



FACULTY  
OF ARTS

English Department | Literary and Cultural Studies Section | Research Seminar

## How Americans and Others Imagined the U.S. as Exceptional

a guest talk by

**Prof. Dr. Volker Depkat**

University of Regensburg

**Monday | March 19 | 15.50-17.25 | Room B2.13**

### | Abstract |

The talk will introduce the audience to the major trajectories and arguments of Volker Depkat's currently evolving book on "American Exceptionalism." Narratives of exceptionalism have been crucial for the intellectual construction of America from its colonial beginnings to the present. Drawing on both the geography of the land and on abundance, affluence, and free-market capitalism, these narratives of exceptionalism have served to interpret American experiences, to provide orientation, and to motivate social interaction. However, American experiences have had different meanings to different groups living in America, and there hardly ever was a shared understanding as to what these experiences meant. Furthermore, narratives of exceptionalism have never been a purely American affair, as Europeans, Africans, and Asians have been projecting their own dreams and nightmares onto the American screen and thus have also been contributing to the intellectual construction of America. Narratives of American exceptionalism have always been just as much the result of American self-descriptions as interpretations from abroad.

### | Bio |

**Volker Depkat** is a trained historian and Professor of American Studies at the University of Regensburg. His research interests include the history of North America from the colonial era to the present as perceived from a continental perspective; the history of European-American relations; biography and autobiography; visual culture studies in transatlantic contexts; and the history of federalism through a transatlantic lens. He is currently working on a book on "American Exceptionalism." Among his latest major publications are: *Geschichte der USA* (2016); *Religion and Politics: Transnational Historical Approaches* (ed. with Jürgen Martschukat, 2013); *Visual Cultures—Transatlantic Perspectives* (ed. with Meike Zwingenberger, 2012); *Geschichte Nordamerikas: Eine Einführung* (2008).

**Masaryk University, Faculty of Arts**

Arna Nováka 1, 602 00 Brno, Czech Republic

T: +420 549 49 1510, E: [info@phil.muni.cz](mailto:info@phil.muni.cz), [www.phil.muni.cz](http://www.phil.muni.cz)

Bank account: KB Brno, Ref. No.: 85636621/0100, ID: 00216224, Tax ID: CZ00216224

Please quote the Ref. No. in your reply.