

Masterstudiengang JFKI,

Kultur-Modul C

*(Kulturgeschichte einzelner Medien und ästhetischer  
Darstellungsformen):*

Vorlesung

## **Lecture Course C1: American Modernities**

Prof. Dr. F. Kelleter

Monday, 14.15 – 16.00 (JFK 319)  
(Summer Semester 2017)

This lecture course deals with American culture between World War I and World War II: an era which saw the birth of new technologies of production, representation, and destruction as well as far-ranging revolutions in the organization of knowledge. Sociology, ethnology, psychoanalysis, and other disciplines emerged in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as specific ways of theorizing modernity. Many of these transformations can be witnessed in a prototypical fashion in the United States. Our topics in this lecture course include: the Great War and modernist aesthetics; the “New Negro” movement and the Harlem Renaissance; New Deal culture; the Hollywood studio system.

The lecture course serves as “**Vorlesung**” of Culture-**Module C** (*Kulturgeschichte einzelner Medien und ästhetischer Darstellungsformen*) in the **Master’s degree program**. **Registration:** All participants must be registered via Blackboard *and* Campus Management before the first session. If you cannot register online or cannot attend the first session, please contact Prof. Kelleter before the beginning of the term.

Students can take this lecture course in conjunction with the **seminar** “American Culture, 1900-1945: Modernities and Modernisms” (same room, immediately after the lecture). If you intend to attend the seminar as well, please study its syllabus carefully to understand all requirements (you need to hand in Topic Proposals for the seminar by April 19 and be present in the first session).

24 April 2017

### **Modernization, Modernity, Modernism**

Suggested: Daniel J. Singal, “Modernist Culture” (*The Oxford Companion to United States History*. Ed. Paul Boyer. Oxford: Oxford UP: 2001, 510-11); *The Crowd* (\*) [MGM, 1928] and/or *Modern Times* (\*) [UA, 1936].

1 May 2017

– [No session (May Day)] –

8 May 2017

## **Sound Technologies: Hollywood in the 1920s**

Required Viewing: *The Jazz Singer* (\*) [Warner Bros., 1927].

Suggested: *The Sheik* (\*) [Paramount, 1921]; *Sherlock, Jr.* (\*) [Metro, 1924].

15 May 2017

## **Modernist Prose (1)**

Required Reading: Gertrude Stein, from *Three Lives*: “Melanctha.”

Suggested: Stein, from *Tender Buttons*: “Objects.”

22 May 2017

## **Modernist Prose (2)**

Required Reading: Ernest Hemingway, “Indian Camp,” “In Another Country,” “Hills Like White Elephants,” from *A Farewell to Arms*: chapters 1, 6, 27, 41.

Suggested: Hemingway, “A Natural History of the Dead,” “Now I Lay Me,” “A Clean, Well-Lighted Place”; *The Sun Also Rises* (\*) or *A Farewell to Arms* (\*) completely.

29 May 2017

– [No session (Kennedy Day)] –

5 June 2017

– [No session (Pentecost)] –

12 June 2017

## **Modernist Poetry**

Required Reading: Wallace Stevens, “Of Modern Poetry,” “Anecdote of the Jar”; W.C. Williams, “Portrait of a Lady,” “The Red Wheelbarrow,” “This Is Just to Say.”

Suggested: Ezra Pound, “Canto XLV: With Usura”; Stevens, “The Emperor of Ice-Cream,” “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird,” “The Idea of Order at Key West”; Williams, “The Young Housewife”; e.e. cummings, “l(a)”; H.D., “Evening”; Marianne Moore, “Poetry.”

19 June 2017

## **Modernist Drama**

Required Reading: Susan Glaspell, *Trifles*; Eugene O’Neill, *The Emperor Jones*.

26 June 2017

## **The “New Negro” Movement and the Harlem Renaissance**

Required Reading: Alain Locke, “The New Negro”; Claude McKay, “The Harlem Dancer,” “If We Must Die”; Countee Cullen, “Incident,” “Scottsboro, Too, Is Worth Its Song”; Langston Hughes, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” “The Weary Blues,” “I, Too,” “Note on Commercial Theater,” “Johannesburg Mines”; from Jean Toomer, *Cane*: “Fern”; from Nella Larsen, *Passing*: chapter 2.

Suggested: George Samuel Schuyler, “The Negro-Art Hokum”; Langston Hughes, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”; from W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (selections); Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (\*).

3 July 2017

## Radio's New Deal and the New Deal's Radio

Required Reading/Listening: Franklin D. Roosevelt, "The Banking Crisis [First Fireside Chat, March 12, 1933]."

Suggested: Herbert Hoover, "On American Individualism"; Roosevelt, "Answering the Critics [Fifth Fireside Chat, June 28, 1934]."

10 July 2017

## Classical Hollywood (1)

Required Viewing: *Scarface* (\*) [UA, 1932]; *King Kong* (\*) [RKO, 1933]; *Stagecoach* [UA, 1939]; *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (\*) [UA, 1939].

Suggested: *Freaks* (\*) [MGM, 1932].

Further Suggested: *She Done Him Wrong* (\*) [Paramount, 1933]; *Three Little Pigs* (\*) [MGM/Disney, 1933]; *Gone with the Wind* (\*) [MGM/Selznick, 1939].

17 July 2017

## Classical Hollywood (2)

Required Viewing: *The Philadelphia Story* (\*) [MGM, 1940]; *The Maltese Falcon* (\*) [Warner Bros., 1941]; *Casablanca* (\*) [Warner Bros., 1942].

Suggested: *Citizen Kane* (\*) [RKO, 1941]; *Spellbound* (\*) [UA, 1945].

Further Suggested: *The Lady Eve* (\*) [Paramount, 1941]; *Bambi* (\*) [RKO/Disney, 1942]; *The Big Sleep* (\*) [Warner Bros., 1946].

Unmarked texts are included in the course reader. The course reader can be found on the reserve shelf in the JFKI-library; for electronic access please contact Uwe Oehm (uoehm@zedat.fu-berlin.de). Marked texts and films (\*) are not included in the course reader; they will be made available on the reserve shelf in the JFKI library. Films will be made available if a DVD exists; if not, please watch online.

This course will **not be graded**. The grade of your module will be identical with the grade you receive in the module's seminar. To **gain credit** for this course, you need to document both your **regular attendance** and **active attendance** ("regelmäßige und aktive Teilnahme" according to Campus Management).

**Documentation of regular attendance:** In each session (except the first), you will be asked to quote (in writing, in-class) one **key-sentence** from the material you have studied **for this session** (in case of films: a piece of dialogue, an intertitle, or a short description of a scene in no more than two sentences). Alternatively, you can provide what you consider a **key thought (in one or two sentences) from last week's lecture**. To gain credit for attendance, you need to have provided **at least 7 such in-class notes** by the end of the semester.

(If you cannot attend a specific session, the in-class note can be substituted by a 600-word abstract of the reading assignments or a 600-word summary of last week's class, to be e-mailed to me no later than the day you're missing class!)

**Documentation of active attendance:** **One-page informal reflection paper** on a session of your choice, to be handed in (e-mail) **by 17 July 2017**.

**Electronic etiquette policy:** You will not be able to follow a lecture with undivided attention when you're simultaneously surfing the Web. Laptop or tablet screens can also be a distraction for other students. Therefore, I kindly suggest that you take your notes on paper.

Only if absolutely necessary, use laptops or tablets for note-taking, and if you do, please disconnect your device from the internet. In addition, please turn off all cell phones in the beginning of class. Thank you!

**A Note on the Selection of Course Material:** The material for this course has not been selected in order to canonize, celebrate or condone it. Rather, this is a course in cultural history which analyzes powerful American self-descriptions and self-performances from a non-US perspective. Thus, some canonical sources have been selected precisely *because* of their prevailing agency within the cultural system we're investigating as observers (rather than contributors). As always, studying cultural history can be intense and disturbing. This course assumes that students are able to engage with material that is challenging in its representations and agendas without need for protection or warning; in fact, engaging with (political or aesthetic) discomfort is a significant part of an American Studies education and an opportunity for discussion and learning. However, there are some instances where a student may have had personal trauma that creates specific triggers for severe emotional distress. If this applies to you, please take responsibility to research all material we will be reading and viewing ahead of time, and let me know if you think that studying a particular text or film would create a significant issue for you—we can then work out alternative arrangements.