

Banned Books

Literary Fiction and the Specter of Censorship

Lecturer: PD Dr. Stefan L. Brandt, Guest Professor

Room and time: WS-A 004, Thursdays 16-18

Course type: Hauptseminar

Modules: Master LKM M 5.1 Geschichte kultureller Institutionen / Lehramt Gym 7.4 Autorengruppen / Lehramt BK 6.3 Autorengruppen / Master Internationale Kulturhistorische Studien EM 5, 6 & 7 (,Langes' 19. Jhdt. & Gegenwart).

First session: April 7, 2011

Course description: The history of U.S. literature and culture is also the history of censorship. Some of the most renowned (and nowadays canonized) works were banned at some point in time. What were the political and social reasons for such ostracism? How did censorship influence the reception of the texts and how did the public imagination react to these forms of restriction? In what way have the criteria of social control changed in the course of time? Which banned books do we know today? Did we know that they were banned? We will look at some infamous cases of censorship, such as Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899), J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), and Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl" (1955) and discuss the reasons for their exclusion from public discourse. How does our knowledge that these works were banned change our perception of them? And, paying attention to modern ways of censorship: Have modes of cultural suppression outlived themselves in the age of the Internet? We will also take a look at the handling of censorship in other media: the Hays Code in Hollywood since the 1930s, the Comics Code Authority in the 1950s, and the Communications Decency Act of 1996. An excursus to the realm of music will explore the effects of indecency standards in scandals such as the so-called "Nipplegate" during the 2004 life-broadcast of the Super Bowl involving Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake and the consequences on sales figures.

Grading:

- 2 CP: regular attendance, participation in discussions, at least eight entries in the discussion forum (1/2), Expert Session (1/2).
- 5 CP: regular attendance, participation in discussions, at least nine entries in the discussion forum (1/3), Expert Session (1/3), final paper of 10-12 pages (1/3).
- 6 or 7 CP: regular attendance, participation in discussions, at least nine entries in the discussion forum (1/3), Expert Session (1/3), and final paper (15-17 pages) (1/3).

Deadline for Final Papers: Friday, August 31 (Wednesday), 2011. Note: There is no extension of this deadline! Please throw papers into my box (2nd floor of the AR-H building) or send them in postal form. *Do not send papers via email!*

Syllabus

- April 7** **Introduction: Censorship in American Literature and Culture**
Basic texts (recommended):
Nicholas J. Karolides et al, "Introduction" to *Censored Books* (2001), xiii-xxii.¹
Herbert N. Foerstel, "Introduction" to *Banned in the U.S.A.: A Reference Guide to Book Censorship in Schools and Public Libraries* (2002), xv-xxv.
Jonathan Dollimore, "Sexual Disgust," *Sex, Literature, and Censorship* (2001), 46-69.
- April 14** **Racism and the Animated Cartoon**
Main example (required):
Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs (1943, dir. Robert Clampett; prod. Merrie Melodies). Please watch online!
Reference themes (10-15 mins.):
1. The Censored Eleven; 2. Disney Cartoons and Censorship.
- April 21** **Easter Holiday (Gründonnerstag)**
Relax and enjoy!

¹ All main texts for this course are available at Moodle: <https://moodle.uni-siegen.de>. All these texts are also available in the form of a course reader (for those who like to have everything printed out already). Copy write, Weidenauer Str. 248 (behind the police station), phone: 0271-45416.

BANNED BOOKS

- April 28** **'Suitable for the slums'? Offensive Language in Local Color Fiction**
Main text (required):
Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), chapters 1, 4, 20, 31 & 43.
Reference themes (10-15 mins.):
1. Local Color and the Vernacular.
- May 5** **'Too strong drink for moral babes': The Cult of True Womanhood and the Women's Movement**
Main example (required):
Kate Chopin, *The Awakening* (1899), chapters 1-3, 9-11, 36, 39.
Reference themes (10-15 mins.):
1. Cult of True Womanhood; 2. The First Women's Movement.
- May 12** **Graphic Violence and the Hays Code**
Main example (required):
Scarface (1932, dir. Howard Hughes). Check out overnight at the Sekretariat (room AR-K 222/1).
Reference themes (10-15 mins.):
1. The Hays Code (censorship and criminality).
- May 19** **Social Fragmentation and the Ghost of Witch-Hunting**
Main text (required):
Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery," from: *The New Yorker* (June 26, 1948), 1-4.
Reference themes (10-15 mins.):
1. The social climate of the late 1940s (Cold War, witch-hunting).
- May 26** **'If you want to know the truth': Juvenile Rebellion and the Tactile Force of Images**
Main text (required):
Jerome D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), chapters 1, 8, 12, 13, 22, 25 & 26.
Reference themes (10-15 mins.):
1. Juvenile rebellion in the 1940s and 50s ("Rebels without a Cause" - Dean, Brando)
- June 2** **Ascension Holiday (Christi Himmelfahrt)**
Relax and enjoy!
- June 9** **Obscenity and Beat Literature**
Main text (required):
Allen Ginsberg, "Howl" (1955).
Reference themes (10-15 mins.):
1. Beat literature; 2. Famous Obscenity Trials (J. Cleland, H. Miller, A. Ginsberg).
- June 16** **The 'Trouble' with Race**
Main example (required):
Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), chapters 1-5 & 36.
Reference themes (10-15 mins.):
1. Race and law; 2. 'Ethnic' novels and protest culture.
- June 23** **Feast of Corpus Christi (Fronleichnam)**
Relax and enjoy!
- June 30** **The Challenges of Pacifism in American Culture**
Main text (required):
Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., *Slaughterhouse-Five, or The Children's Crusade* (1969). Read excerpt and check out the movie (1972, dir. G. R. Hill) overnight at the Sekretariat (room AR-K 222/1, Anne Weber).
Reference themes (10-15 mins.):
1. Censorship of pacifist texts (history, Vietnam).
- July 7** **Blasphemy and Black Humor**
Main example (required):
Monty Python's 'Life of Brian' (1979, dir. Terry Jones). Check out the movie overnight!
Reference themes (10-15 mins.):
1. Religion and censorship.
- July 14** **The Specter of Pornography and the Visual Arts**
Main example (required):
Madonna, "Justify My Love" (1990, dir. J.-B. Mondino) & "Erotica" (1992, dir. Fabian Baron). Please watch online!
Reference themes (10-15 mins.):
1. 'Sex scandals' in the music business ('Nipplegate'); 2. Lewd Photography (R. Mapplethorpe).