

Masterstudiengang JFKI:

Kultur-Modul B

(*Kultur der Nationalität und Diversität*):

Vorlesung mit integriertem Tutorium

**Lecture Course B2:
Capitalism, Sectionalism, and American Nationhood**

Prof. Dr. F. Kelleter

Monday, 16.15 – potentially 18.45 (JFKI 319)
(Summer Semester 2026)

This lecture course deals with American culture in the four decades following the Civil War. Topics include: the failure of Reconstruction; Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; the interlocking of progressivism and imperialism; African American activism; anarchism (Lucy Parsons, Emma Goldman); the emergence of a capitalist-nationalist imaginary; realism and naturalism as literary modes; the "New Woman"; feminist, socialist and nationalist utopias; urbanization and turn-of-the-century media transformations.

The lecture course serves as "**Vorlesung**" of Culture-Module B (*Kultur der Nationalität und Diversität*) in the **Master's degree program**. **Registration:** All participants should 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 Organization:** See **Syllabus and Course Description** in the "Teaching" section of Prof. Kelleter's JFKI website or on Blackboard (go to "Kursmaterial"; you may have to click on "open Syllabus here" to download it; if this doesn't work, try a different browser: students have reported problems with the Chrome browser). Please note that this course is listed as a three-hour "Vorlesung mit integriertem Tutorium." However, participants will gain credit on the basis of the regular two-hour lecture slot (4-6); attendance of the additional academic hour ("tutorial" with further time for Q&A, 6-7) is optional. **First session:** April 13 (in person, no hybrid option).

13 April 2026

U.S. Culture in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era

Suggested Preparatory Reading: Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America* (**); Steve Fraser, *The Age of Acquiescence*: "Part 1. Class Warfare in America: The

Long Nineteenth Century” (**); Winfried Fluck, “Realismus, Naturalismus, Vormoderne,” *Amerikanische Literaturgeschichte*, ed. Hubert Zapf (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004), 154-217 (**).
Note: These readings are “suggested” in the sense that I don’t expect you to have read any of them prior to class. They provide good introductions to three different aspects of the period we are going to study this semester, but none of the titles listed is mandatory reading.

20 April 2026

After Reconstruction: Mark Twain’s South in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884/85)

Reading: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, chapters 1-16 (*).

27 April 2026

Before the Gilded Age: Mark Twain’s America in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (continued)

Reading: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, chapters 17-43 (*).

4 May 2026

National Horrors (Ida B. Wells, Lucy Parsons)

Reading: Ida B. Wells, from *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*: “Preface,” chapters 1-4, chapter 6; Ida B. Wells, from *A Red Record: Lynchings in the United States, 1892-1893-1894*: chapters 1-2, “Lynched for an Attempted Assault” (from Chapter 5), “Lynched as a Warning” (from Chapter 6), chapter 8; Ida B. Wells, from *Crusade for Justice*: chapters 11, 14-15; Lucy Parsons, “The Negro: Let Him Leave Politics to the Politician and Prayers to the Preacher,” “Southern Lynchings.”

Suggested Reading: Lucy Parsons, “The ‘Scab’,” “Salutation to the Friends of Liberty,” “Wage Slaves vs. Corporations”; W.E.B. Du Bois, from *Black Reconstruction in America*: “Back towards Slavery” (selections).

Suggested Viewing: David W. Griffith, *The Birth of a Nation* (**).

11 May 2026

African American Activisms after Reconstruction (Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey)

Reading: Booker T. Washington, from *Up from Slavery*: “14. The Atlanta Exposition Address”; Booker T. Washington, from *The Future of the American Negro*: “Plan to Achieve the Rights of Citizenship”; W.E.B. Du Bois, from *The Souls of Black Folk*: “The Forethought,” “1. Of Our Spiritual Strivings,” “3. Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others”; W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth.”

Suggested: Marcus Garvey, “The Challenge of Black Nationalism (1922/1923),” “W.E. Burghardt Du Bois as a Hater of Dark People (1923).”

18 May 2026

Economic Progressivisms and American Imperialism

Reading: Andrew Carnegie, “Wealth”; Herbert Croly, selections from *The Promise of American Life*; Albert J. Beveridge, “The Philippines Are Ours Forever.”

Suggested: Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (selections).

25 May 2026

– no session (holiday) –

1 June 2026

Anarchism, Marxism, and Corporate Colonialism (Lucy Parsons, Emma Goldman)

Reading: Lucy Parsons, “The Principles of Anarchism,” “A Word to Tramps,” “Our Civilization: Is It Worth Saving?,” “The Haymarket Meeting: A Graphic Description,” “Foreword to *The Life of Albert R. Parsons*,” “Speech[es] at the Founding Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World (Afternoon Session, June 29, [1905]),” “Are Class Interests Identical?,” “The Ballot Humbug,” “The Eight-Hour Strike of 1886”; Emma Goldman, from *Living My Life*: chapters 1 & 4 (selections).

Suggested: Emma Goldman, “Psychology of Political Violence”; Lucy Parsons, “New York Letter”; Chauncey Yellow Robe, “On the Wild West Shows.”

8 June 2026

The Capitalist-Nationalist Imaginary (1)

Reading: William Dean Howells, from *The Rise of Silas Lapham*: chapters 1-3, 5-9, 13-14.

Suggested: Howells, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*: complete novel (**); Horatio Alger, *Struggling Upward, or Luke Larkin’s Luck* (**).

15 June 2026

The Capitalist-Nationalist Imaginary (2)

Reading: William Dean Howells, from *The Rise of Silas Lapham*: chapters 15-20, 24-27.

22 June 2026

The Capitalist-Nationalist Imaginary (3)

Reading: Theodore Dreiser, from *Sister Carrie* (Doubleday/Page edition): chapters 1-8, 10, 13, 16, 19-20, 26-29.

Suggested: Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*: complete novel (**); Georg Simmel, “Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben.”

29 June 2026

Conspicuous Consumption and the Culture of Display

Reading: Dreiser, from *Sister Carrie* (Doubleday/Page): chapters 30-33, 35, 38-39, 42-44, 46-47; Thorstein Veblen, from *Theory of the Leisure Class*: “Conspicuous Consumption.”

6 July 2026

The “New Woman” and the Culture of Decadence

Reading: Kate Chopin, from *The Awakening*: chapters 1-12, 16-17, 19, 21-24, 26-28, 30, 32, 36-39; Lucy Parsons, “The Woman Question Again?”; Emma Goldman, “The Tragedy of Woman’s Emancipation.”

Suggested: Chopin, *The Awakening*: complete novel (**); Emma Goldman, from *Living My Life*: chapter 33 (selections).

13 July 2026

Progressive Utopia and Feminist Social Critique

Reading: Edward Bellamy, from *Looking Backward*: chapters 1-3, 5, 6, 10, 11, 13, 19, 22, 24-26, 28; Charlotte Perkins Gilman, from *Herland*: chapters 1, 5, 6, 8, 11, 12.

Suggested: Bellamy and/or Gilman: complete novels (**); Lucy Parsons, “A Christmas Story”; William James, “The Moral Equivalent of War.”

General Course Information: This course will **not be graded**. The grade of your Module will be identical with the grade received in Module B’s seminar. However, to **gain credit** for this course within Module B, 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. This is an on-campus course; there is no hybrid option.

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 six 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 need not be longer than a sentence or two.

Alternatively, if you do not want to—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 June 1), the other before the end of the semester (by July 13). Reflection papers should not rehearse “facts” about a text or topic (as a Wikipedia entry or a 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” and click on “open Course Reader here” for download; if this doesn’t work, try a different browser: students have reported problems with the Chrome browser). Mark Twain’s novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (marked * above) is not included in the Reader and should be bought in an authoritative edition. Texts marked with two asterisks (**) are not included in the Course Reader either; they will be made available on the reserve shelf in the JFKI library. Since ** readings are “suggested,” I will not expect that students have read them; it is fully possible to follow the lectures without having read them in advance.

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 can 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; suicide; and other potentially sensitive issues: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (20/27 April), National Horrors (4 May), Economic Progressivisms and American Imperialism (18 May), The “New Woman” and the Culture of Decadence (6 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 (e.g., *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*) 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 and the self-naming of the Harlem Renaissance as the “New Negro Movement,” which will be discussed in the “Modernities” lecture course), 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). In terms of semantic 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 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 in the beginning of class. Thank you! *Exception:* students with special needs that can be accommodated by using a laptop or tablet may use all required devices (offline).