

COURSE DETAIL

NAVIGATING THE UNKNOWN: UNCERTAINTY IN THE HISTORY OF NORTH AMERICA AND BEYOND

Country

Germany

Host Institution

Free University of Berlin

Program(s)

Free University Berlin

UCEAP Course Level

Upper Division

UCEAP Subject Area(s)

History American Studies

UCEAP Course Number

151

UCEAP Course Suffix**UCEAP Official Title**

NAVIGATING THE UNKNOWN: UNCERTAINTY IN THE HISTORY OF NORTH AMERICA AND BEYOND

UCEAP Transcript Title

UNCERTNTY NA HIST

UCEAP Quarter Units

4.50

UCEAP Semester Units

3.00

Course Description

The current uncertain times are marked by political upheavals, rapid technological change, and ecological loss and crisis. Yet, this perception of uncertainty is not unique to the present. How have people made sense of the unknown in the past? How have they tried to predict, control, or survive uncertain futures? This seminar explores how individuals, communities, and institutions have historically responded to uncertainty, in North America and beyond. Seminar topics therefore include religious beliefs and prophecies, narratives of destiny and utopia, science and statistics, social planning, bureaucracy and record-keeping, violence and exclusion, art, sports, as well as turns to history itself. Furthermore, the class discusses how historians themselves deal with uncertainty in their work: from gaps in the archives and collective memory, to epistemological questions, biases in historical research, and contested interpretations of the past. Through these themes, students are introduced to the foundational skills of studying history: how to ask critical questions, develop an argument, read primary and secondary sources, and how to write (about) history. A field trip to a local archive offers practical insights into what it means to work as a historian, and the uncertainties that come with it.

Language(s) of Instruction

English

Host Institution Course Number

32400

Host Institution Course Title

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Host Institution Course Details

<https://www.fu-berlin.de/vv/en/lv/1036120?m=361243&pc=701222&sm=934771>

Host Institution Campus

Host Institution Faculty

Host Institution Degree

Host Institution Department

John-F-Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien

Course Last Reviewed

2025-2026

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