

THE PURITANS: LINCHPIN OF THE AMERICAN IMAGINATION

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FS 2016, TUESDAYS, 16:15-18:00

In 1975, Sacvan Bercovitch published a book called *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* offering a reading of American self-understanding through the lens of its Puritan past. The wager of this seminar is that while always deeply ambivalent towards its Puritan beginnings, the Puritans, nonetheless, serve as a linchpin of the American imagination. They are used as a trope for subsequent self-evaluations and negotiations of political and social tensions, especially also unresolved issues of the fledgling democracy such as gender and race. While giving students a detailed understanding of America's puritan past, this seminar will also offer an overview of American literary history, from the 16th century writings to contemporary African-American voices.

Texts marked with an **asterisk (*)** are **excerpts** and will be made available on Olat.

- (1) 23.02. -- Introduction: John Winthrop "A Model of Christian Charity"* (1630) and *A Very Short Introduction to Puritanism*
- (2) 01.03. -- Sacvan Bercovitch "The Ends of Puritan Rhetorics"*, Deborah Madsen "Introduction"*, Heike Paul "Pilgrims and Puritans and the Myth of the Promised Land"*

PURITAN BEGINNINGS

- (3) 08.03. -- Puritan Salvation: Thomas Morton "New English Canaan"* (1634-1635), William Bradford "Of Plymouth Plantation"* (1630-1650), John Cotton "A Treatise of the Covenant of Grace"* (c. 1636) and Exodus*
- (4) 15.03. -- Female Voices: Anne Hutchinson "The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson"* (1637), Anne Bradstreet "Poems and Prose"* (1635-1670), Mary Rowlandson "Narrative of Captivity and Restoration"* (1677)
- (5) 22.03. -- Puritan Nightmares: *The Salem Witch Trials*: Cotton Mather "The Wonders of the Invisible World"* (1692) / *The Jeremiad*: Michael Wigglesworth "God's Controversy with New England"* (1662), Increase Mather "The Mystery of Israel's Salvation" (1667)*

19TH CENTURY: TOWARD A NEW NATION – BETWEEN HOPE AND HAUNTING

- (6) 05.04 -- Benjamin Franklin "The Autobiography"* (1771-1790), Emerson "Nature"* (1836), Tocqueville *Democracy in America** (1835-1840)
- (7) 12.04 -- Catharine Maria Sedgwick *Hope Leslie* (1827) Part 1, Heike Paul "Pocahontas and the Myth of Transatlantic Love"
- (8) 19.04 -- Catharine Maria Sedgwick *Hope Leslie* (1827) Part 2

(9) 26.04. -- Nathaniel Hawthorne *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)

(10) 03.05. -- Nathaniel Hawthorne *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) cont.

20TH CENTURY: THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

(10) 03.05. -- Arthur Miller *The Crucible* (1953)

(12) 17.05. -- Baldwin *Go Tell it on the Mountain* (1953)

(13) 24.05. -- Toni Morrison *Paradise* (1997)

(14) 31.05. -- Toni Morrison *Paradise* (1997) cont. and Conclusion

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Showalter, Elaine. *A Jury of Her Peers: American Women Writers from Anne Bradstreet to Annie Proulx*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009.

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Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. Tucson AZ: U of Arizona Press, 1931.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- All students must prepare a **one page preliminary discussion** (ca. 300 words) for each class, to be posted on Olat (course forum) by Tuesday, 9 a.m. of the respective week. This can entail a thesis, a series of questions, comments or associations; it will facilitate class discussion and allow me to see in what directions you have been thinking while preparing for the class sessions. This will also count towards your class participation and, thus, is compulsory for each session (no more than two misses will be tolerated otherwise you will fail the seminar).
- In addition, all students must compile **written minutes** (Sitzungsprotokolle) for one of the class sessions (to be sent to me one week after the respective session at the latest).
- Students taking the class for **6 CPs** must write an essay, to be handed in by **September 1, 2016**. Please hand in a hard copy at the secretary's office, and e-mail me a pdf version. It is wise to use the class discussions to test your ideas for this written assignment. It is advisable to discuss your outline with me before writing your essay.
- **Bachelor Thesis students:** Please present your project in the final session. You will have to hand in your BA thesis by **November 4, 2016**. Please hand in a hard copy at the secretary's office, and e-mail me a pdf version. It is advisable to discuss your outline with me before writing your essay.
- **Plagiarism is a serious offence and pertains to all assignments!**

CONTACT INFORMATION

The best way to contact me is via e-mail or during my consultation hours. Please let me know in advance if you wish to talk to me.

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Keywords: Puritanism, Puritans, New England, American values. 1. The Origin of American Puritanism and Its development in America. Originally, Puritanism refers to a movement that arose within the Church of England in the latter part of the 16th century. It sought to purify, or reform the Church and establish a middle course between Roman Catholicism and the ideas of the Protestant reformers. Those who advocated Puritanism were called Puritans. In England of the 16th century, the Puritans were the more extreme Protestants within the Church. They thought that the religious reformation in England Prof Leo Marx rev of Sacvan Bercovitch book *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*; drawing.Â Let us say, in fact, that he provides a hermeneutical demonstration of the way Mather, and the Puritans generally, transformed a traditional (European) hermeneutics in order to express a distinctive (American) sense of destiny. But exactly what sort of transformation? The very title of Mather's *Life of Winthrop* (â€œNehemias Americanusâ€), we are shown, contains the germ of the answer. At one level, to be sure, the parallel it predicates is obvious. Just as Nehemiah led the first chosen people, the Israelites, from the Babylonian captivity to that other promised land, so Winthrop led his saintly *The Puritan* (1887), a statue in Springfield, Massachusetts, by Augustus Saint-Gaudens. v. t. e. In the early 17th century, thousands of English Puritans colonized North America, mainly in New England. Puritans were generally members of the Church of England who believed that the Church of England was insufficiently reformed, retaining too much of its Roman Catholic doctrinal roots, and who therefore opposed royal ecclesiastical policy under Elizabeth I of England, James I of England, and Charles I of The ideas put forth by the Puritans are not simply an important starting point for American culture because they were the first in the country, but because they offered ways of thinking that are still ingrained in our culture today. Although many of the thoughts of PuritansÂ Notions of freedom, liberty, and the role of religion within the state have long since been at the forefront of national debates. When the Puritans considered such ideas, their thoughts and writings on the matter were never quite forgotten, only shifted and modified to suit the taste of contemporary concerns. In â€œThe Journal of John Winthrop" and Williamsâ€™ treatise, â€œThe Bloody Tenet of Persecution for the Cause of Conscience" many ideas that are still present in modern American life and culture are brought forward and explored.