

Instructor: **Jolene Mathieson**  
 Title: **Introduction to American Literature and Culture**  
 Course: **Seminar Ia + two-hour tutorial [AA3, LAA3, LAA16]**  
**53-541: Thursdays, 12-14h + two-hour tutorial on Fridays**  
 Room: **Ü35 – 01016**  
 Starts: **17.10.2019**

### Course Description:



Rogier van der Weyen, *The Magdalen Reading*, 1435



Vincent Van Gogh, *The Novel Reader*, 1888



Jeffrey Dale Starr, *Woman Reading in Parc Monceau*, 2012

Hello and welcome to the Institute of English and American Studies! This introductory seminar is a mandatory course within the *Einführungsmodul* and is designed in a two-fold manner. First, it will provide first-semester students a broad and yet intensive introduction to the key concepts, central topics, and basic terminology necessary for the academic study of literary and cultural texts. Here you will learn what it means to analyze texts in a scientific context using scholarly methods. Second, it will serve as an arena for second-semester students to deepen your understanding of these issues and to sharpen your skills. Together we will all engage with the rich literary and cultural heritage of the United States by considering canonical and some non-canonical texts from an array of media and genres. These texts include narrative and lyrical poetry, ranging from Walt Whitman to Juliana Spahr's "Tradition", the award-winning play, *Father Comes Home From The Wars*, by Suzan Lori-Parks, a couple of short stories as well as very brief excerpts from a few novels. We will also analyze a graphic novel, learn the basics of cultural studies, as well as workshop ideas for your research paper. By the end of the course, you will have become acquainted with a number of cultural artefacts and you will be familiar with literary and media genres, critical terminology, and technical analysis. **Requirements:** As the stated goal of this seminar is to empower each and every one of you to approach and engage with literary and cultural texts *as scholars*, this seminar will focus on developing your analytical thinking skills and enhancing your ability to express yourself in academic writing. As such, the *Studienleistung* will consist of thorough preparation of all reading material for both the seminar and the tutorial, completion of short homework assignments for both the seminar and the tutorial, active participation, and an academic essay. The *Prüfungsleistung* consists of a 10-to-12-page research paper. **Attendance in the first session is mandatory. Anyone absent on the first day of class will be dropped from the course.** **Texts:** Each of you must purchase the 'Seminar 53-541' Reader at Cobra Copy (Grindelallee 42, 20146 HH) and bring it to every session.