

PD Dr. Stefan Brandt

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American Literary Realism (1865-1945)

Fri 14.00-16.00

Room 201

First session: Oct 22, 2004

Broadly defined as «the faithful representation of reality» or «verisimilitude,» realism is a technique practiced by many schools of writing, painting, photography and film making. Although strictly speaking, realism is a technique, it also denotes a particular kind of subject matter, especially the representation of middle-class and lower-class life. This course will deal with both the styles and the topics of American realists, including a look at realist painting and social realism in photography and film. We will start in the aftermath of the Civil War, discuss the emergence of naturalism in the 1890s and trace the influence of realism onto American writers, painters, photographers and film makers well into the 1930s. We will consider the movement away from romanticism, the restraints upon character choice, the increased attention to lower-class life, the development of psychological complexity in character, and the formalist techniques involved in realistic representation, especially fragmentation and perspectivism. The seminar will be held in English. 19th

Goals and objectives: Students who successfully complete this course should be able to

- interpret literature analytically and critically
- discuss literature in its role in culture and society
- demonstrate an awareness of historical contexts and major literary and artistic movements during the periods studied

Credit requirements: Regular attendance and thoughtful participation in class (20%), oral presentation as part of an expert group (25%), two research papers (25%), and a term paper (30%).

Oral presentations are meant to be brief, intense, and controversial. They are intended as a springboard to discussion, not a settled issue. Duration 10-15 minutes. Handouts, web page supplements, and other audio-visual aids are welcome. Each presentation will be followed by a discussion, for which the experts will have prepared a catalogue of questions.

Research papers: Each research paper will be 2-3 pages long and present a short description and analysis of one of the texts we've been discussing in class.

Term papers: The term papers will be 10 to 15 pages long. They will make an original argument about one or more of the texts we've been reading, present this argument coherently and logically, and use both close readings of the text(s) and secondary sources to support it. This paper can be based upon one of the research papers. Every paper should include a «works cited» list of at least six secondary sources. **The paper is due Monday, February 28.**

—**Note: There is no extension of the deadline! I will *not* (!) accept late papers.**—

Required reading: A course reader is available in the copy-shop at Königin-Luise-Str.

All participants are asked to purchase *The Portable American Realism Reader* (Viking Portable Library, ed. James Nagel)», either at Bücherstube Marga Schoeller, Knesebeckstraße 33, 10623 Berlin (ca. EUR 15,00), or via www.amazon.de (ca. EUR 14,00).

Relevant texts and books for the seminar can be found in Handapparat 3 in our library.

SYLLABUS

22.10.04 **General Introduction**

29.10.04 **The Civil War and Early Photography**

Read and prepare for this session:

- ALAN TRACHTENBERG, «Albums of War: On Reading Civil War Photographs» (1985), 1-32.
- DAVID E. SHI, «Touched with Fire» (1995), 45-65.

05.11.04 **American Literary Realism**

Read and prepare for this session:

- ALAN TRACHTENBERG, «Fictions of the Real» (1982), 182-207.
- WINFRIED FLUCK, «Realismus als Fiktion» (1992), 19-45.

12.11.04 **Mark Twain's Photographic Eye**

Read and prepare for this session:

- MARK TWAIN, «Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog» (1865), in: *The Portable American Realism Reader*, 3-8.
- MARK TWAIN, «The Story of the Old Ram», in: *The Portable American Realism Reader*, 17-21.

Background text:

- REX BURNS, «The Artful Photograph: Mark Twain's Eye» (1982), 62-73.

19.11.04 **Realism on Canvas: Thomas Eakins's *The Gross Clinic* (1875)**

Read and prepare for this session:

- MICHAEL FRIED, «Realism, Writing, and Disfiguration in Thomas Eakins's *Gross Clinic*» (1985), 33-88.

Background text:

- DAVID E. SHI, «Realism on Canvas» (1995), 126-153.

26.11.04 **William Dean Howells & The Novel of Manners**

Read and prepare for this session:

- WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS, from: *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885) (chapter 1), 5-24.
- WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS, «Editha» (1905), in: *The Portable American Realism Reader*, 412-424.

Background texts:

- WAI-CHEE DIMOCK, «The Economy of Pain: Capitalism, Humanitarianism, and the Realistic Novel» (1991), 67-90.
- PHILIP FURIA, ««Editha»: The Feminine View» (1979), 278-282.

03.12.04 **Sarah Orne Jewett: Regionalism and Local Color**

Read and prepare for this session:

- SARAH ORNE JEWETT, «A White Heron» (1886), in: *The Portable American Realism Reader*, 71-80.

Background text:

- MICHAEL DAVITT BELL, «Local Color and Realism: Sarah Orne Jewett» (1993), 175-204.

—1st research paper (2-3 pages) is due at the start of this session —

10.12.04

Henry James: The Art of Fiction

Read and prepare for this session:

- HENRY JAMES, «The Real Thing» (1892), in: *The Portable American Realism Reader*, 233-254.
- HENRY JAMES, «The Beast in the Jungle» (optional), in: *The Portable American Realism Reader*, 285-322.

Background text:

- HENRY JAMES, «The Art of Fiction» (1888), 3-23.

—Peer group assessment deadline for the 1st research paper —

17.12.04

Frank Norris: Naturalism & The Revolt Against Style

Read and prepare for this session:

- FRANK NORRIS, «A Deal in Wheat» (1902), in: *The Portable American Realism Reader*, 514-524.
- FRANK NORRIS, «Zola as a Romantic Writer» (1896), 72-73.
- FRANK NORRIS, «A Plea for Romantic Fiction» (1901), 75-78.

Background texts:

- MICHAEL DAVITT BELL, «The Problem of Naturalism» (1993), 107-114.
- MICHAEL DAVITT BELL, «The Revolt Against Style» (1993), 115-130.
- LOUIS J. BUDD, «The American Background» (1995), 21-46.

20.12.04-02.01.05

- **Christmas Break** -

07.01.05

Stephen Crane: Impressionism, Naturalism, and Determinist Vision

Read and prepare for this session:

- STEPHEN CRANE, «The Blue Hotel» (1896), in: *The Portable American Realism Reader*, 322-346.
- STEPHEN CRANE, «The Open Boat» (1897), in: *The Portable American Realism Reader*, 466-487.

Background texts:

- JOHN FEASTER, «Violence and the Ideology of Capitalism: A Reconsideration of Crane's «The Blue Hotel»» (1992), 74-94.
- WILLIAM K. SPOFFORD, «Stephen Crane's «The Open Boat»: Fact or Fiction?» (1979), 316-321.
- GREGORY A. SCHIRMER, «Becoming Interpreters: The Importance of Tone in Crane's «The Open Boat»» (1982), 221-231.

14.01.05

Jacob Riis: Photography, Realism and the Social Question

Read and prepare for this session:

- KEITH GANDAL, «The Touristic Ethic and Photography» (1997), 61-73.
- DAVID E. SHI, «Realism and the Social Question» (1885), 181-211.

21.01.05

Realism as an Urban Event: Chicago and New York

Read and prepare for this session:

- DAVID E. SHI, «Form Follows Function» (1995), 154-178.
- DAVID E. SHI, «Ash Can Realism» (1995), 251-272.

Background text:

- PHILIP FISHER, «The Life History of Objects: The Naturalist Novel and the City» (1985), 128-156.

28.01.05

Ernest Hemingway: Iceberg Realism

Please read and prepare for this session:

- ERNEST HEMINGWAY, «Indian Camp» (1925), 15-19.
- ERNEST HEMINGWAY, «The Killers» (1927), 58-69.

Background texts:

- JEFFREY MEYERS, «Hemingway's Primitivism and «Indian Camp»» (1990), 300-308.
- ROBERT E. FLEMING, «Hemingway's «The Killers»: The Map and the Territory» (1990), 309-313.

04.02.05

ROBERT FLAHERTY: *Nanook of the North* (1922)

Screening of the film.

—2nd research paper (2-3 pages) is due at the start of this session —

11.02.05

Flaherty's *Nanook*: Realism and the Documentary

Read and prepare for this session:

- BILL NICHOLS, «Telling Stories with Evidence and Arguments» (1991), 107-133.

You should have watched and prepared:

- Flaherty's movie *Nanook of the North* (1922)

—Peer group assessment deadline for the 2nd research paper —

—Note: There will be an extra-screening of Sturges's *Sullivan's Travels* (1941) after this session, Feb 11, between 16.00 and 17:30 —

18.02.05

Hollywood and Realism: Preston Sturges's *Sullivan's Travels* (1941)

Please read and prepare for this session:

- BRENDA WINEAPPLE, «Finding an Audience: Sullivan's Travels» (1984), 152-157.
- JAY ROZGONYI, «Sullivan's Travels» (1995), 81-94.

Background text:

- BERTOLT BRECHT, «Popularity and Realism» (1938), 489-493.

—Deadline for final paper (10-15 pages) is on February 28.

Note! There is no extension of the deadline. I will not accept late papers! —