

# British and American Cultural Studies

## Theories and Methods

**Lecturer:** Univ.-Prof. PD Dr. Stefan L. Brandt ('Brückenprofessor')

**Room and time:** Room 1 (Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik), Fridays 14-16 Uhr · **First session:** March 9, 2012

**Course description:** In this course, we will discuss pivotal texts from British and American Cultural Studies, ranging from Cultural Materialism, Film Theory, and Gender Studies to New Historicism, Postcolonialism, and Transnational Studies. The main idea is to present students with the whole gamut of potential approaches in contemporary cultural theory. One insight that participants of the course can gain is that different epistemological perspectives may lead to different results in terms of interpretation and 'meaning.' In other words, there is not just one truth, but many different truths, depending on the theoretical lens employed by the interpreter. Students may regard this course as a useful overview, since all major theories and methods of Cultural Studies will be introduced.

**Methods:** Presentations by students, based on PowerPoint and 4-page handouts to be distributed in class; close readings and analyses of key theoretical texts; forum discussions on Moodle. All texts are available on Moodle: <https://moodle.univie.ac.at/>.

**Aims:** It is the aim of this course to support students to explore and apply relevant theoretical approaches from British and American Cultural Studies as part of the process of structuring a Master's or diploma thesis.

**Form of control:** Regular attendance; active in-class participation; presentation as part of an expert session with 4-page handout to be distributed in class; reading assignments; occasional quizzes; at least 9 elaborate entries in the discussion forum.

### Syllabus

- Mar. 9**                    **Introduction – What Are Cultural Studies?**  
Basic texts (recommended):  
    Graeme Turner, "The Idea of Cultural Studies" [1990], *British Cultural Studies*, 1992, 11-37.  
    Neil Campbell and Alasdair Kean, "Introduction," *American Cultural Studies*, 2008, 1-18.
- Mar. 16**                    **"Get into the Groove" – Theories of Popular Culture**  
Main texts (obligatory):  
    John Storey, "What Is Popular Culture?" from: *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, 2001, 1-16.  
    John Fiske, "Commodities and Culture" [1989], from *Understanding Popular Culture*, 2007, 23-47.  
Examples: Pop Music, Blockbusters, Mainstream Cinema, Fan Fiction, Advertisements, Fashion, TV Shows.
- Mar. 23**                    **Reading Culture - Theories of Representation and Communication (Birmingham School)**  
Main texts (obligatory):  
    Stuart Hall, "Encoding, Decoding" [1973], *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. S. During, 1997, 507-17.  
    Stuart Hall, "Introduction" to *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, 1997, 15-74.  
Examples: Television, Journals, Newspapers, Commercials, Paintings, Graphic Illustrations, Blogs.
- Mar. 30**                    **"Hyper Hyper" – Media Theory, Consumer Culture, and Simulated Realities**  
Main texts (obligatory):  
    J. Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra" [1981], *Norton Anthology*, 2010, 1556-66.  
    F. Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" [1988], *Norton Anthology*, 2010, 1846-60.  
Examples: Television, Advertising, Media Images (e.g., Vietnam, 9/11, 2012 U.S. Election, etc.)
- Apr. 6 & 13**                **No class! (Easter Holiday)**  
    *Relax and enjoy!*

- Apr. 20**      **“Strike a Pose” - Gender Studies and Performance Theory**  
 Main texts (obligatory):  
 Judith Butler, “Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions,” *Gender Trouble*, 1990, 128-41.  
 Marvin Carlson, “What Is Performance?” [1996], *Performance*, 2004, 1-7.  
 Examples: Performance Culture, Music, Theater, Video Clips, Everyday Life.
- Apr. 27**      **Independent Study Unit**  
 You will receive an assignment to do at home.
- May 4**        **Cinematic Pleasures – Film Theory, Psychology, and Phenomenology**  
 Main texts (obligatory):  
 Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” 1975, 6-18.  
 Vivian Sobchack, “What My Fingers Knew: The Cinesthetic Subject, or Vision in the Flesh,” 2000, 1-23.  
 Examples: Mainstream and Independent Cinema, Photography, Film Stills.
- May 11**      **Race Matters – Ethnicity and Whiteness Studies**  
 Main texts (obligatory):  
 Richard Dyer, “White” [1985], *The Matter of Images*, 1990, 141-63.  
 Toni Morrison, “Disturbing Nurses and the Kindness of Sharks,” *Playing in the Dark*, 1992, 61-91.  
 Examples: Ethnic Literature and Film, Mainstream Portrayals of Race and Ethnicity, Advertisements.
- May 18**      **“Can the Subaltern Speak?” Postcolonialism and the Invention of the ‘Other’**  
 Main texts (obligatory):  
 Edward Said, “Orientalism” [1978], *Norton Anthology*, 2010, 1866-88.  
 Homi K. Bhabha, “Introduction” to *The Location of Culture*, 1994, 1-18.  
 Examples: (Post-)Colonial Literature and Cinema, Images and Postcards.
- May 25**      **The Politics of Culture - Cultural Materialism and New Historicism**  
 Main texts (obligatory):  
 Raymond Williams, “Hegemony” & “Dominant, Emergent, and Residual,” *Marxism and Literature*, 1977, 108-127.  
 Stephen Greenblatt, “Towards a Poetics of Culture,” *The New Historicism*, ed. H.A. Veenser, 1989, 1-14.  
 Examples: Social and Cultural Movements, Politics, Propaganda, History Books, Globalization, Occupy Movement.
- June 1**        **Independent Study Unit**  
 You will receive an assignment to do at home.
- June 8**        **“Into the Wild” – Nature and Environmental Studies (Eco Criticism)**  
 Main texts (obligatory):  
 Lawrence Buell, Introduction to *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, 2005, 1-28.  
 David Ingram, Chapter 1 from: *Green Screen: Environmentalism and Hollywood Cinema*, 2000, 13-24.  
 Examples: Environmentalism, Nature Writing & Cinema, Landscape Art.
- June 15**      **Inside/Out – Queer Theory and Minority Studies**  
 Main texts (obligatory):  
 Ki Namaste, “The Politics of Inside/Out,” *Sociological Theory* (Jan. 1994): 220-31.  
 Annamarie Jagose, “Queer,” *Queer Theory: An Introduction*, 1996, 72-99.  
 Examples: Mainstream Texts, Queer & Independent Cinema, Sitcoms, Cultural Events.
- June 22**      **Caught in the Matrix – Posthuman Studies and Technoculture**  
 Main texts (obligatory):  
 Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto” [1991], *Postmodern American Fiction*, 1998, ed. P. Geyh, 603-22.  
 Neil Badmington, “Theorizing Posthumanism,” *Cultural Critique* 53 (Winter 2003): 10-27.  
 Examples: Internet, Digital Culture, Video Games, Facebook, Smartphones, Blogs, Augmented Reality.
- June 29**      **Towards a New Consciousness – Transnationalism, Hybridity, and Border Studies**  
 Main texts (obligatory):  
 Paul Gilroy, “The Black Atlantic” [1994], *Norton Anthology*, 2010, 2556-2575.  
 Gloria Anzaldúa, “Towards a New Consciousness” [1987], from *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 2007, 99-113.  
 Examples: Transnational/Transcultural Literature and Cinema, Mixed/Hybrid Identities.