

**Courses Catalog Summer Semester 2025**

**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 7, 2025.**

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](http://anglistik.philol.uni-leipzig.de)).

Unless stated otherwise, **classes start in the week of April 7, 2025**. 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.

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#### **Analytical Seminar**

**either a)** Thursday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 212  
Heather Pruessing

**or b)** Thursday, 11am – 1pm, NSG 212  
Heather Pruessing

**or c)** Wednesday, 3 – 5 pm, NSG 412  
Parker Billingham

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.

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## **Tutorial (Übung)**

**either a)** Wednesday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 124  
Heather Pruessing

**or b)** Wednesday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 124  
Heather Pruessing

**or c)** Wednesday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 124  
Heather Pruessing

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

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

Overall module responsibility: 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 lecture 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.

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### 1003-2 Übung: Kernbereiche Linguistik

Exchange students may not enroll in this course.

***Choose one out of fourteen classes (a-n):***

**either a)** Monday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 224  
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten  
(Institut für Anglistik)

**or b)** Monday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 224  
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten  
(Institut für Anglistik)

**or c)** Monday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 224  
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten  
(Institut für Anglistik)

- or d)** Tuesday, 7 – 9 am, NSG 125  
Quick, Antje  
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or e)** Tuesday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 125  
Quick, Antje  
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or f)** Tuesday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 222  
Lohmann, Arne  
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or g)** Wednesday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 204  
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten  
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or h)** Wednesday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 204  
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten  
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or i)** Thursday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 224  
Küsters, Clara  
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or j)** Thursday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 414  
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten  
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or k)** Thursday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 224  
Küsters, Clara  
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or l)** Thursday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 414  
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten  
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or m)** Thursday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 414  
Schmidtke-Bode, Karsten  
(Institut für Anglistik)
- or n)** Friday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 224  
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.

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### **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 427  
Allen, Thandi  
(Institut für Anglistik)

**or b)** Tuesday, 3 pm - 5 pm, NSG 227  
Mathieson, Jolene  
(Institut für Anglistik)

**or c)** Wednesday, 11 am - 1 pm, NSG 329  
McCallum, James  
(Institut für Anglistik)

Exam: written examination (90 min)

Recommended preparation and reading list:

Aczel, R. (2015). *How to Write an Essay: Anglistik/Amerikanistik*. Klett Lerntraining.  
Oshima, A., & Hogue, A. (2014). *Longman Academic Writing Series: Essays* (5th ed.).  
Pearson Education. Yule, G. (2009). *Explaining English Grammar*. Oxford University Press.

This introductory course in written academic discourse is designed to train students in composing formal academic essays, with special attention paid to advanced grammar and register, as well as the underlying principles of clear, effective writing. The overall goal is for participants to produce a polished, 90-minute, in-class argumentative essay in the field of applied linguistics that demonstrates a firm command of academic conventions, reflecting both the correct use of English at the tertiary level and the ability to conform to established genre expectations.

Through a series of practical exercises, students will develop and refine their interpretative text production skills, learn how to structure arguments cohesively and present ideas in a manner consistent with current professional standards. In addition, we will devote attention to formatting and citation practices, including how to reference scholarship, embed quotations, format correctly and compile a list of references according to a standard linguistics stylesheet.

In line with these objectives, the course also aims to help students identify their current CEFR level of English proficiency in writing, with the goal of working towards the C1+ level necessary for students to successfully complete their degrees. Therefore, please note that a minimum of B2-level English is required to pass this course. Throughout the semester, we will identify and mitigate weaknesses that compromise the grammatical and structural clarity of students' written work, while simultaneously cultivating strengths that enhance the formal features of academic discourse. Specifically, we will address 1) the mechanics of academic writing, such as punctuation and stylistic consistency, 2) effective approaches to text production and argumentation, 3) patterns of coherence and cohesion that produce a logical flow of ideas, and 4) systematic revision techniques to ensure constant

improvement. By the end of the course, students will be better prepared to craft structured and persuasive texts in grammatically correct English that meet the rigorous demands of academic writing.



## 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.

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#### ***Choose two out of three seminars:***

#### **Seminar 1: "No masters, no rulers"? Anarchism in US-American Literature and Culture**

Monday, 3 - 5 pm, NSG 320  
Dr. Katja Schmieder

In a literal sense, 'anarchy' simply means 'without rulership,' and the most basic politics of anarchism include the rejection of oppressive government with its power hierarchies and the propagation/endorsement of voluntarism and mutual collaboration. While these ideas seem to resonate with what we identify as American values, US culture and literature have depicted anarchist ideas and characters in strikingly opposing and ambiguous ways – often as violent, radical, and chaotic. Still, a number of works explore anarchist thinking and ways of living in way more complex and nuanced ways by challenging negative associations and labels.

In our course, we will examine diverse (and often contradicting) conceptions and interpretations of anarchism. After a brief overview of the historical roots of anarchism in America, including the impact of figures like Voltairine de Cleyre and Emma Goldman, we will look into the relatively new and increasingly popular interdisciplinary field of Anarchist Studies (Jesse Cohn, Ruth Kinna) and its relevance and productivity for American Studies. The major part of our seminar consists of reading/watching and analyzing texts – novels, short stories, movies, TV shows – that explore anarchist themes and motifs in a US context to answer questions like: How does anarchist fiction engage with issues of class, economy, race, religion, or gender? How is anarchism (re-)imagined – as a reflection, a critique, a call to action – and how are such diverse perspectives narrated? Authors we might consider

include Ursula K. LeGuin and Chuck Palahniuk, and we will discuss the movie *Harold and Maude* (1972), the TV show *Sons of Anarchy* (2008-2014), and the case of the Chicago 7/ Conspiracy 8.

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### **Seminar 2: Stories of 'Passing' in US Literature and Culture**

Tuesday, 1 - 3 pm, NSG 324  
Dr. Stefan Schubert

In general terms, 'passing' denotes the phenomenon of a member of one 'racial' or ethnic group pretending to be (and being identified by others as) part of another; in US (literary) history, it has mostly been used to describe Black Americans 'passing for' white. In addition to this (historical) practice, passing has also fueled a number of fictional and literary imaginations, tied around both the opportunities and the anxieties engendered by it—and related to questions about what 'race,' identity, and identification mean in the first place. In this seminar, we want to tackle these issues with an interest in the poetics and politics of passing: How have individual, specific stories formally represented such phenomena and grappled with their dynamics, and which larger cultural, ideological, or 'political' questions surrounding the United States are revealed in texts involving instances of passing?

Our focus on racial passing in US literature and culture will include both canonical and lesser-known literature and film (e.g. *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, "Désirée's Baby," *The Vanishing Half*, *Passing*). While questions of 'race' will be central for our interests, we also want to broaden our conceptual scope by considering nonliteral instances of passing that still similarly highlight ambiguity or uncertainty, e.g. in science-fiction stories about androids or cyborgs; related phenomena of 'cultural appropriation' (e.g. in regard to Native Americans); forms of 'minstrelization' like 'digital blackface' (e.g. in video games); and other, nonracial understandings of passing, e.g. via constructions of class, disability, or gender. Overall, this broad range, alongside our formal interest in close-reading textual dynamics via relevant theoretical concepts, will allow us to interrogate the cultural work that stories of passing have done for ambivalent US imaginations of identity and power, oppression and opportunity, and difference and privilege.

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### **Seminar 3: 'Reel' Men? Representations of Masculinity in US Film**

Wednesday, 1 - 3 pm, NSG 304  
Dr. Eleonora Ravizza

The representation of masculinity in film reflects the ever-evolving understandings of masculinity itself. Through decades, genres, and narratives, American cinema has explored the different constellations of what is considered masculine: from the silent men of the Western to the hard bodies of 1980s action heroes, from white men in crisis in the 1990s to the portrayal of queer desire. In this seminar, we will explore the representation and construction of masculinity in various film genres (like action, melodrama, and western), in different bodily configurations, and through moments of anxiety and crisis.

We will focus on questions such as: How are hegemonic, subordinate, and complicit masculinities constructed? How is the male/female binarism validated, perpetuated, but also questioned and (possibly) deconstructed? What roles do race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality play in the construction of

masculinity? We will explore and analyze a variety of US films that engage with these questions to shed light on the cultural work that these texts do.

## 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 **SHP-III** seminars center on the theme of **American Modernization Projects**.

### The module consists of two seminars

#### **Seminar 1: The 'Long Progressive Era' – U.S. Social & Cultural History, 1890s – 1920s**

Wednesday, 3 - 5 pm, NSG 210

Prof. Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

The Progressive Era has become a major focus of historical research in the last 20 years because many issues that arose during this period have become central to controversial debates in the United States up to this day – questions of gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, migration and citizenship, the role of the United States in world affairs, and the place of the body in political projects. In many regards, the researching Progressive Era opened up a perspective on many modes of modernization in the USA. This research and its results challenged both the conventional periodization of the Progressive Era (1890-1914/17) and its usual perspective on the urban US North.

The seminar will introduce central topics and developments of the Progressive Era and then address the question of how compatible our study of this period is with current social, cultural and political trends. To this end, we will study selected primary sources (texts, images, films, etc.) and recent research literature and discuss them together.

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#### **Seminar 2: The Long New Deal Order, 1930-1980**

Monday, 11 am - 1 pm, NSG 412

Peter Hintz

Launched in response to an economic crisis aptly named the "Great Depression," the New Deal programs enacted by Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidential administration in the 1930s stand among the most pivotal social reforms of the twentieth century. Though the history of the New Deal was, from its beginning, also a history of rollback and of attempts to undo it, its political promises of social stability, working-class uplift, and "freedom from fear" managed to hold together a fragile ruling coalition far beyond a single decade. In the seminar, we will look at the origins, transformations, and fractures of what historian Gary Gerstle terms the *New Deal Order*: a period in the history of American democracy and capitalism that arguably lasted from the 1930s until the 1980s. As much as its sometimes utopian social, political, and cultural projects, we will study the racial and gender inequalities of this era, as well as the New Deal's place in the world. We will look at important actors and ideologies of this time, such as (neo)liberalism, (neo)conservatism as well as civil rights and labor organizers. Finally, we will consider how America, today, may still be shaped by legacies of the New

Deal as well as by debates surrounding it. The seminar does not assume prior knowledge of New Deal or economic history, though active class participation as well as reading and engagement with historical course materials is expected.

A seminar reader will be provided.

## 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: Narrating the Nuclear in US American Culture**

Thursday, 3 - 5 pm, NSG 301  
Annika Schadewaldt

While anxieties surrounding nuclear annihilation seemed to have been done and dusted for a long time, recent years have seen a renewed interest in nuclear issues for a number of reasons ranging from geopolitical conflicts to our ongoing environmental crisis. This renewed interest is also mirrored in an increase in more contemporary cultural texts exploring nuclear culture and its effects and meanings, such as the tremendously successfully *Oppenheimer* movie. This seminar will approach the longstanding interest of US culture in nuclear issues by examining fictional imaginings of the nuclear, from more concrete depictions of nuclear bombing to wider scenarios of apocalypses, radiation, toxicity and the ongoing degradation of the environment, the effects of uranium mining, etc. We will thus not ask questions that aim at the geopolitical or technological realities of the nuclear but how cultural objects have engaged with the lived and imagined experiences of these issues. We will begin by engaging with early imaginings of the threat of nuclear annihilation after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the unfolding early Cold War, before turning to more recent work interested in the wider entanglements, infrastructures, risk management, slow violence, and 'mundane' of (transatlantic) US nuclear culture. Besides engaging deeply with fictional texts exploring the nuclear, we will grapple with different concepts and theoretical frameworks scholars have used to approach the imaginary and material realities of the nuclear as depicted in fictional texts. Questions we will explore within this seminar might be: How can/has the nuclear be(en) represented? What scales of representation, modes, or forms allow us to imagine or grapple with the nuclear? How does the nuclear bridge concerns of war, on the one hand, and the environment, on the other? How does the nuclear shape geographies both within the United States and transnationally? What is the relationship of the nuclear to imagined and lived apocalypses? How does it map unto an uneven distribution of power within the US and globally? In what ways can fiction help us think of nuclear apocalypse not only as a metaphor but an ongoing and unfolding event?

Next to expecting students to regularly attend and engage with the seminar discussion, this seminar will ask students to regularly engage with the reading material in the form of short reading responses in written form. The final will be an oral exam for BA students and a portfolio for teaching degree students.

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## **Seminar 2: Through the Looking Glass – Surrealism, Magical Realism, and Folklore**

Tuesday, 11am – 1 pm, NSG 301

Phillip B. Williams (Picador Guest Professor)

In this seminar, we will read novels and poems that transform realist worlds into their own personal mythos, merging what many would call magic and dreamscapes with natural occurrences often taken for granted. How and why do writers navigate the terrain of the magical and surreal when telling their stories? What historical precedents exist and what conversation exists between the past and present? We will look at political and cultural reasons for this writing style and how realism may miss the mark when dealing with the challenging realities in which we live. Though subject to change, books we may read include *Our Lady of Ruin* by Traci Brimhall, *The People of Paper* by Salvador Plascencia, *Sula* by Toni Morrison, *The Palm Wine Drinkard* by Amos Tutuola, *Magical Realism: Essays on Music, Memory, Fantasy, and Borders* by Vanessa Angélica Villarreal and others.

**This class starts in the week of April 14, 2025.**

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

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

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

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

### **The module consists of two seminars**

#### **1012-1 Performing Race and Ethnicity**

Wednesday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 224  
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, 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 Wednesday April 16, 2025.**

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

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

Reading list: will be 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 six 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.

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Generally, **MA students in their fourth semester** who still have to complete modules can either choose from the ones they have not attended yet (and register normally for these via TOOL) or can also pick individual seminars from different modules (which, however, cannot be done via TOOL) and potentially have them recognized as a module they have not completed yet. For details on the latter procedure, please get in touch with your study advisers.

### 3.1 Imagining the Past (04-038-2004)

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

Module organization & coordination: Dr. Stefan Schubert

This module teaches students about the cultural, social, medial, and literary dimensions of history and historicity: how 'history' is created and imagined, discussed and represented, celebrated and contested, etc. in a US (and transnational) context. On the one hand, this involves discussions about central dimensions of US (cultural) history, and on the other hand, the module examines the epistemic and cultural practices involved in understandings of history, including its mediation in different (factual, fictional, and nonfictional) text types and cultural artifacts. The module traces these dynamics throughout different decades and centuries, as imaginations of the past (such as certain national 'myths') play a central role in contemporary US culture as well, e.g. in regard to (racial, gendered, etc.) difference and identity.

#### The module consists of two seminars

##### Seminar: Reporting Reality? News, Narrative, and Politics in US Culture

Monday, 3 - 5 pm, NSG 122

Dr. Stefan Schubert

Among journalists, the news is commonly understood as "the first rough draft of history." As such, although the name indicates something novel and recent, the news is also a distinct way of (re)presenting, imagining, and creating the 'past' while reporting 'reality.' In this class, we want to study the news and journalism in the US from a literary and cultural perspective, but rather than analyzing the news itself, we want to focus on cultural imaginaries surrounding the news, via two different (but intimately related) paradigms: For one, we will examine representations and imaginations *about* the news, i.e., cultural understandings of what is thought of as news (and what is not considered news), how news are created and received, discussed or dismissed, interrogated and attacked, affectively charged or ignored. Topics might include the role of different media in/as the news, issues of accuracy, ethics, and 'fake news,' and the news as something to consume and follow for entertainment.

Our second major focus will be to analyze and contextualize representations and imaginations of the news and journalism itself, in (semi-)fictional texts from diverse genres and media. This might range from film (e.g., *The Parallax View*, *Spotlight*) to TV (e.g. *The Wire*, *The Morning Show*) to games (e.g. *News Tower*), from novels to late-night talk shows to 'true crime.' Theoretically and methodologically, we will approach the cultural work that the news does in the US via insights from the study of narrative and attempts to grasp what there is beyond narrative; through questions of politicality, ideology, and 'neutrality'; via the construction of realities (e.g. in the documentary mode) and the activation of affect; and in 'hybrid' forms of textuality (e.g. in gonzo journalism or works like Capote's *In Cold Blood*).

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##### Seminar: Writing Black Pasts, Imagining Black Futures

Tuesday, 3 – 5 pm, NSG 315

Prof. Dr. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

This course reads texts by black and non-black writers that deal with versions of African American history and future. We will discuss narratives, pamphlets, manifestos, and speeches as well as essays,

novels and short stories that address individual and collective black histories and that imagine the place and future of black people in America from black and non-black perspectives. Our discussions will explore how different historical periods, crucial events, and individual life stories are dramatized in these texts, while also investigating how black authors fashioned their writings in ways to reach (mainly) white audiences in periods when these were the only audiences available.

### **3.2 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: Propaganda - Politics, Media & Communication in the USA during the 20th Century**

Wednesday, 11 am – 1 pm, GWZ 3 5.15

Prof. Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

Propaganda is a term of political theory that is as dazzling as it is complicated – it is quickly at hand, but what exactly is meant by it often remains rather vague. This is all the more true for a modern, decentralized democracy like the United States – what constitutes 'propaganda' here, which actors, state and non-state, engage in propaganda, for what purposes, and how is all this organized in a capitalist system? What roles can variants of 'propaganda' play in domestic and foreign policy conflicts, and in the many culture wars that have characterized the 20th century in the USA? And: can we still use a concept of 'propaganda' to analyze the current debates about fake news, alternative truths and digital attention economies?

To discuss these and other questions, the seminar is structured along a three steps trajectory: after an opening and general discussion of the concept of propaganda and its history, we will then look at selected (mostly political) events in 20th century US history and question the role of 'propaganda' in them. The last third of the semester will then be devoted explicitly to more contemporary or current constellations, focusing in particular on the fundamentally changed media landscape.

All participants are requested to read the assigned 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 (PVL). The class is part of both term paper and portfolio module options.

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##### **Seminar: Negotiating Marginality**

Thursday, 9 – 11 am, NSG 220

Prof. Dr. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

Social marginality is often involuntary. Individuals and groups in the United States have been marginalized by racism, classism, xenophobia, poverty, patriarchy, homophobia, ableism and other forms of domination. However, marginality it is not merely a condition that the marginalized have to

suffer without any agency. Rather, it is a social process involving radical possibility on the part of those pushed to the margin or periphery. Also, marginality – as centrality- is not a stable concept and always situationally bound. In this course we will discuss texts that negotiate marginality from various angles, including chosen marginality and the margin as a position of resistance or empowerment from which authors criticize, reject, or reimagine society. We will discuss fictional and non-fictional texts from the early period of the nation to the present, as well as critical readings on the concept of marginality. Our readings will address various forms of transgressive agency from radical individualism to social and political radicalism to strategic essentialism and social activism.

### **3.3 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: The New Hollywood – Film and U.S. Cultural History, 1965-1980**

Tuesday, 11 am – 1 pm, GWZ 3 5.15

Prof. Dr. Olaf Stieglitz

In the mid-1960s, Hollywood in a way reinvented itself. The decline in cinema attendance and the breakdown of the old studio system, among other factors, triggered a brief period of artistic, experimental, and original filmmaking featuring some films that are today considered 'classic,' such as *Bonnie & Clyde*, *Easy Rider*, *French Connection*, or *Network*, to name just a few.

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

All participants are requested to read the assigned texts for each class meeting and take an active part in group discussions. Films will be available for circulation among the class members; and the Albertina is screening a few of them in a parallel film series. 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 (PVL). The class is part of both term paper and portfolio module options.

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##### **Seminar: A 'Genre Turn'? Contemporary US Writing and the Mediality of Literature**

Wednesday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 321

Prof. Dr. Katja Kanzler

There has been a lively debate in the literary public as well as recent scholarship whether 21st-century American fiction is marked by a new 'genre turn'—a new currency of popular forms and conventions in contexts of 'serious,' 'highbrow' literature. Recurrent points of reference in these debates include, e.g., the first-ever issue of the prestigious magazine *The New Yorker* dedicated to science fiction (in 2012), and most prominently, the forays of ostensibly 'literary' writers like Colson Whitehead, Jennifer Egan,

Gary Steyngart, or Junot Diaz into popular genres. Writing that “combine[s] high literary registers with elements of genre fiction” (G. Leypoldt) seems to be one of the directions into which US literature has been developing after the alleged end of postmodernism. In this seminar, we will probe into this emerging literary trend and the academic discussions around it. We will particularly ask how the ‘genre turn’ relates to the current state of literature as a space of artistic production and as a social field. In the process, we will explore the ways in which ‘genre turn’ texts and their discussions reflect on the nature and role of literature in the early 21st century, how they think about the mediality of literature (vis-a-vis the ascent of other media as platforms of storytelling), and how they contemplate the conditions under which literature today can unfold its potential to afford conversations about the challenges confronting US society.

### **3.4 Trans-/National Spaces, Bodies, Cultures (04-038-2016)**

Overall module responsibility: Prof. Dr. Katja Kanzler

Module organization & coordination: Prof. Dr. Katja Kanzler

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: The Americas in US literature and culture**

Monday, 11 am – 1 pm, GWZ 3 5.15

Prof. Dr. Gabriele Pizarz-Ramírez

This course situates the study of American cultural production in the context of the American hemisphere rather than the nation state. We will investigate how the possibilities for the study of “America” open up when the name is understood not as a synonym for an isolated United States but as a network of historical and cultural connections that have extended across the hemisphere from the period of colonization to the present. We will read criticism from the fields of inter-American American and border studies as well as novels, stories, plays and other texts that articulate the intercultural relationships between the United States and Latin America, Canada and the Caribbean.

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##### **Seminar: Food, Identity, and Textuality in North American Literature and Film**

Tuesday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 429

Prof. Dr. Katja Kanzler

From Mary Rowlandson’s ostentatious refusal to eat the food offered by her Native American captors to the unnamed protagonist’s emphatic “I yam what I am!” in Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, North American authors regularly use food references as narrative resources. Their texts (in print and on screen) feature food—a wide range of fare as well as scenes of its preparation, consumption, or refusal—as potent and multifaceted signifiers. In particular, narratives often tap into the potential of culinary signifiers to shed a light on the nexus between individual, embodied identity and formations of collective identity (both chosen and ascribed).

In this seminar, we will explore some dimensions of this narrative tradition, along with selected critical paradigms by which literary and cultural scholarship have approached it. We will pay particular attention to the ways in which culinary signifiers have helped U.S.-American and Canadian narratives negotiate aspects and intersections of bodily selfhood, nationhood, gender roles and gender expression, ethnic belonging, class structures, etc. We will discuss how food unfolds this signifying potential in a variety of cultural forms and genres, ranging from literature to film, from memoir to novel, from narratives of migration and diaspora to women’s writing.



## 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 2

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.

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##### **1402-2 Seminar: American Cultures and Society**

**Choose one out of six seminars (1402-2a-f):**

##### **1402-2a/b/c/d Nation and Imagination? US Cultural History and the Myths of ‘America’**

**or a)** Wednesday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 412

Dr. habil. Sebastian Herrmann

**or b)** Wednesday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 412

Dr. habil. Sebastian Herrmann

**or c)** Thursday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 412

Dr. habil. Sebastian Herrmann

**or d)** Thursday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 412

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.

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

**either e)** Thursday, 1 – 3 pm, NSG 324  
Dr. Eleonora Ravizza

**or f)** Thursday, 3 – 5 pm, NSG 324  
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.

## 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: Narrating the Nuclear in US American Culture**

Thursday, 3 - 5 pm, NSG 301

Annika Schadewaldt

While anxieties surrounding nuclear annihilation seemed to have been done and dusted for a long time, recent years have seen a renewed interest in nuclear issues for a number of reasons ranging from geopolitical conflicts to our ongoing environmental crisis. This renewed interest is also mirrored in an increase in more contemporary cultural texts exploring nuclear culture and its effects and meanings, such as the tremendously successfully *Oppenheimer* movie. This seminar will approach the longstanding interest of US culture in nuclear issues by examining fictional imaginings of the nuclear, from more concrete depictions of nuclear bombing to wider scenarios of apocalypses, radiation, toxicity and the ongoing degradation of the environment, the effects of uranium mining, etc. We will thus not ask questions that aim at the geopolitical or technological realities of the nuclear but how cultural objects have engaged with the lived and imagined experiences of these issues. We will begin by engaging with early imaginings of the threat of nuclear annihilation after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the unfolding early Cold War, before turning to more recent work interested in the wider entanglements, infrastructures, risk management, slow violence, and 'mundane' of (transatlantic) US nuclear culture. Besides engaging deeply with fictional texts exploring the nuclear, we will grapple with different concepts and theoretical frameworks scholars have used to approach the imaginary and material realities of the nuclear as depicted in fictional texts. Questions we will explore within this seminar might be: How can/has the nuclear be(en) represented? What scales of representation, modes, or forms allow us to imagine or grapple with the nuclear? How does the nuclear bridge concerns of war, on the one hand, and the environment, on the other? How does the nuclear shape geographies both within the United States and transnationally? What is the relationship of the nuclear to imagined and lived apocalypses? How does it map unto an uneven distribution of power within the US and globally? In what ways can fiction help us think of nuclear apocalypse not only as a metaphor but an ongoing and unfolding event?

Next to expecting students to regularly attend and engage with the seminar discussion, this seminar will ask students to regularly engage with the reading material in the form of short reading responses in written form. The final will be an oral exam for BA students and a portfolio for teaching degree students.

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#### **Seminar 2: Through the Looking Glass – Surrealism, Magical Realism, and Folklore**

Tuesday, 11am – 1 pm, NSG 301

Phillip B. Williams (Picador Guest Professor)

In this seminar, we will read novels and poems that transform realist worlds into their own personal mythos, merging what many would call magic and dreamscapes with natural occurrences often taken for granted. How and why do writers navigate the terrain of the magical and surreal when telling their stories? What historical precedents exist and what conversation exists between the past and present?

We will look at political and cultural reasons for this writing style and how realism may miss the mark when dealing with the challenging realities in which we live. Though subject to change, books we may read include *Our Lady of Ruin* by Traci Brimhall, *The People of Paper* by Salvador Plascencia, *Sula* by Toni Morrison, *The Palm Wine Drinkard* by Amos Tutuola, *Magical Realism: Essays on Music, Memory, Fantasy, and Borders* by Vanessa Angélica Villarreal and others.

**This class starts in the week of April 14, 2025.**

## 5 Creative Writing and Other Courses

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

(04-001-1020 | 5 Credits)

#### Poetry Workshop: Writing Grief

Monday, 11 am – 1 pm, NSG 325  
Phillip B. Williams (Picador Guest Professor)

In this workshop, we will read poems about the dead, the dying, loss, losing, unfulfilled wishes, and the complexities that sorrow can bring to a work beyond mere regurgitation of said sorrow. Grief is a process that can be lifelong, and in its ever-presence lies the details of how one has loved what no longer exists – at all or in the same way. Students will write poems dealing with grief as well as poems of their own thematic concerns, using the poems we read in class as guides to better understanding nuanced ways to making craft decisions that explore the magnitude of one of our most challenging emotions. Though subject to change, books we may read include *Elegy* by Mary Jo Bang, *A Wreath for Emmett Till* by Marilyn Nelson, *My Alexandria* by Mark Doty, *Patter* by Douglas Kearney and others.

**This class starts in the week of April 14, 2025.**

## 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](mailto:heather.pruessing@uni-leipzig.de).

## **5.3 Study Organization and Planning**

### **Graduate and Undergraduate Study Organization and Planning**

Monday, 10 am - noon, GWZ 3 5.03

Dr. Stefan Schubert

This slot serves as a dedicated office hour/consultation time/Q&A session for any questions you have about planning or organizing your studies. Feel free to bring all issues or questions you have about any aspects of your studies you are unsure about or generally want help with. This can include a general study orientation for first-year students, advice on organizing your studies, choosing modules, or planning semesters in the middle of your studies, or input for how to plan the writing of your BA/MA thesis or think about what to do once you have your degree.

You can simply come by Dr. Schubert's office without an appointment; if you prefer, you can also email him beforehand (the slot is generally in person, but you can also request a Zoom option by writing an email). This offer is open to all American Studies students, graduates (MA) or undergrads (BA).