

# American Academy Lecture

## Jefferson Cowie

Vanderbilt University

### ***Freedom: The Troubled History of an American Ideal***



We tend to think of freedom as the struggle of the oppressed for a better world. But for centuries, whenever the federal government intervened on behalf of nonwhite people, many white Americans fought back in the name of freedom—their freedom to dominate the land, labor, and political power of others. Using the micro-history drawn from his Pulitzer Prize-winning history, *Freedom's Dominion: A Saga of White Resistance to Federal Power*, Jefferson Cowie helps to explain how the freedom to oppress others has meant an enduring war against federal authority and what has changed since the re-election of Donald Trump.

**Jefferson Cowie** is James G. Stahlman Professor in American History at Vanderbilt University. He holds a BA in history from the University of California, Berkeley, and a PhD in history from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. He is the author of four books: *Freedom's Dominion: A Saga of White Resistance to Federal Power* (2022), which won the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for History; *The Great Exception: The New Deal and the Limits of American Politics* (2016); *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (2010); *Capital Moves: RCA's Seventy Year Quest for Cheap Labor* (1999). Cowie's essays and opinion pieces have appeared in the *New York Times*, *Foreign Affairs*, *American Prospect*, *Politico*, and *The New Republic*, among others, and he is the recipient of fellowships from Stanford's Center for Advanced Studies in Behavioral Sciences, the American Council of Learned Societies, Andrew Mellon Foundation, Society for the Humanities at Cornell, and the Center for US-Mexican Studies at UC San Diego. Cowie has appeared on media outlets including CNN's "The Seventies," C-SPAN's "Booknotes," NPR's "Weekend Edition," as well as in a variety of documentaries, podcasts, and radio broadcasts.

**Wednesday, Feb 5**

**6:15 - 7:30 pm  
followed by a reception**

Habelschwerdter Allee 45 / Room Hs 1b