

# Introduction to Cultural Studies (USA)

Übung, LV-Nr. 050663D, 3 CP

B.A. Anglistik/ Amerikanistik

**Lecturer:** PD Dr. Stefan L. Brandt

**Room and time:** GABF 04/614 (Süd), Thursdays 12-14

**Short description:** This course provides an introduction to the field of 'Cultural Studies' with a focus on the USA. Students will obtain knowledge of the key theoretical models as well as the methods deployed by (American) Cultural Studies. In each case, we will test the practical use of our results by applying them to cultural practices (in the broad sense) such as TV, film, music, painting, advertising, sports, and photography. In addition, the categories of class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality will be discussed in their repercussions for individual and group identities and with regard to their reflection in contemporary U.S. American literature and popular culture. The second main aim of the class is to give an introduction to the most central facts of American *Landeskunde*, which will also feature a look at the socio-historical and mythological dimension.

**Grading:** Apart from regular attendance and participation in class discussions, each student will have to be an expert in one session and prepare a handout (group work possible). There might also be unannounced 'pop quizzes' to check if you have read the texts. Poor attendance or class participation will negatively affect your grade.

## Syllabus:

### 22. Oct. Introduction: What Is American Cultural Studies?

Basic texts:

N. Campbell & A. Kean, "Introduction" (1997) (from *American Cultural Studies: An Introduction to American Culture*, London: Routledge).

H. Temperley & C. Bigsby, "Chronology" (2005) (from: *Lessons on the Constitution*, Washington: S.E.C.).

R. Williams, "Culture" (1976) (from: *Keywords*, London: Fontana). In: Red Reader (RR) (Theory, distributed in class): 2-4.

J. Storey, "What Is Cultural Studies?" (1976) In: RR: 2-13.

S. Hall, "Representation, Meaning and Language" (1997) (from: *Representation*, ed. S. Hall, London et al: Open Univ.). RR: 14-34.

### 29. Oct. Making 'America': Revolution, Independence, and Constitution

Required reading:

"The Constitution of the United States" (1787) & Amendments (from: R.J. Wilson, *The Pursuit of Liberty*, New York: Knopf, 1984).

J.J. Patrick & R.C. Remy, "Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances" (2005) (from: Temperley & Bigsby, *Lessons on the Constitution*).

Possible examples: Images and illustrations from the Revolutionary Era, short Revolutionary poems.

### 05. Nov. 'American' and 'Americanness': Exceptionalism and Cultural Identity

Required reading:

B. Anderson, from *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983). RR: 40-41.

Possible examples: Short speeches by former U.S. leaders (e.g., T. Roosevelt, G.W. Bush).

### 12. Nov. Puritanism and Religion

Required reading:

J. Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" (1838 [1630]) (from: *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 1989).

Possible examples: Images of churches and sermons, stills/clips of TV preachers (e.g., Pat Robertson).

### 19. Nov. The Old South

Required reading:

E. Ransom & A. Hook, "The Old South" (1989) (from: M. Bradbury & H. Temperley, *Introduction to American Studies*, Essex: Longman).

Possible examples: Images and poems of the Old South, clips from films (e.g., *Gone with the Wind*).

### 26. Nov. The American 'Frontier' & 'Manifest Destiny'

Required reading:

R.A. Burchell & R.J. Gray, "The Frontier West" (1989) (from: Bradbury & Temperley, *Introduction to American Studies*).

Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" (1956 [1893]).

D. Galloway, "The American Frontier – The Line of Potential" (lecture).

Possible examples: Images of the frontier (Buffalo Bill, Billy the Kid, etc.), Wild West films.

- 03. Dec. The 'American Dream' ('From Rags to Riches')**  
Additional reading:  
R. Barthes, "Myth Today" (1973) (from: *Visual Culture*, ed. J. Evans & S. Hall, London: Sage, 1999).  
RR: 35-38.  
Possible examples: Images of self-made men (e.g., Horatio Alger), songs, films (e.g., *Pretty Woman*, 1990).
- 10. Dec. Ethnicity and Immigration**  
Required reading:  
N. Campbell & A. Kean, "Ethnicity and Immigration: Between Many Worlds" (1997) (from *American Cultural Studies: An Introduction to American Culture*, London: Routledge).  
J.G. Zeller, "Brief" (1869) (from: *Briefe Rueß und Verwandte*, ed. W. Helbich).  
A. Smedley, "'Race' and the Construction of Human Identity" (1998) (from: *American Anthropologist*, 100.3, Sep.). RR: 66-71.  
S. Hall, "New Ethnicities" (1989) (from: *Stuart Hall*, ed. D. Morley & K.-H. Chen, London et al: Routledge, 1996). RR: 61-65.  
Possible examples: Images of immigrants from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Chinatown, early Jewish culture.
- 17. Dec. The African American Civil Rights Movement**  
Required reading:  
J. Williams, "Standing for Justice" (1987) (various materials from *Eyes on the Prize*).  
M.L. King, Jr., "I Have a Dream" (Aug. 28, 1963) (from: *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*).  
Possible examples: Documents of the African American Civil Rights Movement, Emmett Till, MLK.
- 07. Jan. Vietnam & Counter Culture**  
Required reading:  
D. Snowman & M. Bradbury, "The Sixties and Seventies" (from: Bradbury & Temperley, *Introduction to American Studies*, 1989).  
Possible examples: Short poems by Beat authors, Woodstock, Vietnam War movies.
- 14. Jan. Mass Culture and Television**  
Required reading:  
P. Du Gay & S. Hall, "Circuit of Culture" (1997) (from: *Doing Cultural Studies*)  
S. Hall, "Encoding, decoding" (1993 [1973]) (from: *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. S. During).  
Both in RR: 39, 45-52.  
Possible examples: Influential TV series, examples of mass consumerism (walkman, Coca Cola).
- 21. Jan. Gender & Queer Theory**  
Required reading:  
E. Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Axiomatic" (2005 [1991]) (from *Queer Theory*, ed. I. Morland & A. Willox). RR: 53-60a.  
Possible examples: Gender bending, feminist icons, photography (R. Mapplethorpe), queer television.
- 28. Jan. Popular Culture & Fandom**  
Required reading:  
J. Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom" (1992) (from: *The Adoring Audience*, ed. L.A. Lewis, New York: Routledge). RR: 72-75.  
Philip Bounds, "Cultural Populism" (1999) (from: *Cultural Studies*. Studymates). RR: 76-80.  
Possible examples: Fan fiction, comics, 'cult' TV series, pop icons (M. Monroe, J. Dean, Madonna, etc.).
- 04. Feb. Post 9/11: Trauma, Nationalism, and Postnationalism**  
Required reading:  
J.C. Rowe, "Nationalism, Post-Nationalism, and Terrorism" (2007) (lecture).  
Arundhati Roy, comment in *Guardian* (Sep. 29, 2001).  
Possible examples: Images from 9/11 ('falling man'), television footage, Afghanistan, Iraq War.

All theory texts are contained in a reader which is available for 1 EUR.

For films, please go to the 'Mediathek', GB 03/33 (Nord). The 'Mediathek' is open Tue, 11-14, Wed, 12-16, Thur, 12-16. Important note: Films can be checked out only over night (!) or over the weekend. Make sure you return the film the next possible weekday at 12!