

Courses Catalog Summer Semester 2022

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 4, 2022.**

Students are responsible for keeping track of updates on actual course dates (some are alternating).

Table of Contents

| | | |
|------------|---|-----------|
| 1 | Information | 2 |
| 2 | BA Courses | 3 |
| 2.1 | Society, History, Politics I (04-001-1002) | 3 |
| 2.2 | Introduction to Linguistics for American Studies (04-001-1003) | 5 |
| 2.3 | Literature & Culture II (04-001-1007) | 7 |
| 2.4 | Society, History, and Politics III (04-001-1010) | 10 |
| 2.5 | Literature & Culture III (04-001-1011) | 11 |
| 2.6 | Ethnicity and Diversity in US Culture II: Multicultural and Multilingual America (04-001-1012) | 12 |
| 3 | MA Courses | 13 |
| 3.1 | Political Cultures in a Transatlantic Context (04-038-2005) | 13 |
| 3.2 | Media and Society (04-038-2006) | 15 |
| 3.3 | Difference and Literature (04-038-2007) | 17 |
| 3.4 | Interamerican Spaces and Latino/a Cultures (04-038-2016) | 19 |
| 4 | Lehramt Courses | 20 |
| 4.1 | 04-AME-1401: Literatures and Cultures of the USA | 20 |
| 4.2 | 04-AME-1701 US Popular Culture and American Literature | 23 |
| 5 | Creative Writing | 24 |
| 5.1 | BA Professional Skills Module “Creative Writing: Envisioning America” | 24 |

1 Information

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 (BA, MA, Lehramt), please have a look at the Registration Information Sheet. 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 4, 2022**. Students are responsible for keeping track of updates on actual course dates (some are alternating).

Please keep checking our website for up-to-date information on how classes will take place.

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: Prof. Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

Module organization & coordination: Heather Pruessing

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: Constructing North American History I: From Colonial Times to the Civil War

Monday, 5 – 7 pm, HS 6
Prof. 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, NSG 328
Heather Pruessing

or b) Thursday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 328
Heather Pruessing

or c) Thursday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 328
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.

The Analytical seminars will start one week later: first class is on **April 14, 2022**.

Tutorial (Übung)

either a) Wednesday, 9 – 11 am, HS 16
Heather Pruessing

or b) Wednesday, 11 am – 1 pm, HS 16
Heather Pruessing

or c) Wednesday, 1 – 3 pm, HS 16
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.

The Tutorials will start one week later: first class is on **April 13, 2022**.

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

Overall module responsibility: Dr. Antje Quick

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, Hörsaalgebäude HS 3
Dr. 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, Seminargebäude S 305
Dr. Quick, Antje
(Institut für Anglistik)

or b) Tuesday, 11 am - 1 pm, Seminargebäude S 305
Dr. 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) Wednesday, 9 - 11 am, Seminargebäude S 305
Mathieson, Jolene
(Institut für Anglistik)

or b) Wednesday, 11 am - 1 pm, Seminargebäude S 305
Mathieson, Jolene
(Institut für Anglistik)

or c) Thursday, 9 - 11 am, Seminargebäude S 427
Schmidt, Bradley
(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. Dr. 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, HS 6
Prof. Dr. 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: Postmodernism: Contexts, Texts, and Issues

Wednesday, 3 - 5 pm, GWZ 2 5.16
Annika Schadewaldt

If you ask psychologist and pundit Jordan B. Peterson, postmodernism is at the root of many of contemporary society's ills. But what was postmodernism in the first place? And why are people still angry about it? This seminar will introduce students to some of the topics, texts, and basic concepts of postmodernism as a cultural phenomenon spanning roughly from 1965 to 2001. We will read and watch some canonical as well as more peripheral postmodern texts and movies and examine them both as aesthetic objects and complex negotiations of social, philosophical, and technological developments, such as the emergence of new media, the Cold War, 'late capitalism,' poststructuralism, and the changing literary field. We will also engage with some scholarly attempts at understanding what 'postmodernism' and its related concerns may be. A central question of the class will be how postmodernist texts examine the relationship between storytelling and how we come to know ourselves as well as the world around us. Whereas postmodernism traditionally has been understood as a catch-all periodizing term covering developments of literature and culture in the second half of the twentieth century (or at least the parts deemed worth studying), this seminar will approach

postmodernism as one artistic response to contemporary developments among many. We will thus not only try to understand how postmodernism's practitioners conceptualized their own projects, but we will also critically engage with some of the ways in which 'postmodernism' has been used to frame cultural history in certain ways, paying special attention to the relationship of these framings to whiteness and (middle-class) masculinity. We will end the seminar by thinking about why and when (and if) postmodernism has ended and what comes after.

Topics discussed may include: technology and media, consciousness and agency, the spectacle, consumerism, utopia and apocalypse, metafictionality and intertextuality.

Classes for this seminar start in the week of **April 13**. Please purchase Fran Ross's *Oreo* and Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* (any edition/medium is fine); all other readings will be made available.

Seminar: (Re-)Imagining Nature, the Environment, and the Climate throughout US Fiction

Monday, 3 - 5 pm, NSG 323

Dr. Stefan Schubert

Discussions about climate change and the climate crisis have picked up in intensity in recent years, and while movements like Fridays for Future are particularly prominent in Europe, disagreements over the climate and the environment—and humanity's role in it—dominate the US national conversation as well. In fact, in the United States, projecting particular images onto the environment and utilizing them for 'political' discussions goes back to a long history of constructing and (re-)imagining nature in fictional texts, in literature just as much as in popular culture. This entails the Puritan fear of the wilderness as the 'place where God is not' just as much as romanticized versions of nature as a refuge for solitary living, thinking of nature as benevolent and nurturing, or imagining it as a harsh and unforgiving place, a landscape to be conquered.

In this class, we want to probe into such narrative constructions of nature by, first, looking at the history of nature writing in US culture, along paradigms such as the wilderness, the frontier, and the sublime. We will then examine how these themes reoccur in a broad range of genres, media, and time periods: from Thoreau's *Walden* to contemporary Native American literature, from Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* to neo-Western movies like *Brokeback Mountain* or *No Country for Old Men*, from disaster films (such as the recent *Don't Look Up*) to postapocalyptic zombie fiction like *The Walking Dead*, from science/climate fiction narratives like *Snowpiercer* to survival video games. In all of these diverse texts, we will focus on studying the poetics and politics of nature from the perspective of literary and cultural studies, combining our analytical interest with theoretical and conceptual impulses surrounding questions, among others, of space, urban vs. rural divides, individualism, community and belonging, and difference (e.g. in terms of gender or class).

Seminar: The Spectacle of Monsters: Crime, Deviance, and the Media in American Culture

Monday, 11 am - 1 pm, NSG 328

Dr. Steffen Wöll

From western outlaws and public enemies of the Great Depression to the war on drugs and mass incarceration of racial minorities: Crime and punishment have long-since occupied a central position in the socio-cultural fabric of the United States. This seminar investigates criminality and social deviance by asking about their representations as pleasure or spectacle in various media formats. We will work with a diversity of theoretical approaches and sources, including Truman Capote's non-fiction novel *In Cold Blood*, racialized representations of perpetrators and victims in police photography (mugshots), the psychology of 'missing white woman syndrome,' as well as true crime podcasts and investigative journalism. Introducing an additional analytical level, the seminar will survey actual cases that will help us to understand how race, class, and gender dynamics inform representations of criminality.

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

Overall module responsibility: Prof. 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 1: Slavery in North America: History – Historiography – Memory

Tuesday, 9 - 11 am, NSG 229

Prof. 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 (4,500 words) as a module exam is September 30, 2022.**

Seminar 2: Contending Perspectives on Global Political and Economic Relations

This seminar will start **April 14**

Thursday, 3 -5 pm, GWZ 2 5.16

Tobias Schlobach

This seminar will explore the structure and dynamics of global political and economic relations, the role of the United States as a key actor in them, as well as their regional and local implications. Drawing from current and recent history, we will examine individual cases and broader developments in areas like security, ecology, economy, and political movements, and identify and evaluate differing—and often contending—perspectives by applying conceptual and analytical frameworks from multiple fields of study.

Please Note: If conditions allow, this course will include international exchange components, which will also further define the final structure of the seminar. More information will follow soon.

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

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Dr. 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 1: American Surrealism

Wednesday, 11 am - 1 pm, GWZ 3 5.15
Hilary Leichter (Picador Guest Professor)

What do we mean when we say that a short story is strange? How does an author create a bizarre world that still feels tethered to our own? Language is already embedded with surrealism; how do we tap into the "power of the odd" to shine a light on the human, the emotional, the mundane? You can call it the *unheimlich*, the uncanny, or the just plain weird. American contemporary fiction is overflowing with new and off-kilter approaches to the form.

In this seminar, students will become comfortable discussing fiction that mines the otherworldly, the fabulist, and the fantastic. We will read short stories by masters of the form, including Jen George, Carmen Maria Machado, Donald Barthelme, Kelly Link, Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, and Alice Sola Kim.

Please note that this class will only start in the week of May 16. Due to this, there will be double sessions for some weeks.

Seminar 2: Science and/as Fiction: Eugenics in American Literature and Culture

Thursday, 11 am – 1 pm, GWZ 2 5.16
Dr. Katja Schmieder

Eugenics, a quasi-scientific system of ideas, theories, and practices, reached a peak in the first half of the 20th century, however, it informs and shapes recent political, medical, and philosophical developments in multiple ways. Literary and cultural texts in the U.S. (and – indeed – worldwide) have critically reflected and (sometimes eerily) anticipated the impact of eugenic thought and its execution. In this seminar, we will consider different literary and filmic texts – from stories by William Faulkner, Margaret Atwood, or Jodi Picoult to movies like *Gattaca* (1997), *The Island* (2005), or *Jupiter Ascending* (2015) – and examine their narrative and rhetorical strategies of endorsing or dismantling eugenics as an arbiter of ideologies about the reproductive body.

We might address (1) how scientific discourse is employed to establish (narrative) authority, and, thus, blur the boundaries between "fact" and "fiction," (2) how eugenics as a topic allows for a questioning and deconstruction of ideas (morality and free will v. greater good and collective) in order to reveal or obfuscate the loci of power and control, (3) how concepts associated with eugenics like (bio)ethics, (bio)power, and social Darwinism interfere with the choices and beliefs of the characters.

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

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Dr. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez, Prof. Dr. Ole Schützler

Module organization & coordination: Prof. Dr. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez, Prof. Dr. Ole Schützler

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: Performing Race and Ethnicity

Wednesday, 3 – 5 pm, NSG 425
Prof. Dr. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

This course explores race and ethnicity as constructed and performed/performable identities in American cultural discourses and literary texts. We will explore how through acts of representation, bodies are objectified and stereotyped, how the performance of whiteness has served to create exclusive notions of national identity and culture, but also how ethnic and racial identities have been employed in playful, liberating or resistive ways. Our discussions will include issues such as minstrelsy and racial masking, passing, "playing Indian," and performing Latinidad, as well as the multiple ways in which authors have addressed racial and ethnic performances in novels, stories, and plays.

This course will start on **April 13**.

1012-2 Seminar: Sociolinguistic Variation in American English

Wednesday, 9 - 11 am, Seminargebäude S 414
Prof. Dr. Schützler, Ole
(Institut für Anglistik)

Reading list: will be provided in the course

Exam: term paper covering both seminars

In this seminar, we will take a sociolinguistic perspective on American English. Participants will first acquire a general understanding of sociolinguistics, as well as the historical background and key features of American English – both as a standard reference dialect ('General American') and as a set of regional and social dialects (e.g. New England, Southern, Californian, Canadian and African American Vernacular). We will then read and discuss seminal studies (starting with some of the classics authored by William Labov) that have highlighted sociolinguistic variation in those different varieties. Apart from learning about the variability of American English, methodological aspects will also be the topic of this class, which should support participants in the development of their own research portfolios and term papers.

3 MA Courses

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

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

Module organization & coordination: Prof. Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

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: The Irish in America: Performing Diaspora

Tuesday, 3 – 5 pm, NSG 427
Prof. Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

Ireland has the largest diaspora to indigenous population rate of any country in the world, and in the United States of America this group has flourished from outcasts to political powerhouse. Through a mix of Irish pride and American nationalism, the Irish American diaspora has become one of the most dominant and influential socio-political groups in American history. In this course we will examine how the Irish underwent this dramatic change. From portrayals of the Irish as a subhuman, nationalist group whose loyalties lay with the fenian struggle against British rule in their homeland to the proliferation of US presidents proudly claiming Irish descent in the 20th century, the oftentimes dichotomous nature of the Irish American experience will be dissected and contextualized alongside important events in American social and political history. A variety of factors and issues will be considered when addressing the overarching themes of performance and the construction of whiteness for the Irish in America.

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 (6,500 words) is September 30, 2022.

Seminar: The Proletarian Novel and Beyond: Writing Work in US-American Literature

Monday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 423

Prof. Dr. Katja Kanzler

For many literary scholars, the proletarian novel is one of the quintessential genres of political fiction. While this genre – typically understood as narratives that address working-class experience from a Marxist perspective of class-consciousness and activism – has a relatively slim (albeit significant) tradition in a United States context, there is a much broader body of US literature that engages constellations and experiences of labor-related exploitation, oppression, poverty, and/or precarity. In this seminar, we will probe into this tradition, reading and discussing literary texts that range from the early 19th century to the contemporary period. These readings will be accompanied by discussions of how literary and cultural scholarship has conceptualized (the working) class in a US context, including the intersectionality of class with other axes of social inequality, what traditions and conventions of ‘writing work’ it has identified, and how it has proposed to read the politics of such literary texts.

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).

3.2 Media and Society (04-038-2006)

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Dr. Katja Kanzler

Module organization & coordination: Prof. Dr. 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: Affect and Emotion in Popular Media Culture

Wednesday, 3 – 5 pm, NSG 429

Prof. Dr. Katja Kanzler

Affect and emotion play a central role in popular media culture. This centrality shows, for example, in how popular culture studies foregrounds the category of ‘pleasure’ in its approaches to popular media artifacts; it also shows in many terms that the field of popular media culture uses to describe itself – genre terms, for example, like ‘thriller,’ ‘weepy,’ or ‘horror movie.’ To a significant extent, popular media culture does its work of ‘entertaining’ us by eliciting bodily responses – making us laugh, cry, shiver with horror, excited with suspense – and by making us feel. In this seminar, we will explore some of the ways in which popular culture studies has theorized affect and emotion, and how it has conceptualized the (cultural) work of these in selected popular genres. We will both develop and apply these conceptual insights to a few selected artifacts of US-American popular culture.

Please note that this is a discussion- and reading-intensive graduate seminar, with an emphasis on theory. 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: Body Politics of Hollywood Horror, 1920s to 1990s

Wednesday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 111

Prof. Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

The horror genre is one of the most profitable in the history of filmmaking. It is lauded by some, rebuked by others, but enjoyed by millions. But what makes this genre of filmmaking so popular and powerful?

We will explore the changing landscape of the horror film from the 1920s to the 1990s. Although we will discuss the movies in filmic terms, emphasis rests on placing Hollywood horror movies into surrounding cultural discourse. The basic function of the horror film – to elicit unsettling emotions of fear, shock, anxiety, and disgust – has also made the genre a frequent target of censorship and a convenient scapegoat for broader social crises and moral panics. Such controversies also speak to the

crucial ways that horror cinema both explores and negotiates cultural tensions and anxieties about identity, technology, religion, difference/Otherness, and the environment. We will especially look at the body politics of horror, addressing issues such as gender, sexuality, and (dis)ability.

Trigger Warning: Some of the material in this course contains violent, sexually explicit, racist, sexist, and misogynistic material. To do justice to the subject of the course, this material needs to be addressed. If you anticipate that this will create a problem for you, you should not register for the course.

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 (6,500 words) is September 30, 2022.

3.3 Difference and Literature (04-038-2007)

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Dr. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

Module organization & coordination: Dr. Stefan Schubert

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: Sentimental Literature and Its Legacies

Thursday, 3 - 5 pm, NSG 305

Dr. Stefan Schubert

In nineteenth-century America, the sentimental novel was a prominent genre with a wide readership, but—partly because such novels were mainly written by women—it was frequently derided by contemporary authors, just as the term 'sentimental' has retained a pejorative connotation to this day. And yet, many of these writings are noteworthy for their literary quality, their immense popularity (think *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), and the important social and political issues that they addressed, such as women's rights, economic inequality, slavery and abolitionism, and other questions of difference, exclusion, and power. At the same time, at the core of these novels lies a more general notion of the sentimental, an appeal to emotionality and sensibility. Understood in this way, 'the sentimental,' as a mode, characterizes not just one particular genre of writing but seems central for how a wide range of narratives can address their readers in effective ways. This is true from the nineteenth century to today, and for diverse genres all throughout US literature and (popular) culture—and prominently in the realm of politics as well.

Accordingly, in this seminar, we will trace the legacies of the sentimental novel by examining the importance of emotionality and sensibility throughout US culture. In the course of the semester, we will study a few of the 'original' nineteenth-century works that have been more or less frequently deemed sentimental (e.g. *The Lamplighter*, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, *The Awakening*); consider in how far later genres can be seen as 'successors' to these earlier writings (such as the melodrama, the romance, or the soap opera); and look for traces of the sentimental mode in a variety of cultural artifacts, understanding 'literature' in a broader sense: from contemporary writings by women (e.g. the novel *Little Fires Everywhere*, the films *Little Women* or *Promising Young Woman*) to high-brow pop culture arguably making use of the sentimental in other genres (e.g. political dramas, certain science fiction, TV shows like *Mad Men* or *Succession*) to political speeches and populist movements. Along the way, we want to transcend the high/low-culture divisions in which the sentimental is still often thought of and tackle questions such as: What characterizes the sentimental—which strategies does it use to 'move' (and appeal to) its audiences? How can we best theorize sentimental elements in US fiction and culture, and what role do emotion and affect play in theoretical conceptions of the sentimental? What kinds of politics does the sentimental lend itself to as a mode? How does it negotiate questions of gender, class, and 'race'—as well as their intersections—in particular? And can we detect any shifts and changes throughout the decades—particularly 'sentimental' eras, or perhaps the resurgence of the sentimental in contemporary times?

Seminar: Defining and Redefining African American Literature

Wednesday, 9 - 11 am, NSG 111
Prof. Dr. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

This course will explore “African American Literature” as an unstable signifier that has been defined, redefined and questioned in the field of tension between normative literary expectations and individual expression. We will discuss how black writing from the 18th to the 21st century has addressed blackness and the situation of African Americans in pamphlets, speeches, poems, and narratives and how writers have reacted to the varying social and literary contexts surrounding their work. Our discussions will include texts by black intellectuals, poets and authors of fiction and the way authors negotiate issues of race, class, gender, freedom, citizenship, uplift, internationalism, and responsibility in their texts.

This course will start on **April 13**.

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

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Dr. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

Module organization & coordination: Prof. Dr. 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: Spaces and Narratives of (In)Security in US Culture and Literature

Tuesday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 426
Prof. Dr. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

What is the relationship between security and space? How is security produced and performed in various US spaces (continental and extracontinental), how are safe and unsafe spaces constructed and narrated, and how have perceptions of security and vulnerability changed over time? In this course we will explore US-American spaces, imaginaries and narratives related to concepts of security and insecurity as well as the way such narratives have been functionalized for different purposes. We will look at spaces such as gated communities, “ethnic” neighborhoods, suburbs, detention camps, prisons, and borders, and the ways narratives of insecurity are related to the construction of new communities and coalitions. The first part of this MA course will be taught in the form of 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.

This course will start on **April 12**.

Seminar: Imagining the Americas in U.S. Fiction

Thursday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 329
Prof. Dr. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

In this course we will discuss fictional texts that articulate the entanglements and intercultural relationships between the United States and Latin America, Canada and the Caribbean. Drawing on the fields of comparative, inter-American and border studies, we will understand “America” as a network of historical and cultural connections that have extended across the hemisphere from the period of colonization to the present. Among the authors to be discussed are Leonora Sansay, Herman Melville, Zora Neale Hurston, Eric Walrond, George Washington Cable, Evelio Grillo, Luis Urrea, and Jennine Capó Cruzet.

This course will start on **April 14**.

4 Lehramt Courses

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

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Dr. 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, HS 7

Prof. Dr. 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):

Depending on the state of the pandemic, Seminar Slot g (Wednesday 11 am) might be offered in a hybrid format so as to accommodate immunocompromised students and students with care obligations. If you are a member of either of these groups, please email smherrmann@uni-leipzig.de ahead of time to receive priority enrollment in this slot.

Please Note: all seminars (1402-2a-g) will start in the week for April 11, 2022.

1402-2a/b American Progress? Negotiating Myths of Identity and Democracy in US History

either a) Tuesday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 410
Dr. Eleonora Ravizza

or b) Tuesday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 410
Dr. Eleonora Ravizza

From the ‘discovery’ of America and the settling of colonies in New England to US Independence, from the myth of the melting pot to the rise of modern industry and technology, US history has often been recounted as if determined by a narrative of progress. This frame has strongly influenced the way that American identity has been established through founding myths and how narratives of American democracy, both at home and abroad, have shaped the way that the US thinks about itself as a nation.

In this class, we will explore various historical events and narrative patterns, paying particular attention to the way that the shaping of myths determined the American path. We will examine how certain narratives established the parameters of what it meant to be an American, who was allowed to be included in that definition, and how others have been silenced and excluded systematically. We will look at how the self-fashioning of the US as a global player has influenced its foreign policy through the exporting of democracy, mass consumerism, and American culture.

Overall, in this seminar, we will reflect on the way historical myths are created, narrated, and perpetuated and we will question these very narratives by including different perspectives and varied points of view from which history can be told.

1402-2c/d The (Death of the) American Dream: Questioning Narratives of Power, Wealth, and Individualism

or c) Wednesday, 9 – 11 am, HS 17

Dr. Eleonora Ravizza

or d) Wednesday, 11 am – 1 pm, HS 17

Dr. Eleonora Ravizza

The American Dream is a foundational myth of American society and culture. In recent decades, critics of this idea have become more vocal, pointing at the great inequality present in American society and even claiming that the American Dream is dead. Examining the historical and social circumstances that have shaped the ideology of the American Dream is crucial in order to understand how the US perceives itself as a nation without a class system, a nation of immigrants who can climb the social ladder in a country of abundance and opportunities.

In this class, we will look at how and why the rags-to-riches narrative has been fashioned and we will examine how narratives of wealth and equality have fueled the rise of American-style capitalism and determined the impact of mass consumerism. Looking at the history of American imperialism will also provide another facet of how capitalistic forces determined American intervention in the colonial context and beyond. Furthermore, we will investigate how the suppression of the labor movement, the belief in trickle-down economics, and the lack of a social safety net have led to increasing social inequality.

Overall, in this seminar, we will reflect on the way historical myths are created, narrated, and perpetuated and we will question these very narratives by including different perspectives and varied points of view from which history can be told.

1402-2 e/f/g Nation and Imagination? US Cultural History and the Myths of 'America'

or e) Tuesday, 11 am - 1 pm, NSG 322
Dr. Sebastian Herrmann

or f) Tuesday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 322
Dr. Sebastian Herrmann

or g) Wednesday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 213
Dr. Sebastian Herrmann

In this seminar we will engage decisive moments and core issues in US cultural and political history by asking for how they have shaped, or expressed, American national (self-)perceptions. Doing so will not only allow us to work on a deeper understanding of the cultural history of the United States, or to engage both the myths of 'America' and the contradictions and tensions they entail. On a methodological level it will allow us to practice the kind of interdisciplinary inquiry that has been, and continues to be, a hallmark of American studies.

Please Note: all seminars (1402-2a-g) will start in the week for April 11, 2022.

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

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Katja Kanzler

Module organization & coordination: Dr. Katja Schmieder

The module consists of two seminars

Seminar 1: American Surrealism

Wednesday, 11 am - 1 pm, GWZ 2 5.16
Hilary Leichter (Picador Guest Professor)

What do we mean when we say that a short story is strange? How does an author create a bizarre world that still feels tethered to our own? Language is already embedded with surrealism; how do we tap into the “power of the odd” to shine a light on the human, the emotional, the mundane? You can call it the *unheimlich*, the uncanny, or the just plain weird. American contemporary fiction is overflowing with new and off-kilter approaches to the form. In this seminar, students will become comfortable discussing fiction that mines the otherworldly, the fabulist, and the fantastic. We will read short stories by masters of the form, including Jen George, Carmen Maria Machado, Donald Barthelme, Kelly Link, Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah, and Alice Sola Kim.

Please note that this class will only start in the week of May 16. Due to this, there will be double sessions for some weeks.

Seminar 2: Science and/as Fiction: Eugenics in American Literature and Culture

Thursday, 11 am – 1 pm, GWZ 2 5.16
Dr. Katja Schmieder

Eugenics, a quasi-scientific system of ideas, theories, and practices, reached a peak in the first half of the 20th century, however, it informs and shapes recent political, medical, and philosophical developments in multiple ways. Literary and cultural texts in the U.S. (and – indeed – worldwide) have critically reflected and (sometimes eerily) anticipated the impact of eugenic thought and its execution. In this seminar, we will consider different literary and filmic texts – from stories by William Faulkner, Margaret Atwood, or Jodi Picoult to movies like *Gattaca* (1997), *The Island* (2005), or *Jupiter Ascending* (2015) – and examine their narrative and rhetorical strategies of endorsing or dismantling eugenics as an arbiter of ideologies about the reproductive body.

We might address (1) how scientific discourse is employed to establish (narrative) authority, and, thus, blur the boundaries between “fact” and “fiction,” (2) how eugenics as a topic allows for a questioning and deconstruction of ideas (morality and free will v. greater good and collective) in order to reveal or obfuscate the loci of power and control, (3) how concepts associated with eugenics like (bio)ethics, (bio)power, and social Darwinism interfere with the choices and beliefs of the characters.

5 Creative Writing

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

(04-001-1020 | 5 Credits)

Beginning Fiction Workshop

Tuesday, 11 am - 1 pm, GWZ 3 5.15
Hilary Leichter (Picador Guest Professor)

This class is about troubleshooting and blueprinting, diagramming and detailing, construction and demolition. Through a close examination of character, voice, plot, perspective, place, and language, we will talk about how to edit our work, and how to get started. What makes fiction operate? What allows it to run smoothly? Why does a story make us feel a certain way, and what mechanism carries the emotion from the page to the reader? How can we better use these tools in our own writing practice? And most importantly—how do you remember the joy and surprise inherent in creation, while you’re facing down the blank page? Each week, we will discuss short stories from contemporary writers, focusing on a different aspect of narrative in every conversation. You will turn in at least one short story during the term to be discussed carefully and generously by your peers in the workshop space. This story can be edited and submitted as your final assignment.

Please note that this class will only start in the week of May 16. Due to this, there will be double sessions for some weeks.

Please see our news items on Hilary Leichter as well as more information on this module.