

Courses Catalog Summer Semester 2024

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 2, 2024.**

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

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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 Documents 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 2, 2024**. 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.

Class will start on Monday, April 15, 2024.

Analytical Seminar

either a) Thursday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 426
Heather Pruessing

or b) Thursday, 11am – 1pm, NSG 426
Heather Pruessing

or c) Thursday 3 – 5 pm, 304
Parker Billinghamurst, M.A.

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.

All classes will start in the week of April 8, 2024.

Tutorial (Übung)

either a) Wednesday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 412
Heather Pruessing

or b) Wednesday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 412
Heather Pruessing

or c) Wednesday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 412
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.

All classes will start the in week of April 8, 2024.

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

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Dr. Lohmann, Arne

Module organization & coordination: tba

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.

Erasmus Studierende können NUR die Vorlesung besuchen, nicht die Übung "Kernbereiche Linguistik"

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

1003-1 Vorlesung: Introduction to Synchronic Linguistics

Tuesday, 1 - 3 pm, HS 3
Prof. 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 Übung: Kernbereiche Linguistik

Exchange students may not enroll in this course.

Choose one out of sixteen classes (a-p):

either a) Monday, 7 – 9 am, NSG 120
Quick, Antje
(Institut für Anglistik)

or b) Monday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 120
Quick, Antje
(Institut für Anglistik)

or c) Monday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 220
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten
(Institut für Anglistik)

- or d)** Monday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 220
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or e)** Monday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 220
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or f)** Monday, 3 – 5 pm, NSG 104
Küsters, Clara
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or g)** Tuesday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 213
Quick, Antje
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or h)** Wednesday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 321
Lohmann, Arne
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or i)** Wednesday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 225
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or j)** Wednesday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 225
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or k)** Wednesday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 124
Seidel, Beate
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or l)** Wednesday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 124
Seidel, Beate
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or m)** Thursday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 315
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or n)** Thursday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 315
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or o)** Thursday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 315
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or p)** Friday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 315
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten
(Institut für Anglistik)

Required reading: Ingo Plag et al. 2015. Introduction to English Linguistics. 3rd, revised and enlarged edition. Berlin, Boston: de Gruyter.

Exam: electronic exam (90 min.) covering the lecture and this course

This course accompanies the lecture 'Introduction to Synchronic Linguistics', which gives a survey of various linguistic subdisciplines. It extends the introduction within the following core fields of linguistics: phonetics/phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. We will describe the sound system of English, the structure of the English syllable and phonological processes operating in connected speech, discuss and analyse the patterns of English word-formation and inflection as well as the structure of phrases and sentences. Within semantics we will cover semantic relations in the lexicon and different approaches to the description of meaning. Participants are expected to use the book by Plag et al. (2015). Additional reading material will be provided in class.

1003-3 Übung: Sprachpraxis für Amerikanisten: Written Academic Discourse

Choose one out of three classes (a-c):

either a) Tuesday, 11 am - 1 pm, NSG 124
Allen, Thandi
(Institut für Anglistik)

or b) Tuesday, 3 pm - 5 pm, NSG 210
Mathieson, Jolene
(Institut für Anglistik)

or c) Wednesday, 11 am - 1 pm, NSG 211
Allen, Thandi
(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 I.” 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 1: Multiple Selves: Family, Community, and Identity in US Fiction

Tuesday, 3 - 5 pm, NSG 304

Dr. Stefan Schubert

Thinking about identity in a US context invariably evokes mythical conceptions of rugged individualism and the American Dream, which champion the single individual in a quest against others. Simultaneously, though, the United States has also been imagined as a particular community, on smaller and larger scales, especially in the context of (im)migration narratives and in stories of racial or class conflict. In this seminar, we want to trace these competing imaginaries—between the individual and the communal self—as they are represented, narrated, visualized, or otherwise envisioned in literature and popular culture. We will proceed from the idea that identity is not something singular or static but rather something best understood as flexible and dynamic, in the plural—as multiple identities or selves.

The notion of the family, which Sigmund Freud called the “germ cell of civilization,” will play a particularly important role for our inquiries, as it constitutes a prominent space intermingling individuals and a collective. In the course of the seminar, we will address questions such as: Where do notions of identity and community clash in US fiction, where do they harmonize? How have ideas of family and community changed historically, as evidenced in different writings or films? Do particular media, genres, or forms of fiction lend themselves differently to thinking about identity? How do ‘race,’ class, gender, and other categories of difference intersect in these constructions? What cultural and

political work do representations of the family do on a national level (e.g., in terms of ‘family values’ or the staging of the presidential first family)? Texts and concepts we will look at may include sentimental(ist) fiction, the novels of authors like Celeste Ng and Brit Bennett, TV sitcoms that feature more traditional or newer (e.g. queered) understandings of family, and films that exemplify a particular period’s thinking about family and community (like 50s melodrama, 80s/90s films about masculinity in crisis, or contemporary takes like *Everything Everywhere All At Once*).

Seminar 2: “The plural of anecdotes is not data”: Medicine in US-American Fictions

Monday, 3 - 5 pm, NSG 226

Dr. Katja Schmieder

Both literature and medicine focus on ideas about and perceptions of the human being, and stories about diseases and their treatments as well as about patients and doctors have been a staple in US-American fiction since its beginnings. While 19th-century texts often reflect on the aspects of human mortality and the social and ethical dimensions of sickness, 21st-century TV shows respond to and criticize the political and economic aspects of scientific medicine and its appropriation of the body. Today, medical schools throughout the US include literary writings in their curricula, while literary scholars and writers explore the narrative nature and potential of medical texts.

In our course, we will examine the role of early US literature in the cultural construction of illnesses (such as consumption/tuberculosis) and their meaning, and we will discuss more recent examples that comment on the societal impact of the advancements in scientific medicine. We will also look into the increasingly popular interdisciplinary field of Literature and Science, with a focus on Literature and Medicine (John Cartwright, Rita Charon), and its relevance and productivity for American Studies by considering concepts like bioethics, medicalization, embodiment, and medical humanities.

As the major part of our seminar consists of reading/watching and analyzing texts – novels, short stories, movies – that explore medical themes and motifs, we will try to answer the following questions: How does medical fiction engage with issues of agency, power relations, bodily autonomy, class, or gender? How is the intersection of medicine with political ideologies (as in public health) explored, and what are the implications of politicized medicine and science? How is “the doctor” portrayed? And last but not least: Why do we always find the ‘mad doctor’ but rarely the mad literary scholar? Ideally, we will come to understand how medical fictions – along with scientific studies and popular-scientific writings – can both shape and generate our thinking about scientific and medical issues within larger political and ideological contexts.

Authors we might consider include (but are not restricted to) Edgar Allan Poe, Sarah Orne Jewett, Samuel Shem, and Dan Brown, and we might discuss the movie *The Constant Gardener* (2005) and the TV shows *The Knick* (2014-15) and *Dopesick* (2021).

Seminar 3: Conspiracism in US Literature and Culture

Thursday, 11 am - 1 pm, NSG 410

Dr. habil. Sebastian Herrmann

In 1964, Richard Hofstadter identified a “paranoid style” as characteristic of American politics. Since then, the content and form of conspiracy thinking has undergone many changes, but its influence on

public discourse has continued to grow. Today, conspiracy theories such as ‘birtherism’ or the ‘great replacement theory’ animate the political right.

In this seminar, we will dedicate one slice of our time to talk about how these conspiracy narratives make their mark on real-world politics. Most of our time, however, will be focused on the large canon of conspiracy fiction. This will allow us to ask for the cultural work that conspiracy theory and conspiracy thinking do. In the process, we will ask questions such as: What are the pleasures and appeals of conspiracy theorizing? What kinds of narratives does it enable? What are the formal features of conspiracy thinking? Do we best think of it as a mode or as a genre? What are the histories of conspiracism as a literary trope? How does this trope power negotiations of individualism and of modernization? How does it intersect with discourses of race, of class, or of gender, respectively? To engage these questions, we will work with a body of conspiracist primary texts from a range of media covering the time from the nineteenth century to the present, alongside scholarship from the large and growing body of conspiracy theory research.

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

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

Module organization & coordination: Peter Hintz

This capstone module offers students the opportunity to engage in depth with selected societal themes and cultural phenomena as well as historical discourses and practices that have shaped and shape the political culture of the United States. Issues will be explored through questions relating to notions of American identity, to the intersectional nature of power in American society, to the negotiation of forms of consensus, and to American transcultural undertakings in the international arena. Both of this semester's seminars are centered around the theme of **Histories of Violence**.

The module consists of two seminars

Seminar 1: Cultural History of the American War in Vietnam

Wednesday, 3 - 5 pm, NSG 320

Prof. Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

The Vietnam War took place on several fronts, not just in the rice fields and jungles of Southeast Asia. The war was fought at American universities, on American city streets, and in American living rooms. It polarized a nation through prowar and antiwar marches and at the ballot box. This class examines all these different theatres of war and attempts to understand how a conflict that started in a small Southeast Asian country that most Americans couldn't find on a map turned into a global war that ultimately transformed American society, politics, and culture. How did the Vietnam War come to loom so large in the American consciousness? How did Americans interpret U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia and how did those interpretations shape the Antiwar Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and the New Conservatism that emerged as one of its consequences? How was Vietnam portrayed in popular culture and how did those representations shape American diplomacy and politics throughout the late twentieth century? How is the Vietnam War still relevant of America's collective memory? And how did the immense violence of that conflict frame its perceptions? These are central questions this course pursues.

Class will start on Wednesday, April 17, 2024.

Seminar 2: Terror in American History and Culture

Monday, 3 - 5 pm, NSG 304

Peter Hintz

From the Indian Wars to Lynching and 9/11, American society, politics, and culture have historically been profoundly influenced by discourses and practices of fear. Terror(ism), as militant political tactic, as social or legal ascription, and as cultural imagination has particularly served to mobilize and politicize fear in American society. Understanding ideas and practices of terror as historically evolving, the seminar seeks to identify (counter-)terror's changing logics and narratives, analyzing them for what they can reveal about changing social categorizations as well as political constellations in the United States. General questions that may come up include: What was called terror and why? Who terrorized whom and how? What ends and ultimate impact did (counter-)terror have within American society and beyond? A seminar in cultural history, we aim to look at discourses of terror via a wide array of

sources, such as historical documents from the spheres of politics and journalism as well as literary and audiovisual representations.

Classes in this module will include a guest lecture by Prof. Steve Estes (Sonoma State University, California).

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

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Dr. Katja Kanzler

Module organization & coordination: Annika Schadewaldt

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: Reading Poetry in a Distracted Age

Tuesday, 3 - 5 pm, NSG 326

Annika Schadewaldt

Poet Marianne Moore begins her poem "Poetry" with the line "I too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle." Moore wrote these words in the 1920s but the implicit question remains relevant even a hundred years later: Why read poetry? Why read poetry now? And what even is poetry? This seminar has several aims: It is an introduction to reading (and perhaps enjoying) poetry. It is an introduction to US-American poetry as one national tradition of poetry writing. And it is an experiment in creating time and space, in giving undistracted attention individually and communally to a specific form of art, sense making, expression, and experience. The seminar won't assume previous skills or knowledge in this genre but will expect you to show up regularly and be willing to discuss and sit with texts that may seem challenging in new ways. Ideally this seminar helps you to become a more confident and curious reader of poetry. Topics covered may include the question of what a poem is, poetic form, voice, sound and meaning, poetry and activism, and new forms of poetry such as spoken word/slam poetry or rap.

All texts will be made available as a reader.

The first session of this class will take place in the week of April 8, 2024.

Seminar 2: Building Radical Worlds

Wednesday, 9 am – 1 pm, NSG 403

Rita Bullwinkel (Picador Guest Professor)

Every time an author writes a new work they create a new world. As authors, and therefore world builders, how do we see visions of the ideal? How do fictional other worlds reflect back on our lived reality? In this class we will explore the radical world building techniques of world-building masters, and investigate how the conceit of their projects reveals the reality of the author's lived experience in significant and magnified ways. Special emphasis will be placed on exploring the uses of invented and foreign languages as tools for world building. Students will engage with the work of these world-building masters through discussion, in-class writing prompts, and group critique.

The first session of this class will take place in the week of June 3, 2024.

Please note that all classes will be **double sessions (9 am – 1 pm)**.

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

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

Module organization & coordination: Dr. Steffen Wöll

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: Race & Consumption

Monday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 305
Dr. Steffen Wöll

In her essay "Eating the Other" the late bell hooks suggests that "[t]he commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling. Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture." The seminar uses these insights as starting points to explore the intersections between consumerism, commodification, race, and ethnicity within the American context.

We will trace the dynamics between difference and commodity culture, aiming to unravel the multifaceted tapestries of conspicuous consumption and symbolic exchange. Starting off by theorizing how ethnic identities are commodified within a capitalist framework, the seminar explores literary consumptions of language by considering dialects and vernacular speech as potential vessels of racial horror. Our analyses will further extend to the metaphorical zombification of consumer culture, food and culinary practices, as well as racialized discourses of domesticity and hygiene.

By addressing the appropriation of African American art and styles for commercial gain, we apply a critical lens to the idea of blackness as a marketplace. The seminar, however, also navigates less explored realms, for instance the junctions of ethnicity and consumption in child's play and video games. Other topics include the racial boundaries between human and nonhuman animals, body politics, and the consumption of race in true crime contexts.

The seminar explicitly invites a critical discourse about racial commodification and its implications for marginalized communities, giving students nuanced perspectives regarding the challenges of racial consumption in US society. It aspires, ultimately, to cultivate a renewed commitment to these challenges by echoing bell hooks' caution that through the commodifying logics of the racialized marketplace "the Other will be eaten, consumed, and forgotten."

1012-2 Seminar: African American English: Its structure and sociolinguistic history

Donnerstag, 11 am - 1 pm, NSG 425
Dr. Jakob Neels
(Institut für Anglistik)

Reading list: will made available on moodle

Exam: term paper covering both seminars

“African American Vernacular English is not Standard English with mistakes” – although this point was made compellingly by eminent linguist Geoffrey Pullum in response to the 1996 Oakland school board controversy, the current status of this English sociolect is still riddled with public misconceptions. Among scholars, also the diachronic evolution of African American English (AAE) in the context of colonial slave trade and US history is controversially debated, leading this variety to be sometimes classified as a creole language. Through its long history, AAE developed into a fairly stable contemporary variety that differs, in many features of language structure, from the prestigious White norms codified as Standard (American) English. The global visibility and diffusion of features of AAE have recently reached new heights via various media and movements, above all via hip-hop music. Covering historical, structural, typological, attitudinal, educational and media perspectives, this course introduces students to AAE from multiple angles and puts participants in a position to investigate selected aspects in greater detail.

3 MA Courses

Research Papers and Portfolios

In their second and third semester, MA students will complete 6 modules overall, four of which they have to finish with a research paper and two of which with a portfolio exam. Because of that, every one of the thematic modules in the 2nd and 3rd semester is offered in two varieties on TOOL: the “Research Project” (= seminar paper) variety and the “Academic Discourse” (= portfolio exam) variety. The Academic Discourse/portfolio varieties have a “-P” at the end of the module number (e.g., “04-038-2007-P” is the module “Cultures of Difference: Academic Discourse” = portfolio, whereas “04-038-2007” is “Cultures of Difference: Research Project” = seminar paper).

Accordingly, in each of the two semesters, students should finish two modules with a seminar paper and one with a portfolio. While the seminar paper is something students mostly write in the semester break, the portfolio consists of multiple smaller assignments to be completed mostly while classes are in session. Within these stipulations, you can freely choose which of the thematic modules you want to take in their seminar-paper variety and which in the portfolio variety (the contents are the same, only the exams are different). You have to do so when you sign up for the modules on TOOL.

For more information, please see our website (especially the study regulations, the [Registration Information Sheet](#), and a [previous news item](#)) or contact your study advisers.

3.1 Political Cultures (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(s) in a US (and global) context. On the one hand, this entails politics as tied to the state and the government of the US, but on the other hand, and more prominently, ‘politics’ also signals the question of politicality throughout US culture and society more broadly, denoting realms, discourses, and cultural artefacts in which questions of power, representation, and identity are negotiated. The political thus finds expression in US culture in topics such as social movements, the political activism of specific social groups, or in the political potentials (and imaginaries) of specific forms of literary and cultural expression, both throughout US history and in more contemporary contexts.

The module consists of two seminars

Seminar: Eugenics - Body - Politics, 1890 to the Present

Tuesday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 401
Prof. Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

This class aims 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 or 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.

Class will start on Tuesday, April 16, 2024.

Seminar: Contemporary Utopian Fiction

Wednesday, 1 – 3 pm, GWZ 3 5.15

Prof. Dr. Katja Kanzler

Utopianism--speculative thinking about what a good society might look like--is a powerful mode of political thought. Yet in a world that slides from one crisis to the next, it seems to have become increasingly difficult to imagine better alternatives to our social and political status quo. The output in speculative fiction of the last few decades suggests that dystopian and post-apocalyptic genres have been the far more compelling models for thinking about the future than utopias. To adapt a famous quote by Frederic Jamison, it appears to have become much easier to imagine the end of the world or a horrible future than to come up with scenarios of a good society.

In this seminar, we will engage with a selection of U.S. literary texts from the last few decades that do take up the challenge of utopian speculation. Proceeding from a discussion of Utopian Studies-scholarship, we will ask: How do these texts address the social issues and crises of our time? What avenues toward solving them do the texts pursue in their narratives? How do they use a fantastic mode of narration to explore alternative social arrangements? And how do they navigate the political pitfalls of utopian thinking, such as the static quality that marks many utopian imaginaries, or their often totalitarian implications?

3.2 Media, Society, and Culture (04-038-2006)

Overall module responsibility Prof. Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

Module organization & coordination: Prof. Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

Media and its different forms lie 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, and adapted in every corner of the world. This module is meant to deepen students' knowledge about the conventions and the history of different media that have played a particularly important role in constructions and imaginations of the culture of the United States, among them mass media (like print, film, radio, or TV) and electronic/digital media of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Next to a focus on the (historical and contemporary) sociocultural processes in which media have been involved and which, in turn, specific media representations have shaped, the module also addresses forms of inter- or transmediality.

The module consists of two seminars

Seminar: Visualizing Reform – Photography, Reform, and Social Movements in the 20th Century

Wednesday, 11am – 1 pm, GWZ 3 5.15

Prof. Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

This class analyzes the intersecting social and cultural histories of photography and American reform ambitions over the course of the 20th century. Since its inception in 1839, photography has provided a critical means for documenting and encouraging change in the United States, and especially since the Progressive Movement visualizing the necessities for social reform (or revolution) became a central strategy for both activists and artists.

After a first set of meetings discussing conceptual frames for reading social / documentary photography, the course then delves into the ways in which photographers have played a pivotal role in documenting, shaping, and reflecting the evolution of social, political, and cultural movements that defined the American experience. We will examine iconic and not so iconic images addressing moments of documentation, protest, progress, and upheaval. From the Progressive Era through the Great Depression and Civil Rights Movement to the counterculture of the 1960s and contemporary activism, this class illuminates the power of the photographic image to influence public perception and galvanize social change. Key topics include documentations of urban and rural living conditions, labor struggles, feminist as well as queer photography, many civil rights movements, war and anti-war photography, environmentalism, and contemporary visualizations of social, political, and cultural struggles.

Class will start on Wednesday, April 17, 2024.

Seminar: Cinematic Cityscapes: Exploring the American Urban Imaginary on Screen

Thursday, 11 am – 1 pm, GWZ 3 5.15

Dr. Eleonora Ravizza

From the corrupt detectives and crime-ridden inner cities of the 1970s to serving as the backdrop of romantic comedies in the 1990s, the urban space has been immortalized on screen in a multitude of different ways. The city has been depicted as a place for immigrant communities to form their (American) identity (*Gangs of New York*, *West Side Story*), as a crime-infested hellscape—both in action

films (*Dirty Harry*, *The French Connection*) and in dystopian science-fiction (*Blade Runner*, *Escape from New York*, *Robocop*)—as a place for love and connection (*When Harry Met Sally*, *Carol*) and for alienation (*Taxi Driver*, *Midnight Cowboy*, *Her*), as a powder keg of racial conflict and violence (*Do the Right Thing*), as the playground for monsters, aliens, and natural disasters (*King Kong*, *Independence Day*, *The Day After Tomorrow*) as well as of post-human imaginations (*I Am Legend*, *The Last of Us*).

In this seminar, we will explore cinematic depictions of American cities through (post-1960) film history by watching and analyzing a variety of films. We will contextualize the relation between social and cultural changes around the films' release, how they were reflected on screen, and how the films themselves contributed to the shaping of the contemporary urban imagination. We will engage with a range of cultural and film theories which will allow us to explore issues such as alienation, globalization, environmentalism, commodification, gender and racial politics.

3.3 Trans-/National Spaces, Bodies, Cultures (04-038-2016)

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Dr. Katja Kanzler

Module organization & coordination: Dr. Stefan Schubert

This module enables students to understand the core importance that manifestations and imaginations of spaces and bodies have played throughout US culture and within transnational considerations. This concerns concrete individual spaces and bodies and their construction in specific (factual and fictional) texts and artifacts just as much as the figurative importance of spatiality and embodiment in culture and society, e.g. in terms of negotiations of power, narratives of migration, or discourses of multiculturalism. In different historical events, (semi-)literary texts, or media artifacts, bodies and spaces have thus been fundamental in creating, contesting, and complicating national and transnational identities.

The module consists of two seminars

Seminar: Staging Bodies, Imagining Spaces: Games and Play in US Culture

Monday, 3 – 5 pm, GWZ 3 5.15

Dr. Stefan Schubert

In *Homo Ludens*, Johan Huizinga influentially declared that “[p]lay is older than culture,” and accordingly, games and other forms of playing loom large throughout the United States: from childhood play to video games as a mass entertainment industry and the predominant form of popular culture in the twenty-first century, from sports and other games as something to either play yourself or watch others perform to the omnipresence of gamification in economics, politics, and didactics. At the same time, games are still often derided as ‘low’ forms of culture, and the specific subset of ‘gamer culture’ in particular is regularly scrutinized for its reactionary politics. In this seminar, we want to examine play and games from the perspective of literary and cultural studies and with a particular interest in the kinds of bodies that are involved and staged in processes of playing and in the spaces that games create, imagine, and invite us to manipulate.

One goal of the seminar will be to analyze contemporary video games (but also historical precursors like board games), from indie to mainstream examples (e.g., *The Stanley Parable*, *The Long Dark*, *The Last of Us*, *Civilization*, *Detroit: Become Human*, *World of Warcraft*, etc.), while paying attention to how games combine narrative, (audio)visual, ludic, affective, and other forms of meaning-making. In addition, we will search for manifestations of play in other cultural realms, for instance in postmodern experimental novels (e.g., *House of Leaves*) or in films/TV series that ‘play’ with the expectations of their audiences (e.g., *Inception*, *Westworld*) or in how conspiracy theories like QAnon can be made sense of as forms of play as well. To understand the intermingling of play, bodies, and spaces, we will reflect on theories of playfulness and narrativity, transmediality, affect, virtuality, and performance, among others, and use these to highlight concerns such as difference and/in games (e.g. in terms of race, gender, sexuality, and [dis]ability), agency, and immersion.

The seminar is thus not just intended for students already interested in (video) games but also wants to encourage everybody else to recognize characteristics of play and games in all facets of American culture.

Seminar: 'The American Home': Domestic Spaces and Practices in United States Literature and Culture

Tuesday, 1 – 3 pm, GWZ 3.515

Prof. Dr. Katja Kanzler

Both today and throughout U.S. history, the space of the home has very much been a subject of writing: Fictional as well as non-fictional texts--from domestic and neo-domestic novels to gothic fiction, from advice books or blogs to reality tv--have been dedicated to discussing what the American home is, or what it should be, and how the spaces and practices of the home matter. As Amy Kaplan has argued in her influential article "Manifest Domesticity," these narratives and other discourses of the home especially link domesticity to imaginaries of the nation. Kaplan's argument proceeds from the observation that the word 'domestic' "has a double meaning that not only links the familial household to the nation but also imagines both in opposition to everything outside the geographic and conceptual border of the home." Discourses of the home thus often revolve around boundary work, negotiating ideas of national identity and belonging, of citizenship and the foreign. In addition, these discourses discuss, often in highly normative ways, the places that differently marked bodies can or should have in domestic space: As Robert Reid-Pharr highlights, "within domesticity bodies are produced as classed, gendered, and raced entities."

In this seminar, we will discuss a set of texts, along with relevant scholarship, that thus address domestic spaces and practices. The texts will range from the 19th century to the contemporary period, and while the emphasis will be on literary narratives, we will also look at other materials like advice manuals and reality shows.

4 Lehramt Courses

4.1 04-AME-1402 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

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 six seminars (1402-2a-f):

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

either a) Tuesday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 304
Dr. Eleonora Ravizza

or b) Tuesday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 304
Dr. Eleonora Ravizza

or c) Thursday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 410
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.

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

or d) Tuesday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 412
Dr. habil. Sebastian Herrmann

or e) Tuesday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 412
Dr. habil. Sebastian Herrmann

or f) Thursday, 1 - 3 pm, NSG 410
Dr. habil. 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.

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

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Dr. Katja Kanzler

Module organization & coordination: Annika Schadewaldt

The module consists of two seminars

Seminar 1: Reading Poetry in a Distracted Age

Tuesday, 3 - 5 pm, NSG 326

Annika Schadewaldt

Poet Marianne Moore begins her poem "Poetry" with the line "I too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle." Moore wrote these words in the 1920s but the implicit question remains relevant even a hundred years later: Why read poetry? Why read poetry now? And what even is poetry? This seminar has several aims: It is an introduction to reading (and perhaps enjoying) poetry. It is an introduction to US-American poetry as one national tradition of poetry writing. And it is an experiment in creating time and space, in giving undistracted attention individually and communally to a specific form of art, sense making, expression, and experience. The seminar won't assume previous skills or knowledge in this genre but will expect you to show up regularly and be willing to discuss and sit with texts that may seem challenging in new ways. Ideally this seminar helps you to become a more confident and curious reader of poetry. Topics covered may include the question of what a poem is, poetic form, voice, sound and meaning, poetry and activism, and new forms of poetry such as spoken word/slam poetry or rap.

All texts will be made available as a reader.

The first session of this class will take place in the week of April 8, 2024.

Seminar 2: Building Radical Worlds

Wednesday, 9 am – 1 pm, NSG 403

Rita Bullwinkel (Picador Guest Professor)

Every time an author writes a new work they create a new world. As authors, and therefore world builders, how do we see visions of the ideal? How do fictional other worlds reflect back on our lived reality? In this class we will explore the radical world building techniques of world-building masters, and investigate how the conceit of their projects reveals the reality of the author's lived experience in significant and magnified ways. Special emphasis will be placed on exploring the uses of invented and foreign languages as tools for world building. Students will engage with the work of these world-building masters through discussion, in-class writing prompts, and group critique.

The first session of this class will take place in the week of June 3, 2024.

Please note that all classes will be **double sessions (9 am – 1 pm)**.

5 Creative Writing and Other Courses

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

(04-001-1020 | 5 Credits)

Generative Fiction Seminar

Wednesday, 1 - 5 pm, NSG 224

Rita Bullwinkel (Picador Guest Professor)

Writing is a unique medium in that it is both made and, generally, consumed in isolation, and therefore oral and written responses that engage with a work are particularly rare and valuable to the writer. Through the space of the writer's workshop an author can escape the isolation in which they made their work, understand their work from a consciousness other than their own, and procure insight into how to further their creative project into its fullest, most complex and potent, form. In this course students will read, discuss, and provide oral feedback in response to the work of their peers. Students will also read the work of acclaimed contemporary authors alongside the work of their peers in order to identify how their own work, and the work of their peers, is situated within the contemporary literary landscape.

The first session of this class will take place in the week of June 3, 2024.

Please note that all classes will be **double sessions (1 - 5 pm)**.

5.2 Writing Clinic

Writing Clinic

Thursday, 1 - 3 pm, GWZ 3 5.01

Heather Pruessing

The writing clinic is intended to serve as a resource for ASL students in all forms and stages of the writing process. Whether you are working on drafting a presentation for a seminar, or finalizing your BA thesis, you can make an appointment and receive individual help and feedback. Please simply register for an appointment by emailing Heather Pruessing at heather.pruessing@uni-leipzig.de.