

### **Introduction to American Literature and Culture**

What is literature? And how do we discuss it? Why do we read literature and how do we distinguish its main genres, styles, and cultural and historical developments? This seminar seeks to provide students of American literature and culture with basic skills to pose and answer properly these and related questions. It serves as an introduction to the concepts and practices of an academic analysis of literature (and related narrative media). Students will gain insight into core methodologies, theories, and modes of inquiry necessary for textual analysis and the interpretation of a text's structure, characters, settings, perspective, etc. In conjunction with Prof. Rohr's mandatory lecture course "History of American Literature," this seminar surveys and critically reflects upon the various literary genres from poetry through drama to prose, and it highlights the different stages and epochs in American cultural and literary history. Discussions will take seriously the differentiation of social and cultural contexts, and the diversity of identity formation (i.e. class, race, and gender). Basic skills, tools, and requirements of academic research and writing will also be introduced. The seminar is accompanied by two tutorials. The entire module consists of three obligatory parts: the seminar, the tutorial (you have to choose one of the two), and the lecture course.

### **Course requirements**

Regular attendance and active participation (seminar and tutorial);  
thorough preparation of all reading assignments;  
in-class presentation and writing assignment(s);  
written final exam during the final session