

## Prof. Rohr: Contemporary American Fiction

In this seminar, we will discuss different forms of contemporary American writing, asking: what are the literary traditions as well as the innovative force that the texts under consideration display? All texts were published in 2021 and they represent a tiny fraction of the multitude and richness of voices that partake in American literary expression. One of the texts, Erdrich's *The Sentence*, is also one of the first novels with a "pandemic plot," i.e. a novel that broaches the impact of Covid and life under pandemic conditions.

The material that we will study comprises a graphic novel (Alison Bechdel, *The Secret to Superhuman Strength*) and various novels that reflect ethnically marked literary traditions, such as African American writing (Asali Solomon, *The Days of Afrekete*), Japanese American Writing (Katie Kitamura, *Intimacies*), Native American Writing (Louise Erdrich, *The Sentence*), and a short story from the realm of Jewish American Writing (Jennifer Anne Moses, "The Uncircumcised"). I also decided to smuggle in a poem that I would very much like to discuss with you, Amanda Gorman's *The Hill We Climb* which the author read at President Biden's inauguration in January 2021. Among the authors are thus famous winners of prestigious prizes, such as Louise Erdrich, well established artists like Alison Bechdel, up-and-coming stars like Amanda Gorman and lesser-known creative voices such as Asali Solomon, Katie Kitamura and Jennifer Anne Moses.

### Please note:

- ➔ You will have to purchase most of the texts and, as they are so recent, most are still only in the hard cover version on the market. There will, of course, be copies in the library, and you will find the short story and the poem in the AGORA room connected to the seminar.
- ➔ There will also be **10 quizzes** meant as encouragement to keep up with the assigned reading of which you will have to pass at least 8 in order to get credit for the course.