

COURSE DETAIL

NATIVE AMERICANS AND GERMAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

Country

Germany

Host Institution

Free University of Berlin

Program(s)

Free University Berlin

UCEAP Course Level

Upper Division

UCEAP Subject Area(s)

German

UCEAP Course Number

113

UCEAP Course Suffix

D

UCEAP Official Title

NATIVE AMERICANS AND GERMAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

UCEAP Transcript Title

NAT AMER&GER IDENT

UCEAP Quarter Units

4.50

UCEAP Semester Units

Course Description

Foreigners, in particular people from the US or Canada, are often astonished when they hear how fascinated Germans are with Native Americans. So-called “hobbyist” events with Germans “playing” at being and dressing up as North American Indians, shows with Native Americans performing traditional dances or other rituals, but also theatrical festivals devoted to stories around the fictional Mescalero Apache Winnetou and his white (German) blood brother Old Shatterhand draw thousands of visitors, and it is still fair to say that most Germans have some memory of playing Indians when they were children. The creator of Winnetou, Karl May, is more widely read than Goethe or Thomas Mann, although the literary value of his texts is disputed. As puzzling as this may be from the outside: For more than 150 years, America and, in particular, North American Indians have played an important role in narratives about German national identity. Examining these narratives, students discover a complex web of fascination and identification with Native Americans on the one hand, fascination and ambivalence regarding the culture, politics, and economics of the US and white Americans on the other hand. Students study extracts from literary texts depicting Native Americans from the 19th and 20th centuries and analyze films based on Karl May and other authors, produced in the FRG and the GDR (West and East Germany). They discuss the political implications of images of Native Americans in the context of imperial Germany, in National Socialism, and in the GDR, and they review and evaluate concepts such as the “Noble Savage”, “cultural appropriation” and racial/ ethnic stereotyping and exoticism.

Language(s) of Instruction

English

Host Institution Course Number

16913

Host Institution Course Title

NATIVE AMERICANS AND GERMAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

Host Institution Campus

Host Institution Faculty

Host Institution Degree

Host Institution Department

Institut für deutsche und niederländische Philologie

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