

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

Monday, 16:15 – 18:45 (JFKI 319)
(Summer Semester 2024)

This lecture course deals with political aesthetics in the so-called “founding” era of the United States. We will look at 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 periodical press, the Haitian Revolution, the South and slavery, the impact of the American Revolution on American indigenous cultures, the black enlightenment, early trans-Atlantic feminism, the advent of the novel and its early genres (sentimental novel, Gothic novel, historical novel) as well as other issues.

The two-hour lecture course serves as “**Vorlesung**” of Culture-**Module A** (*Amerikanische Ideengeschichte und Theorien amerikanischer Kultur*) in the M.A. program. Attendance of the additional academic hour (“tutorial” with further time for Q&A) is optional. **Registration:** All participants must be registered via Blackboard *and* Campus Management before the first session. If you cannot register online or cannot attend the first session, please contact Prof. Kelleter before the beginning of the term. **Requirements:** See Syllabus and Course Description (on Blackboard). **First session:** April 15.

15 April 2024

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

Readings: 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) (*).

22 April 2024

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

Readings: 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.”

29 April 2024

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

Readings: 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) (*).

6 May 2024

The French Revolution in North America

Readings: 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).

13 May 2024

Newspaper Wars and the Beginnings of Party Politics

Readings: “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.”

20 May 2024

– **no session** –
(Pentecost holiday)

27 May 2024

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

Readings: 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’re 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.

3 June 2024

The Beginnings of Non-Revolutionary Ethnic Identity Politics

Readings: 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” and selected chapters; William Apess, “An Indian’s Looking Glass for the White Man.”

10 June 2024

Republican Poetry and Settler Colonialism

Readings: 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.”

17 June 2024

Nationalist Agrarians, “Vanishing Indians”

Readings: 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.”

24 June 2024

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

Readings: 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*.

1 July 2024

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

Readings: 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.”

8 July 2024

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

Readings: 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) (*).

15 July 2024

American Gothic

Readings: 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) (*).

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 express your observations on the reading material, or they can address ideas and questions that came up during the 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 27, 2024), the other before the end of the semester (by July 19, 2024). Reflection papers should not rehearse “facts” about a text or topic (as a Wikipedia entry or Chat-GPT dialogue would) but collect your individual thoughts on it.

If you have any questions, please contact me, either by e-mail or directly on Blackboard.

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. 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.

Plagiarism: Always indicate your sources, even when you’re “only” paraphrasing them. Everything else constitutes plagiarism and is a serious breach of academic ethics that will not only result in immediate failure of this course but can endanger your career as a student at this Institute (and potentially beyond). Please take this issue very seriously, because plagiarism is a severe scholarly offense! This goes for reflection papers as well as other written contributions. To find out more about what constitutes plagiarism, see definitions and examples collected in the *MLA Handbook* (and similar textbooks). Citing AI-generated texts (such as Chat-GPT dialogues) without exact source quotation will be considered plagiarism. All cases of plagiarism involving exchange students will be reported to the student’s home institution. There are no exceptions to this rule.

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. I will also be available to answer questions there.

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 influential 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 study and investigate. 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 research 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 the 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; racialist and racist attitudes; and other potentially sensitive issues: The Haitian Revolution (27 May), Ethnic Identity Politics (3 June), Republican Poetry and Settler Colonialism (10 June), “Vanishing Indians” (17 June), Anti-Blackness and Slavery (24 June), Early American Feminism (1 July), Gender and Genre (8 July), American Gothic (15 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 the word visually (on a powerpoint slide) from a primary source or even when a 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 to the 1970s, it is used by U.S. writers of different ethnicities as an accepted term of ethnic identification without overt motivations to voice an insult. As a self-attribution in the writings of authors such as Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey—or, later, in the poetry of Langston Hughes, in the self-naming of the Harlem Renaissance as the “New Negro

Movement,” or in the writings of artists and activists such as Ralph Ellison or Martin Luther King, Jr.—the word “negro” 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). As students of communicative history, it is important for us 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 someone in this course feels personally offended by these quotations, please 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.

Electronic Etiquette Policy (for live teaching): You will not be able to follow a lecture with undivided attention when you’re simultaneously surfing the Web. Laptop, tablet, or mobile phone screens can also be a distraction for other students in the classroom. Therefore, I kindly ask you to take your notes on paper. Only if absolutely necessary, use laptops or tablets for note-taking, and if you do, please go offline. In addition, please turn off all cell phones during class. Thank you! *Exception:* students with special needs that can be accommodated by using a laptop or tablet may use all the required devices (offline).