

COURSE DETAIL

WHAT WAS AMERICA?

Country

Germany

Host Institution

Free University of Berlin

Program(s)

Free University Berlin

UCEAP Course Level

Upper Division

UCEAP Subject Area(s)

History English American Studies

UCEAP Course Number

139

UCEAP Course Suffix**UCEAP Official Title**

WHAT WAS AMERICA?

UCEAP Transcript Title

WHAT WAS AMERICA?

UCEAP Quarter Units

4.50

UCEAP Semester Units

3.00

Course Description

America was an invention, not a discovery. It is as much an idea or an art project as it is a place or a polity. This course investigates the many and fragile meanings of something called “America” in literary history. Students investigate the first contacts between Indigenous peoples and European colonizers in the early modern era, the monopolization of the term “American” by the United States in the nineteenth century, and more modern interrogations of what America might be and what it represents. The course moves through North America, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean as it investigates how empire, colonialism, slavery, transnational dynamics, and cross-cultural transformations among Indigenous, European, and African civilizations impacted the literary and cultural legacies of “America. The course questions how America was invented, and often contested, in literary forms and genres that range from colonial records and natural histories to poems and more contemporary forms. In the many ways of writing about America, what did the place and term come to mean to different people at different times in the past? What was America then, and how does it help us understand what it is today?

Language(s) of Instruction

English

Host Institution Course Number

32203

Host Institution Course Title

WHAT WAS AMERICA?

Host Institution Course Details

<https://www.fu-berlin.de/vv/en/lv/1052345?m=361371&pc=701222&sm=965826>

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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