query XIV: Laws”; John Pendleton Kennedy, from *Swallow Barn*: “A Word in Advance from the Author to the Reader” (Preface to the 1851 edition), “Introductory Epistle,” chapters 1, 2, 7, 18, 31, 46–48; selections from *The Confessions of Nat Turner*.

29 June 2021

## **Family Men, Republican Wives, and the Rights of Woman: Intersections of Enlightenment Thought and Early American Feminism**

Reading: Mary Wollstonecraft, from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*: “Author’s Introduction,” “The Prevailing Opinion of a Sexual Character Discussed,” “The Same Subject Continued,” “Modesty—Comprehensively Considered, and Not as a Sexual Virtue,” “Of the Pernicious Effects which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in Society”; Judith Sargent Murray, “On the Equality of the Sexes”; Constantia [Judith Sargent Murray], from *The Gleaner*: “Dedication to John Adams,” “Preface to the Reader,” “The Gleaner No. 1,” “The Gleaner No. 17,” “The Gleaner No. 91,” “Conclusion: The Gleaner Unmasked.”

6 July 2021

## **Gender, Genre, Nation: The Sentimental Novel between Enlightened Ethics and Bourgeois Morality**

Reading: Susanna Rowson, from *Charlotte Temple*: “Preface,” chapters 1, 6–7, 14–15, 17–18, 20, 22, 25–28, 32–35; Hannah Webster Foster, from *The Coquette*: Letters 1–6, 8, 11–13, 15, 18, 21–22, 25, 36, 42–43, 48, 57, 61–62, 70–74.

Suggested: Hannah Webster Foster, *The Coquette* (complete text) (\*); Frank Kelleter, from *Amerikanische Aufklärung*: chapter 12 (708–66) (\*).

13 July 2021

## **American Gothic**

Required: Charles Brockden Brown, from *Wieland, or The Transformation*: chapters 1–3, 6, 9, 11, 13, 16–17, 19, 22, 27.

Suggested: Brown, *Wieland* (complete text) (\*).

**Online Organization:** Because of the current pandemic, this lecture course will be offered as an **online course**. My goal is to make the lectures as rewarding for you as possible while allowing for the possibility that other concerns take precedence. Even if you do not have permanent internet access, or if you cannot do all the readings because you have to take care of others, or of yourself, we will find a solution for you to take and pass this course. **Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns!** Starting April 13, I will provide all students who are signed up on Blackboard for this course with video lectures on a weekly basis, making **a new lecture available each Tuesday** around 4 p.m. The lectures will **not take place as live-streams**. Instead, I will provide you with files to watch online. As in previous online semesters, this will probably be done on the video-site Loom (or, if this turns out to be inconvenient, another fileshare platform). Please note that lectures will be uploaded in two (sometimes three) parts; the complete length of these parts may exceed 90 minutes, but in terms of workload, keep in mind that I will not monitor if you have done all readings. I don’t expect everyone to always be able to do so.

**General Course Information:** This course will **not be graded**. The grade of your Module will be identical with the grade received in Module A’s seminar. However, to **gain credit** for this course within Module A, you need to document both your **regular attendance** and your **active attendance** (“regelmäßige und aktive Teilnahme” according to Campus Management). How this can be done is explained below.

**Documentation of Regular and Active Attendance:** To **gain credit** for this course (“aktive und regelmäßige Teilnahme”), you should have been **active in the online discussions of at least seven different sessions, either by opening a new thread on our Blackboard “Discussion Board” (“Diskussionsforum”) or by posting a response in another student’s**

thread. Threads can be dedicated to your observations on the course material, or they can address ideas and questions that came up during the video lectures, or both. You don't have to compose mini-essays; posts and responses can be tweet-length, if you wish. They need not be longer than a sentence or two.

Alternatively, if you do not want—or cannot—use the “Discussion Board,” you may submit **two one-page informal reflection papers** on two sessions of your choice: one in the first half of the semester (by May 25), the other before the end of the semester (by July 13).

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, either by e-mail or directly on Blackboard. If you encounter technical (or other) problems that make it difficult for you to participate in our online activities, please reach out to me and we will make special arrangements.

**Course Reader (Assigned Readings):** All unmarked texts are included in a Course Reader. The **Course Reader** will be made available before the beginning of the semester as a PDF file on **Blackboard** (go to “Kursmaterial”; you may have to click on “open Course Reader here” to download it; if this doesn't work, try a different browser: students have reported problems with the Chrome browser). Marked texts (\*) are not included in the Course Reader; they will be made available on the reserve shelf in the JFKI library (which may or may not be accessible during the summer term, depending on the further course of the pandemic). Since these readings are “suggested,” I will not expect that students have accessed or read them; it will be fully possible to follow the lectures without them.

**A Note on Workload:** I encourage you to do as many of the weekly readings as possible, but I will not monitor if you have done so or not. You will get a chance to discuss the course material on our **Blackboard “Diskussionsforum” / “Discussion Board”** at your own pace and convenience. I encourage you to use this forum to engage with each other's reading experiences, as you would in a seminar. I will also be available to answer questions there. If necessary or desired, we may add one or two voluntary live sessions toward the middle and end of the semester. Please let me know if you would like to see such online meetings scheduled as well.

**A Note on the Selection of Course Material:** The material for this course has not been selected in order to canonize, celebrate, or condone it. Rather, this is a course in cultural history that analyzes powerful American self-descriptions and self-performances from a non-U.S. perspective. Thus, some canonical sources have been selected precisely *because* they are canonical, i.e., because of their prevailing agency within the cultural system we're investigating as observers (not contributors). We will read them—and their canonization—critically. Doing so, we will find that studying cultural history can be intense and disturbing. This course assumes that students are able to engage with material that is challenging in its representations and agendas. In fact, engaging with (political or aesthetic) discomfort is a significant part of an American Studies education and an opportunity for debate and learning. However, there are some instances where a student may have experienced personal trauma that creates specific triggers for severe emotional distress. If this applies to you, please take responsibility to research all material we will be reading ahead of time, and let me know if you think that studying a particular text would create a significant issue for you—we can then work out alternative arrangements. Among others, the following sessions deal with material that contains depictions of violence, including sexual violence; racist and racist attitudes; and other potentially sensitive issues: The Haitian Revolution (18 May), Ethnic Identity Politics (25 May), Republican Poetry and Settler Colonialism (8 June), “Vanishing Indians” (15 June), Anti-Blackness and Slavery (22 June), Early American Feminism (29 June), Gender and Genre (6 July), American Gothic (13 July).

**A Note on Language:** I will not voice the N-word (or other racial slurs) in this course, also not when I'm quoting it visually from a primary source and even when this source text uses the word not as a slur, but as an in-group expression. I would like to ask all non-Black students to follow the same practice. By contrast, the word "negro" has a different semantic history. In many texts in American cultural history up until the 1970s, it is used by Black and White writers as an accepted term of ethnic identification without overt motivations to voice an insult. As a self-attribution in the writings of people such as Martin Luther King, Jr. or Ralph Ellison (or, earlier, in the poetry of Langston Hughes and the self-attribution of the Harlem Renaissance as the "New Negro Movement"), it is not used as an exclusive in-group marker, but as an unmarked expression in accordance with the political parlance of the day. Therefore, I will quote the word whenever it occurs but will not use it as a descriptive term myself (outside of quotations). To the extent that we're students of communicative history, it is important to understand that the English word "negro" is not completely identical with its German dictionary translation. Both terms, however, and also their French and Spanish equivalents, are ultimately rooted in colonialist discourse. Therefore, if anyone in this course feels personally offended by these quotations, please do not hesitate to let me know and I will try to find individual ways of historicizing our texts without de-historicizing their language. Regarding the term "Indian," I will largely follow the example of Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, who suggests that we "use 'Indigenous,' 'Indian,' and 'Native' interchangeably ... Indigenous individuals and peoples in North America on the whole do not consider 'Indian' a slur" (*An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, 2014). However, since the term "Indian" originates as a colonialist appellation, I will not use it as a descriptive term myself, but put it in quotation marks or paraphrase it whenever the context requires.