

Courses Catalog Summer Semester 2021

American Studies Leipzig

Below please find our course catalog. We will update these pages throughout the break and the semester. Unless stated otherwise, **classes start in the week of April 12, 2021.**

Students are responsible for keeping track of updates on actual course dates (some are alternating). Please note that all instruction will take place in online formats.

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1 Information

Unless indicated otherwise in the detailed module description, **classes will start in the week of April 12, 2021**. Your instructors will contact you **via your studserv email** address with details. Please make sure to check those.

Contact Information

The Institute for American Studies is located at the University's Humanities Building (Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum, GWZ), Beethovenstraße 15, on the 5th floor, in house 3, which is opposite the elevators/stairs.

Contact information on individual faculty members can be found on the faculty page.

Registration for Classes

Most classes require prior registration. To learn more about registration procedures for students in different ASL programs (Magister, BA, MA; service for Lehramt), please have a look at the **Registration Information Sheet** available in the respective news item. As access to some classes is quite competitive, please take the procedures and deadlines for registration seriously.

American Studies Modules

Modules in the BA and MA programs are designed to achieve specific learning goals, they entail a specific amount and specific types of coursework and examinations, and they may have prerequisites. To learn more about these, we strongly encourage you to have a look at our program's Module Catalog (BA; MA) and at the appendix to our Conditions of Study (BA; MA).

International Students

International Students are very welcome in the courses offered by the Institute for American Studies. To learn more about places available in individual courses, please contact the instructor, and describe your situation briefly (i.e., exchange student, international guest student, participating in an international degree program). We will do our very best to include you in our courses.

Courses

Course catalogs of past semesters can be found in the Downloads and Resources Area.

For course offerings in Linguistics, please consult the British Studies course catalog, available at the website of the Institute for British Studies (anglistik.philol.uni-leipzig.de).

Unless stated otherwise, **classes start in the week of April 12, 2021**. Students are responsible for keeping track of updates on actual course dates (some are alternating).

Addresses:

GWZ (Geisteswissenschaftliches Zentrum), Beethovenstr. 15

NSG (Neues Seminargebäude), Universitätsstr. 5

HSG (Hörsaalgebäude), Universitätsstr. 7

2 BA Courses

2.1 Society, History, Politics I (04-001-1002)

Overall module responsibility: PD Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

Module organization & coordination: Tobias Schlobach

This module is meant to provide students with an interdisciplinary and integrated introduction to key developments and themes in the history, politics, and society of the United States from the colonial period to the conclusion of the Civil War. Beyond becoming acquainted with important aspects of American life, the module is meant to provide students with repeated exercises and practice in analytical thinking and expression, both in written and oral form.

The module consists of one lecture, one seminar, and one tutorial

Lecture: American Horizons – North American History in a Global Context I: From Colonial Times to the Civil War

Monday, 3 – 5 pm
PD Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

The lectures will explore how the unfolding of American history shaped American society and thus the country's political culture, institutions, and outcomes. Topics to be covered include transatlantic influences on the emergence of an American republic, the formation of republican institutions, the role of religion in shaping American politics and society, the evolution of an American capitalism, tensions between regional and national institutions and cultures, expansion and empire, and war. Next to political history, the class also underscores the importance of social and cultural history and emphasizes the plurality of North America's population. Moreover, the course integrates global, transatlantic, and international developments to better understand the nature of the American experience and its impact on international affairs.

For students of the BA in American Studies, the course ends with an in-class final exam.

Analytical Seminar

either a) Thursday, 9 – 11 am
Heather Pruessing

or b) Thursday, 11 am -1 pm
Heather Pruessing

or c) Thursday, 1 – 3 pm
Heather Pruessing

Through exposure to a diverse range of primary documents and interpretive essays, the Analytical Seminar seeks to guide students' in expanding and contextualizing the information covered in the module's lecture component. Furthermore, the course seeks to develop students' analytical skills in writing, debate, and presentation.

Tutorial (Übung)

either a) Wednesday, 9 – 11 am
Heather Pruessing

or b) Wednesday, 11 am – 1 pm
Heather Pruessing

or c) Wednesday, 1 – 3 pm
Heather Pruessing

Within the context of American Society, History, and Politics, students in the Praxis Seminar (Tutorial/Übung) will work to improve their writing and argumentation skills in academic English. The goal of this course is to solidify students' understanding of the lecture and analytical seminar content, while simultaneously improving critical and analytical skills through discussion and written assignments.

2.2 Introduction to Linguistics for American Studies (04-001-1003)

Overall module responsibility:

Module organization & coordination: Dr. Antje Quick

Die Vorlesung "Einführung in die synchrone Linguistik" führt ein in die Grundlagen der modernen englischen Sprachwissenschaft und gibt einen Überblick über die wesentlichen Teilgebiete der Disziplin. Das Seminar "Systemlinguistik" vertieft das in der Vorlesung "Einführung in die synchrone Linguistik" vermittelte Wissen aus den Bereichen Morphologie, Phonetik/Phonologie, Semantik und Syntax mit spezifischer Relevanz für das moderne amerikanische Englisch. Die Übung "Geschriebener Akademischer Diskurs" macht mit Form, Funktion, Entwicklung, Struktur und Stil englischer Textelemente als Basis des akademischen Essays vertraut.

The module consists of one lecture, one seminar, and one tutorial

1003-1 Vorlesung: Introduction to Synchronic Linguistics

Tuesday, 1 - 3 pm, HS 3
Lohmann, Arne
(Institut für Anglistik)

Exam: written examination (90 min) covering the lecture and the seminar

This course introduces students to the scientific study of language with a focus on English. We will get to know the field of English linguistics by working our way through the different levels of linguistic analysis: phonetics/phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. We will also learn about sub-disciplines that investigate the interface of linguistics with other scientific disciplines. In doing so the central terms and tools of the scientific study of language will be introduced and the basics of empirical research in linguistics will be discussed.

The lecture assumes a thorough knowledge of English, but does not presuppose any previous study of grammar or other aspects of linguistics.

1003-2 Seminar Systemlinguistik: Introduction to Synchronic Linguistics

Von den folgenden Seminarangeboten (a-b) ist ein Kurs zu belegen.

either a) Tuesday, 9 - 11 am, NSG 111
Quick, Antje
(Institut für Anglistik)

or b) Tuesday, 11 am - 1 pm, NSG 301
Quick, Antje
(Institut für Anglistik)

Reading list: will be announced in class.

Exam: cf. lecture "Introduction to Synchronic Linguistics"

Together with the lecture, this seminar introduces into the scientific branch of linguistics. Whereas in the lecture you familiarize yourself with basic concepts, the seminar focuses on in-depth discussion, exercises and task solving. We will start our linguistic journey with phonetics & phonology, and after that move into other traditional areas of linguistics such as morphology, syntax, and semantics. Needless to add, the textbook describes English as used in the USA.

1003-3 Übung Sprachpraxis für Amerikanisten: Written Academic Discourse

Von den folgenden Übungsangeboten (a-c) ist ein Kurs zu belegen.

either a) Monday, 9 - 1 am, NSG 225
McCafferty, Patrick
(Institut für Anglistik)

or b) Thursday, 9 - 11, NSG 225
Schmidt, Bradley
(Institut für Anglistik)

or c) Thursday, 1 - 3 pm, NSG 315
Mathieson, Jolene
(Institut für Anglistik)

Exam: written examination (90 min)

Reading list: Williams, Joseph M. Style: *The Basics of Clarity and Grace*. Ed. Joseph Bizup. 5th ed. London: Pearson, 2014. Print. [ISBN-13: 978-0-321-95330-8 / ISBN-10: 0-321953304]

Please have your copy with you in our first class.

The goal of this practical language exercise is the class essay in academic English. Students will practise their analytic and interpretative text production skills in keeping with both the formal genre conventions and current research on academic writing at tertiary levels. Our exercises are geared to helping students mitigate those weaknesses detrimental to structural clarity and target those strengths conducive to enriching the formal elements in their written academic discourse. Our exercises will focus on improving i) the mechanics of academic writing, ii) approaches to text production, iii) patterns of coherence and cohesion, and iv) systematic revision techniques.

2.3 Literature & Culture II (04-001-1007)

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Katja Kanzler

Module organization & coordination: Dr. Stefan Schubert

The module builds on and advances the knowledge and skills students acquired in the introductory module "Literature & Culture 1." It acquaints students with major issues, concepts, and theories involved in the study of literature and (popular) culture. The module explores the canon debate and its implications for the study of U.S.-American literature and culture. In addition, it introduces students to exemplary modes and genres of literature and culture, and to their reflection in scholarship.

The module consists of one lecture and two seminars

Lecture: US-American Popular Culture: History, Media, Methods

Tuesday, 9 – 11 am
Prof. Katja Kanzler

This lecture will provide an introduction to US-American popular culture and popular culture studies. It will cover three main areas: First, it will discuss what popular culture actually is – how it has been conceptualized, also in relation to other fields of cultural and literary expression, and what kinds of questions American Studies scholarship has raised about it. Two, the lecture will survey significant milestones in the historical development of US popular culture, from 19th-century minstrel shows to 21st-century (post-)television. Third, it will take a closer look at some of the media that function as carriers of popular culture, how their medial particularities have been conceptualized and what specific methods of analysis they require.

Choose two out of three seminars:

Seminar: "Whither goest thou, America, in thy shiny car in the night?": American Postwar Literature and Culture

Tuesday, 3 - 5 pm
Annika Schadewaldt

The postwar decades hold a special place in the public memory as a watershed moment for US-American literature and culture and its self-descriptions. Often called a time characterized both by conformity and dissent, mainstream and counterculture, the postwar marks the (alleged) beginning of many things we now consider quintessentially American: youth culture, consumer capitalism, suburbia, identity politics, etc. This seminar will not only serve as an introduction to some of the canonical works of the literature and (popular) culture of the period but also try to engage with the question why the 1950s and 1960s have come to be the locus of a variety of nostalgic desires for the US. Among the topics and artistic movements, we will discuss are youth rebellion, the Beats, confessional poetry, suburban sadness, and the beginnings of the Civil Rights movement. Authors may include Baldwin, Ginsberg, Plath, Didion, and Salinger, but we will also engage with other media such as film.

Seminar: Aliens, Androids, and Others: Cultural Anxieties in Science Fiction Film & TV

Wednesday, 11 am – 1 pm
Dr. Eleonora Ravizza

Science fiction, as JP Telotte has written, “represent(s) our most pressing cultural anxieties.” From exploring the fear of alien invasion in *The War of the Worlds* and *Independence Day* to exorcising the threat of nuclear holocaust in *Wargames* and the Terminator series to blurring the lines between human and machine in *Ex-Machina* and *Westworld*, science fiction has often looked toward the future with trepidation, merging a fascination of the unknown with a negotiation of contemporary fears. In this seminar, we will explore the various ways in which cultural anxieties have been reflected and processed through popular science fiction films and TV series throughout the decades. We will employ various theoretical approaches in order to analyze the convergence of ideological, political, and cultural fears with issues of gender, class, and race.

Seminar: Fictions of Class in US Culture

Thursday, 11 am - 1 pm
Dr. Stefan Schubert

The United States likes to imagine itself as a classless society, a claim that rests on the narrative that everybody has the same opportunities to achieve the ‘American Dream.’ In this seminar, we want to critically contest this notion by examining how questions of class have propelled a vast number of fictional narratives and how the stories the US tells about itself, in turn, prominently relate to issues of social class in myriad ways. In other words, we aim to gain an understanding of the complexity of class by studying US literature and popular culture—from rags-to-riches stories of the 19th century to contemporary films criticizing middle-class consumerism, from memoirs depicting the hardships of the working class to fantastic texts that metaphorically imagine a class struggle.

One central goal of the seminar will be to learn about different theories and conceptualizations of class (e.g., in terms of power, different forms of capital, status and habitus, consumption, or intersections with other categories of difference) in order to apply them to meaningful analyses. A second concern will be to work out the range and variability of issues of class in US fiction in different genres, media, and periods of time. Together, these two impulses will allow us to address questions such as: How can class be narrativized—how does class motivate stories, and how can questions of class be rendered in textual, audiovisual, metaphorical, etc. ways? Are there specific genres or forms of writing that particularly lend themselves to discussing issues of class, and why? How are concerns of class interwoven with questions of power and difference in US culture—what, overall, is the cultural work of fictions of class?

2.4 Society, History, and Politics III (04-001-1010)

Overall module responsibility: PD Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

Module organization & coordination: Tobias Schlobach

This module is meant to provide students with the opportunity to engage in-depth selected societal, historical, and political themes that have shaped and shape the United States. Issues will be explored in terms of basic questions relating to American identity, the nature of power in American society, the negotiation of forms of consensus, and how American dynamics influence the country's exercise of power and transcultural undertakings in the international arena.

The module consists of two seminars

Seminar: Slavery in North America: History – Historiography – Memory

Monday, 5 – 7 pm
PD Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

Against the backdrop of the Black Lives Matter movement and several memory projects that caused attention (like 'The 1619 Project' of the New York Times), interest in the history of slavery in North America grew enormously. A growing number of scholarly publications over the last couple of years covering all aspects of slavery also mirror that trend.

This course has three interrelated objectives: a) it is going provide a survey about the political, social, and cultural histories of slavery in North America, from colonial times to emancipation; b) it will also introduce students into different schools of slavery historiography, and c) shall discuss how that history of slavery in a variety of public memory projects.

In class, we discuss scholarly texts next to a variety of primary sources (texts, images, films). Students are asked to participate in one group moderation (Studienleistung); **deadline for a term paper** as a module exam is **September 30, 2021**.

Seminar: Here, Then, and In Between — Perspectives on the Future of the Transatlantic Relationship and Global-Local Exchange

Thursday, 3 -5 pm
Tobias Schlobach

The global order is changing and the transatlantic relationship will have to adapt accordingly. Transformations on the global level as well as within societies in the transatlantic space, pose challenges, but also provide opportunities, for renewed transatlantic engagement. The COVID-19 pandemic unveiled a plethora of shortcomings in global cooperation, spanning from public health to the economy to social cohesion. Sociopolitical changes have drawn losses for liberal political settings and boosted more authoritarian political cultures. At the same time, new voices have emerged that demand more social and ecological justice, as well as political participation.

To address these transformations and research, as well as discuss their repercussions and implications for people and regions on both sides of the Atlantic, this seminar will join forces with students from

Ohio University to form the 2021 Transatlantic Student Summit. Together with experts and practitioners from the field of international affairs in the areas of economy, security, ecology, and political movements, we will work in a truly transatlantic setting on policy and recommendations that (re-)think and (re-)construct the transatlantic relationship in innovative and inclusive ways for the new decade and beyond.

This course will feature weekly expert lectures that address current contexts and the implications for the transatlantic relations and community. In accompanying seminars, the experts will work with students on issues relevant for the future of global and transatlantic cooperation. In additional sessions and consultations with faculty from Leipzig and Ohio, students will also receive further input on methods and techniques for policy analysis, providing guidance for the design, creation and finalization of their policy research. Working together in this setting will render spheres of tension between different interests and notions, as well as identify ideas and perspectives that will add constructively to the debate.

2.5 Literature & Culture III (04-001-1011)

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Katja Kanzler

Module organization & coordination: Dr. Katja Schmieder

The module aims to deepen students' knowledge of US literature and culture, and of the methods and theories involved in their study. Two seminars allow students to explore exemplary themes and discourses in literary and cultural studies.

The module consists of two seminars

Seminar: "Timeless Age"

Thursday, 11 am – 1 pm

Dr. Katja Schmieder

Everybody and everything ages, and age as a topic, trope, and analytical lens enjoys dubious popularity. Even though "age" has finally been established as the "fourth category" of difference in cultural studies, it is still underrepresented in curricula and in scholarship. In this seminar, we will examine and discuss how age "as a cultural script, a biomedical condition, and a social-political status" (Kunow) impacts fiction and non-fiction texts – and, after all, the field of American studies. With the help of scholarly input from Gullette, Woodward, Kunow, and Maierhofer we might talk about texts ranging from Poe's "Morella," Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, and Roth's *The Dying Animal* to movies such as *Harold and Maude* (1971) or *Hard Candy* (2005).

Seminar: Sex in American Literature

Tuesday, 5 - 7pm

Sheila Heti (Picador Guest Professor)

We will be discussing depictions of sex in American writing (mostly novels), to understand how sex is used to reveal not only character, but cultural values, the political moment, and the author's and the character's views on gender, justice, race, and the soul. Students should look forward to reading some of the following writers (this list is subject to change): Nathaniel Hawthorne (*The Scarlet Letter*), Henry Miller (*Tropic of Cancer*), James Baldwin (*Giovanni's Room*), Gail Jones (*Corregidora*), Andy Warhol (*From A to B and Back Again*), Hubert Selby Jr. (*The Demon*) Joan Didon (*Slouching Towards Bethlehem*), Kathy Acker (*Blood and Guts in High School*), Leslie Feinman (*Stone Butch Blues*), Max Valerio (*The Testosterone Files*), Helen DeWitt (*Lightning Rods*), Tamara Faith Berger (*Little Cat*), Marie Calloway (*What Purpose Did I Serve in Your Life*), and Garth Greenwell (*Cleanness*). Students will be expected to read around 100 pages a week (sometimes a bit more), and submit several informal responses to texts of their choosing.

Please note that the first session of this seminar will take place in the week of **April 19**.

2.6 Ethnicity and Diversity in US Culture II: Multicultural and Multilingual America (04-001-1012)

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

Module organization & coordination: Prof. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

The objective of this module is to deepen students' knowledge of the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of the United States and of the theories and tools to analyze this diversity. Two seminars - one focusing on the study of ethnic minorities and one on the US as a multilingual nation - will enable students to develop their skills in discussing specific historical and cultural developments related to the multiethnic United States on an academic level.

The module consists of two seminars

1012-1 Seminar: Fictions of Race in American Literature and Culture

Wednesday, 3 - 5pm
Prof. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

Exam: term paper covering both seminars

How has 'race' become part of identity narratives at various moments in American cultural and literary history? How have narratives of race influenced Americans' sense of individual and national identity? And how have writers imagined and talked about race through fiction? In this course, we will read texts by American authors of varying racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds from the 18th to the 21st century, focusing on how "fictions" in the artistic sense - novels, stories, essays, etc. - have both fostered and challenged "fictions" in the ideological sense - that is, the assumptions and myths about race that have pervaded American cultural life from its early beginnings. We will explore how these texts negotiate race, racism and identity in direct or subtle ways and how they address the entanglement of race with other categories of difference such as gender, sexuality, and class.

All texts for the course will be available from Moodle.

1012-2 Seminar: Tracing cultural and linguistic variation in US-American presidential speeches since World War II

Wednesday, 9 - 11 am, NSG 405
Schützler, Ole (Institut für Anglistik)

Reading list: Charteris-Black, Jonathan. 2018. *Analyzing political speeches: Rhetoric, discourse and metaphor*. London: Palgrave. Esser, Jürgen. 2009. *Introduction to English text-linguistics*. Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang. *Famous Presidential Speeches* at The Miller Center, University of Virginia. <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches>. *Inaugural speeches* at the Avalon Project, Yale University Law School.

https://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/inaug.asp

Exam: term paper covering both seminars

Over the past four years, Donald Trump's particular, seemingly impromptu style of communication has highlighted the extreme variation that can exist in a supposedly stylised and conventionalised genre like the presidential speech. We will take a closer look at US-American presidential speeches since World War II (beginning with Franklin D. Roosevelt). The following four aspects are central: (1) the historical, political and cultural contextualisation of each speech (and speaker), (2) the discussion of the (subjective) impressions different speeches make on us, (3) the analysis of speeches at different linguistic levels, and (4) the comparison of speeches in order to separate idiosyncratic differences from historical developments, as far as possible. The main focus will lie on the third component (analysis), and to introduce at least some homogeneity we will mainly focus on inaugural speeches. Based on audio recordings and transcripts, our analyses will include phonetics and phonology, lexis, intonation, timing and fluency, grammar and textual cohesion.

Students should take a basic interest in (or at least not be averse to) the use of software like Praat or AntConc for the analysis of audio data and transcribed texts, respectively. Previous knowledge in these areas is not required, as techniques used in this class will be reasonably basic and will be properly introduced.

3 MA Courses

3.1 Political Cultures in a Transatlantic Context (04-038-2005)

Overall module responsibility: PD Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

Module organization & coordination: Dr. Stefan Schubert

This module is meant to provide students with a deeper understanding of the concept of political culture in a transatlantic context. Political culture is generally defined as the traditions, practices, institutions, material considerations and norms that shape how a society pursues politics and constructs priorities in its political process, for example, in the case of governing. Political culture involves the fields of cultural history, literature, cultural studies, political science, sociology, anthropology, and economics. It is a key concept for understanding the nature of politics and society in the United States, in Europe, and in any comparison between two regions involving comparative, international, transnational, transcultural, and global approaches to the study of history, politics, and society.

The module consists of two seminars

Seminar: History of Eugenics in American Society

Tuesday, 3 – 5 pm
PD Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

This class is to provide windows into American pasts and presents formed, informed, and transformed by eugenics. It is, first of all, a class in American (and also transnational) social and cultural history, a class about the eugenic movement from the late 19th into the mid-decades of the 20th century and how it tried to influence, shape and often enough destroyed the lives the well-being of a significant amount of people not only in the US but worldwide. Moreover, this is a class about eugenic thinking, about a system of knowledge that claimed to be scientific and that exercised a highly productive yet immensely dangerous form of biopolitics. Additionally, this class will discuss how eugenics – in a number of appearances – stays with us today and how its languages und ideas still have a strong impact on nowadays biopolitical governmentality.

All participants are requested to read the assigned texts (primary sources and secondary texts) for each class meeting and take an active part in group discussions. Several class meetings will be moderated and additionally prepared by a group of selected students who “adopt” that meeting’s topic, selecting additional or different material and guide through our discussions (Studienleistung). Deadline for a term paper as module exam is September 19, 2021.

Seminar: The Politics of Genre

Thursday, 3 - 5 pm
Dr. Stefan Schubert

Popular culture is political—such a statement will hardly raise an eyebrow in contemporary American studies circles. And yet, how exactly we can understand the relationship between ‘politics’ and popular culture and how such an understanding can inform our academic practice continues to pose many theoretical and analytical challenges, while at the same time spilling over into larger cultural discussions (e.g. in the recently renewed criticism of Disney films’ patterns of representation). In this seminar, we want to wade into this murky territory by focusing on the politics of genre in particular: What can popular genres tell us about the ‘political’ cultures of the United States at a particular time? In how far does the changing popularity of a particular genre speak to the culture in which it resonates? How can we relate evolutions and transformations within genres to cultural or social developments?

This class will combine different theories of genre, mode, form, textuality, adaptation, and related concepts with exemplary investigations of particular popular genres, understanding them as entailing both certain poetics and specific politics (e.g., in terms of questions of power, difference, or representation). One central goal of the seminar will be to examine how genres have changed over time while still clinging to certain generic markers (engaging in a dialectic of repetition and innovation), how they have been revised, transformed, or deconstructed (e.g. in feminist, queer, or transnational reimaginings), and how they have been fluidly combined and ‘hybridized’ to form new genres—or to question the validity of the concept of genre altogether. Our focus will thus lie on properly contextualized analyses of specific genre ‘texts,’ from diverse media, and on finding ways to discuss the politics of these genres in order to extrapolate on our findings. Genres to be discussed may include the Western, science fiction, (anti-)war films, crime fiction, horror, romance, melodrama, and comedy.

3.2 Media and Society (04-038-2006)

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Katja Kanzler

Module organization & coordination: Prof. Katja Kanzler

Media and its different forms lays at the heart of constructing and disseminating images, ideas, information, and identities that have shaped the very notion of “America” and how it has been received, integrated, adapted in every corner of the world, and especially in Europe. Conversely, European traditions in such mediums - whether journalism in all its forms (print, radio, tv, internet) or film, music, literature, - have had and have strong influences on many aspects of American society. This module is meant to deepen student knowledge about how media and society have evolved in the United States, Europe, and in a transatlantic context.

The module consists of two seminars

Seminar: Narrative across Media: (Post-)Television

Monday, 11 am – 1 pm

Prof. Katja Kanzler

Television and the ‘post-television’ of digital media platforms have come to figure as major sites of storytelling in today’s culture. It is particularly the storytelling in the various forms of (post-)television series and serials that has received much scholarly attention in the past few years —attention not only to the contents of the stories serial tv tells but also to their narrative form. In fact, the prevailing paradigms of contemporary television—from “quality tv” to “narrative complexity”—all suggest that it is formal features that make serial television such a significant force in US culture at the turn of the millennium.

This seminar will focus on scholarship that approaches television series in term of their narrativity. We will explore concepts of television’s media-specific narrative strategies and, on this basis, ask how a narrative approach tackles the cultural work of television and how it conceives of some of the central aspects and phenomena tied to (post-)tv culture, such as seriality, popularity, genre, or media convergence.

Please note that this is a discussion- and reading-intensive graduate seminar. Students outside the MA American Studies are generally welcome to join the class, but should inquire for prerequisites with Prof. Kanzler (katja.kanzler@uni-leipzig.de).

Seminar: The New Hollywood – Film and US-Cultural History, 1965-1980

Tuesday, 11 am – 1 pm

PD Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

50 years ago, Hollywood in a way reinvented itself. The decline in cinema attendance and the breakdown of the old studio system, among other factors, triggered a brief period of artistic, experimental, and original filmmaking featuring some films that are today considered 'classic,' such as *Bonnie & Clyde*, *Easy Rider*, *French Connection*, or *Network*, to name just a few.

Nevertheless, this is not supposed to be a class in film history. Instead, the plan is to use some of the New Hollywood films from the mid-1960s to the late 1970s to discuss US society and culture, a time period during which the war in Vietnam, the results of Civil Rights activism, the rise of new social movements, the Watergate scandal, and a noticeable economic decline influenced the daily life of almost every American. The goal of this class is to embed the New Hollywood into the social and cultural history that made this wave of cultural productions possible.

All participants are requested to read the assigned texts for each class meeting and take an active part in group discussions. All films will be available for circulation among the class members. Several class meetings will be moderated and additionally prepared by a group of selected students who "adopt" that meeting's topic, selecting additional or different material and guide through our discussions (Studienleistung). **Deadline for a term paper as module exam is September 30, 2021.**

3.3 Difference and Literature (04-038-2007)

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Katja Kanzler

Module organization & coordination: Prof. Katja Kanzler

The module addresses the negotiation of socio-cultural difference in U.S.-American literature. It aims to deepen students' understanding of 'difference' in its key manifestations 'race,' class, and gender with a focus on their articulation and contestation in literary texts. The seminars explore specific forms of difference in their historical, social, cultural, and aesthetic contexts. They will embed selected readings in 'difference and literature' within discussions of U.S. literary history and reflections on literary theory.

The module consists of two seminars

Seminar: The Historical Imagination in US Fiction

Tuesday, 1 – 3 pm
Prof. Katja Kanzler

Historical fiction is one of the most enduring—and most enduringly popular—literary genres, also in a United States context. Since the nation's very beginning, US authors have created fictional accounts of their nation's history, e.g., to forge a unified and cohesive national identity, to give voice to historical experiences of people excluded from the official writing of history, or to draw attention to the contingency and contestedness of historical accounts. Historical novels have thus served as platforms of historical thinking and intervention, as vehicles of public history and vernacular historiography, in ways that are themselves tied to the historical moments of their writing and reading. At the same time, historical fiction has tended to circulate as a form of genre fiction, mediated by particular genre conventions and frameworks of popularity.

In this seminar, we will explore a selection of US-American historical novels, along with literary scholarship that allows us to trace the dynamics of historical imagination in these narratives, the ways in which these dynamics are situated in their respective historical contexts, the kinds of national self-descriptions they articulate and the historical subjects they imagine. The seminar's selection of novels will focus on two moments when historical fiction enjoyed a particular popularity in the US: the early 19th century and the late 20th century.

Please note that this is a discussion- and reading-intensive graduate seminar. Students outside the MA American Studies are generally welcome to join the class, but should inquire for prerequisites with Prof. Kanzler (katja.kanzler@uni-leipzig.de).

Seminar: „How does it feel to be a problem?“ Literary Negotiations of Blackness from Slavery to the Present

Thursday, 1 - 3 pm
Prof. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

Throughout American history, to be black has meant to be considered as different, and, as W.E.B. DuBois has famously observed in *The Souls of Black Folk*, it often meant to be seen as a problem. The frequency of incidents of racial profiling and racialized violence against black Americans as well as the mass incarceration of African-Americans that Michelle Alexander has highlighted in *The New Jim Crow* shows that fifty years after the abolition of racial segregation racism still looms large in 21st-century America. Against this background this course asks how black writers have addressed blackness and the situation of African Americans in pamphlets, speeches, poems, and narratives, and how they have confronted issues of race, class, gender, freedom, citizenship, uplift, internationalism, and responsibility in their work. Discussing writings by black intellectuals, poets and authors of fiction we will explore different positions and visions concerning the situation of being black in America.

3.4 Interamerican Spaces and Latino/a Cultures (04-038-2016)

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

Module organization & coordination: Prof. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

This module helps students to develop an understanding of the historical and cultural interrelationships between the United States and other regions in the hemisphere as well as of the histories and cultures of U.S. Latinos/as in the context of current debates about migration, national identity and multiculturalism.

The module consists of two seminars

Seminar: Race, Ethnicity and Space

Monday, 5 – 7 pm
Prof. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

What does it mean to study race and ethnicity from a spatial perspective, and what do we gain? How is racial inequality organized spatially? How do spaces come to be known and represented in racialized terms? This course focuses on the intersections of ethnicity/race, space, and place in theoretical and fictional writings about the United States. We will analyze the spatial dimensions of race and ethnicity and the ways in which issues such as segregation, (dis)placement, or spatial contestations are produced through histories and geographies of privilege and oppression, inclusion and exclusion. Drawing on urban studies, Critical Race Theory, Border and Ethnic Studies and exploring scholarly as well as fictional sources, we will discuss the emergence and representations of spaces such as ethnic enclaves, urban “ghettoes”, gated communities, and reservations, and the different ways in which individuals and groups have competed for, (re)claimed and (re)interpreted space. The first nine sessions of this MA course will be taught as regular class sessions, followed by a project phase in which participants will be expected to investigate a research project of their own choice. The course will conclude with a colloquium dedicated to the presentation and discussion of the student projects.

Seminar: The Americas in American Literature

Wednesday, 9 - 11am
Prof. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

This course situates the study of American literature in the context of the American hemisphere rather than the nation state. We will investigate the possibilities for the study of American cultural productions opened up when “America” is understood not as a synonym for an isolated United States but as a network of historical and cultural connections that have extended across the hemisphere from the period of colonization to the present. We will read theoretical texts from the fields of comparative, inter-American and border studies as well as fictional texts that articulate the intercultural relationships between the United States and Latin America, Canada and the Caribbean. Among the authors to be discussed are Leonora Sansay, Herman Melville, Zora Neale Hurston, Kate Chopin, Evelio Grillo, and Jennine Capó Cruzet.

4 Lehramt Courses

4.1 04-AME-1401: Literatures and Cultures of the USA

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Katja Kanzler

Module organization & coordination: Dr. Eleonora Ravizza

The module consists of one lecture and one seminar

1402-1 Lecture: US-American Literature: Beginnings to Present

Wednesday, 5 – 7 pm

Prof. Katja Kanzler

Exam: written examination (90 min) covering the entire module

This lecture will provide a survey of US-American literary history from its colonial pre-history to the present. It will discuss important themes, modes, and genres that characterize US literature throughout its history, its cultural contexts, and the literary periods into which these developments have been organized. In the course of this survey, we will explore the – partly very different, partly continuous – ways in which texts across these periods define ‘Americanness,’ in which they approach human nature and social differences, and the ideas about the role and operations of literature that they reflect.

1402-2 Seminar: American Cultures and Society

Choose one out of seven seminars (1402-2a-g):

1402-2a/b/c US Cultural History and Politics: Values and Institutions

either a) Tuesday, 11 am -1 pm

Dr. Eleonora Ravizza

or

b) Tuesday, 1 - 3 pm

Dr. Eleonora Ravizza

or

c) Wednesday, 1 - 3 pm

Dr. Eleonora Ravizza

This class will cover how historical, political, and social developments in the United States were and are influenced by the rapidly changing national landscape. In this seminar, we will discuss various topics relevant to both historical and contemporary United States in terms of what determines American values and how they have shaped and empowered (or undermined) certain institutions. We will then look at how traditional American values such as freedom, justice, and equality have evolved

through time and how they have influenced the socio-political realm. Topics will include racial inequality, political corruption, the healthcare system, and the justice system.

In addition to gaining knowledge about the historical background, students will also have the opportunity to apply their findings in group discussions about a variety of texts, such as newspaper articles, magazine articles, and online videos. The seminar thus invites an interdisciplinary dialog between history, politics, and cultural studies.

Please note that all seminars will start in the week of **April 19**.

1402-2d/e/f/g US Cultural History and Politics: Myths and Narratives

or d) Wednesday, 11 am - 1 pm
Stephanie Sommerfeld

or

e) Wednesday, 1 - 3 pm
Stephanie Sommerfeld

or

f) Thursday, 11 am - 1 pm
Stephanie Sommerfeld

or

g) Thursday, 1 - 3 pm
Stephanie Sommerfeld

Historical, political, and social developments in the United States have always been influenced by long-standing myths and narratives. In this seminar we will accordingly discuss how (popular) cultural imaginations have shaped social and political realities, considering topics such as the American Dream, immigration, the myth of Manifest Destiny, notions of individuality and self-reliance, and others. We will also engage with the reverse perspective, looking at how these myths and narratives have been shaped by social and cultural realities.

In addition to gaining knowledge about the cultural and historical background, students will also have the opportunity to apply their findings in group discussions about a variety of texts, such as newspaper articles, magazine articles, and online videos. The seminar thus invites an interdisciplinary dialog between history, politics, and cultural studies.

Please note that all seminars will start in the week of **April 19**.

4.2 04-AME-1701 US Popular Culture and American Literature

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Katja Kanzler

Module organization & coordination:

The module consists of two seminars

Seminar: “Timeless Age”

Thursday, 11 am – 1 pm

Dr. Katja Schmieder

Everybody and everything ages, and age as a topic, trope, and analytical lens enjoys a dubious popularity. Even though “age” has finally been established as the “fourth category” of difference in cultural studies, it is still underrepresented on curricula and in scholarship. In this seminar, we will examine and discuss how age “as a cultural script, a biomedical condition, and a social-political status” (Kunow) impacts fiction and non-fiction texts – and, after all, the field of American studies. With the help of scholarly input from Gulette, Woodward, Kunow, and Maierhofer we might talk about texts ranging from Poe’s “Morella,” Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire*, and Roth’s The Dying Animal to movies such as *Harold and Maude* (1971) or *Hard Candy* (2005).

Seminar: Sex in American Literature

Tuesday, 5 - 7 pm

Sheila Heti (Picador Guest Professor)

We will be discussing depictions of sex in American writing (mostly novels), to understand how sex is used to reveal not only character, but cultural values, the political moment, and the author’s and the character’s views on gender, justice, race, and the soul. Students should look forward to reading some of the following writers (this list is subject to change): Nathaniel Hawthorne (*The Scarlet Letter*), Henry Miller (*Tropic of Cancer*), James Baldwin (*Giovanni’s Room*), Gayl Jones (*Corregidora*), Andy Warhol (*From A to B and Back Again*), Hubert Selby Jr. (*The Demon*) Joan Didon (*Slouching Towards Bethlehem*), Kathy Acker (*Blood and Guts in High School*), Leslie Feinman (*Stone Butch Blues*), Max Valerio (*The Testosterone Files*), Helen DeWitt (*Lightning Rods*), Tamara Faith Berger (*Little Cat*), Marie Calloway (*What Purpose Did I Serve in Your Life*), and Garth Greenwell (*Cleanness*). Students will be expected to read around 100 pages a week (sometimes a bit more), and submit several informal responses to texts of their choosing.

Please note that the first session of this seminar will take place in the week of **April 19**.

5 Creative Writing

5.1 BA Professional Skills Module “Creative Writing: Envisioning America”

(04-001-1020 | 5 Credits)

Creative Writing, On The Spot

Thursday, 5 - 7 pm
Sheila Heti (Picador Guest Professor)

We will spend much of our in-class time writing. Each session will involve practicing different writing exercises and techniques, with students then sharing their work with each other. Not everyone has to share every time, but students who think they will never want to share should consider not taking this class. We will practice skills that are related to writing well, such as asking questions of other people, how to make decisions in longer-term creative projects, how to incorporate interruptions into one’s creative process, and more. There may be some writing assignments to complete between sessions. For those who enjoy writing, exploring and experimenting, it will be a fun class.

Please note that the first session of this class will take place in the week of **April 19**.

Please also see our news item for more information on this module.