

Prof. Martin Brückner  
University of Delaware

“The Revision of America:  
Memory, Power, and the Plurality of Early American Cartographies”

Conceived as a macro study, this lecture explores the image of America from the perspective of a much overlooked media event: the rise of early modern cartography during the age of the printing press. Print technology popularized the cartographic shape of America. It famously helped the German map-maker, Martin Waldseemüller, to “invent” America in 1507, and it provided the lesser known U.S. cartographer, John Melish, to set the agenda for Manifest Destiny in 1816. A brief survey of influential maps will show the rise of American cartography between 1500 and 1900, and its reception history celebrating progress and knowledge, technology and transparency. But rich as this history is, it is also based on narrow definitions describing the cartographic culture in the early Americas. In a critical assessment of historical cartography, the lecture documents two strands of historiography that have viewed American maps alternatively as accurate reflections of social and national formations or as ideological projections of empires and nation-states. Ultimately, the lecture demonstrates how early American cartography was a collaborative affair, the product not only of cartographic theories and European practices but the response to a multitude of cartographic exchanges between people of both indigenous and European origins who used maps to better represent and understand the world they inhabited.

Prof. Martin Brückner  
University of Delaware

“The Object of Maps in circa 1776:  
Spectacle and Spatial Work on the Eve of the American Revolution”

This lecture offers a micro analysis of early American cartography by exploring the rise of decorative display maps during the period of the first consumer revolution in North America. Taking its cue from much overlooked eighteenth-century definitions that declared maps to be “pictures,” the lecture examines maps through the lens of material culture studies, with special emphasis on decorative art and visual representation. Using probate inventories, sales records, and design manuals it tracks popular wall maps—including the century’s largest map by Henry Popple’s *A Map of the British Empire* (1733) and John Mitchell’s *Map of the British and French Dominions in North America* (1755) famously used during the American Revolution—from assembly halls into American parlors and bedrooms. Placing these maps into their material context reveals how maps “carto-coded” early America, affecting everything from interior architecture to visual perception to ideas of interiority.