

Lehrkraft: StR Ackermann

Leitfach: Englisch

Rahmenthema: Slavery in the Old American South

Zielsetzung des Seminars:

Have you ever wondered why it is such a big deal that Barack Obama became President of the United States? After all, the color of one's skin does not determine one's abilities or intellectual capability. Yet, in multicultural America, the melting pot, the salad bowl, the pizza... - race still matters to many people.

While the ancestors of white Americans immigrated to the USA looking for freedom and opportunity, the ancestors of African Americans were abducted from their homeland and sold into slavery on the plantations of the American South. In our course, we will travel back to the Old – sometimes called the *romantic* – American South. On the one hand, we will look at the way white planters lived and worked and why they tried to actually promote slavery as a positive institution. On the other hand, we will examine *slave narratives* – the stories of (former) slaves who escaped, ever fearful of slavehunters, white bounty hunters who made a living by chasing runaway slaves over vast distances.

However, portraying whites only as terrible slaveholders would not be accurate, either. While people in the South grew dependent on slavery, the northern states gradually abolished it. Therefore, we will also examine so-called *abolitionist literature* like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, who tried to show the terrible, dehumanizing side of slavery and to convince whites of its horrors. Eventually, the question of slavery would become one of the central issues leading to the American Civil War.

In your term paper, you can focus on historical, literary or linguistic aspects of the Old American South.

mögliche Themen für die Seminararbeiten:

1. The beginnings of slavery in colonial America
2. King Cotton – an examination of the southern economy
3. The religion of American slaves
4. Living conditions of American slaves
5. Education, arts and culture of American slaves
6. Social groups of the White South
7. Life on the margin: free blacks in the Old South
8. The rebellion of Nat Turner (1831)
9. The underground railroad
10. An examination of pidgin English, the language of African-American slaves
11. Themes and style of antebellum slave narratives
 - a) Harriet Jacobs: Incidents in the life of a slave girl
 - b) Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass
12. Uncle Tom's Cabin as a sentimental novel
13. Uncle Tom's Cabin as a feminist text
14. Uncle Tom's Cabin - a characterization of Tom
15. The portrayal of whites in Uncle Tom's Cabin
16. The portrayal of blacks in Uncle Tom's Cabin
17. An examination of the methods Harriet Beecher Stowe uses in Uncle Tom's Cabin to convince her readers of the immorality of the "Peculiar Institution"
18. Slavery and the American Civil War

ggf. weitere Bemerkungen zum geplanten Verlauf des Seminars:

Students in this course are required to have read the novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin" by Harriet Beecher Stowe when the course starts.