

- Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines
- [www.unine.ch/lettres](http://www.unine.ch/lettres)

## Modern and Contemporary Literature : Thirteen Ways of Looking at American

Filières concernées	Nombre d'heures	Validation	Crédits ECTS
<b>Pilier principal B A - langue et littérature anglaises</b>	<b>Séminaire: 2 ph</b>	<b>oral: 30 min</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Pilier secondaire B A - langue et littérature anglaises</b>	<b>Séminaire: 2 ph</b>	<b>cont. continu</b>	<b>5</b>

ph=période hebdomadaire, pg=période globale, j=jour, dj=demi-jour, h=heure, min=minute

### Période d'enseignement:

- Semestre Printemps

### Equipe enseignante:

Boris Vejdosky

### Objectifs:

Students should be able to read the texts closely and identify the performative and poetic effects of their tropes. They should also be able to relate the texts among themselves and replace them in their historical and literary contexts. Students will also be expected to identify and apply the appropriate theoretical tools to read the texts.

### Contenu:

The title of this class is inspired by Wallace Stevens' celebrated poem from his 1923 collection *Harmonium*, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird."# The rhapsodic and chiasmic quality of the poem invites the reader to recompose the reality that he or she might be observing - a blackbird - through thirteen different views. What the blackbird is becomes a function of how we look at it, of the fiction we compose. This class proposes to look at "America" in thirteen ways to observe and critique what America is - or appears to be - and to suggest that America is the product of the ways in which it has been read over time. The thirteen texts of the class are arranged chronologically, but they do not form a survey of American literature and they do not compose the history of the nation. We shall focus on the central tropes in these texts to see what their performative effects have been over time and how they form the composite image of what we call America today.

### Forme de l'évaluation:

Brief class report (c. 20 minutes), in-class mid-term test (15th April) and final 3000-word essay to be uploaded on MOODLE by 30 June 2014.

### Documentation:

Primary Texts; or, Thirteen Ways of Looking at/Reading American Literature

1. Christopher Columbus—Letter to Santangel
2. John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity"
3. Anne Bradstreet, Poems
4. Thomas Jefferson—The Declaration of Independence
5. St John de Crèvecoeur—"What is an American?"
6. Henry David Thoreau—from *Walden*; or, *Life in the Woods*
7. Frederick Douglass, "What the Meaning of the Fourth of July to an American Negro?"
8. Walt Whitman, from *Leaves of Grass*
9. Edith Wharton, "The Tragedy of a Muse"
10. Wallace Stevens, "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird"
11. Elizabeth Bishop, "Poem"
12. Toni Morrison, from *The Bluest Eye*
13. Barack Obama, from *Dreams from my Father*.