

Literature Department Course Offerings Summer Term 2021

All courses at the university during the summer semester will be held using digital formats. This document contains information on all the courses that will be offered by the Literature Department. The weekly time slots below have no official function at this point; the instructors may, however, use the scheduled time frames for group work, remote consultation, or other online activities in their classes. Each instructor will communicate the teaching mode, the readings, and the online tools for their respective course via Blackboard (students are automatically added to Blackboard when they sign up for their courses on Campus Management). If you run into any problems using Blackboard, please contact your instructor individually (via email) as soon as possible. Please also check the JFKI website regularly for updates.

A. Bachelor Program

Orientation Module Literature:

Course	Title	Lecturer
S 32200-S21 (Introductory module on literary analysis)	Introduction to Literature II	Ulla Haselstein Thu 10:00-12:00
This class complements the "Introduction to Literary Studies," further familiarizing students with conventions of genre and literary analysis. We will read texts written in different centuries but belonging to the same genre in order to observe the affordances of the form and trace its expressive function for the cultural imaginary. Examples will include the short story, the autobiography, the captivity narrative, the jeremiad, and the essay.		

Advanced Module A—Literary Epochs

Course	Title	Lecturer
S 32206-S21	Immigrant Literature	Florian Sedlmeier Thu 16-18
<p>The self-mythologization of the U.S. as a nation of immigrants has prompted a multi-faceted literary tradition of immigrant literature across the centuries. Starting in the late nineteenth century, the consolidation and reception of this massive corpus of texts increasingly corresponds to various sociological models and tropes such as Americanization, assimilation, and the melting pot. At the same time, cultural pluralism and multiculturalism provide alternative notions, which are partly informed by anthropology. The emphasis on ethnic difference questions the mechanisms of social inclusion and exclusion, probing the conditions of participation in prototypical stories of acculturation and economic success. Conceived as a medium of cultural and social self-assurance, literature both affirms and destabilizes these models and tropes of immigration, which are often tied to familial narratives of generational change, where each new generation relates differently to the pressures of becoming American.</p> <p>Against this backdrop, the seminar examines autobiographical texts, samples from investigative journalism and social documentaries, dramatic and prose texts of varying lengths, and a graphic novel, covering a transhistorical scope that reaches from the eighteenth through the twenty-first centuries. Reading literature by Benjamin Franklin, Jacob Riis, Anzia Yeziarska, Willa Cather, Jamaica Kincaid, Shaun Tan, and others, students will thus be familiarized with a variety of genres as well as the cultural, literary, and social plots central to narrating immigrant experiences.</p> <p>Students are expected to participate actively with regular contributions to class discussion. As a creative assignment, they are asked to collectively produce a multi-media text that revolves around immigration. For a graded "Schein," they will have to write a term paper</p>		

Advanced Module B—Literary Forms

Course	Title	Lecturer
VS 32201-S21	Reframing the Unfinished in the American Novel of the 1990s	Simone Sannio Mon 18-20
<p>This course will focus on a selection of novels from the 1990s that include within their plots fictitious unfinished texts, or other unfinished works of art,</p>		

as media of textual self-reflection. Our twofold aim will be to define the varied use of the incomplete as an aesthetic principle in this literary form and to retrace its transformations during a transitional period in US culture. To this end, we will read both fiction and non-fiction writings by some of the defining novelists of the era, including Don DeLillo, Michael Chabon, and Colson Whitehead. Besides looking at the peculiar ways in which these authors subvert the Aristotelian ideal of narrative closure, we will also consider how their works respond to multiple “narratives of the End” that were popular in the 1990s, most notably by exposing at the textual level the decade’s obsession with endings. For this reason, each primary text will be framed within the larger debate over the state of literature at the close of the 20th century, a pivotal historical and cultural moment that coincided in the popular and scholarly imagination with a series of perceived “conclusions” to which these novels resist in varying degrees: among them, the end of the Cold War and the end of the millennium, but also the so-called “end of history”, the end of postmodernism, the “end of the book” as a medium, and the often-announced “death of the novel”.

VS 32202-S21

A Country Imagined:
Literary and
photographic narratives
since 1970

Koen Potgieter
Fri 12-14

This course explores the cross-pollination between American photography and literature since the 1970s. The decade signaled a great increase in the esteem of photography as an art form, an esteem modeled to a significant degree on the idea of the photographer as a fully fledged literary voice, expressing an inner consciousness. At the same time, as Susan Sontag wrote in 1977, *‘the Whitmanesque mandate to record in its entirety the extravagant candors of actual American experience has gone sour’* in this period. Indeed, in both literature and photography, the era's postmodern turn threw age-old questions about the representation of reality—and the romantic “I” figure that was implied behind the text—into stark relief.

We will explore how literature and photography in the United States were shaken up by these ideas, and see how they eventually repositioned themselves as chroniclers of the life of the nation. Special emphasis will be placed on works in which writing and visuals are combined, for example Bernadette Mayer’s *Memory* (1975) and Jim Goldberg’s *Rich and Poor* (1985). Other texts we will discuss include: Michel Foucault *What is an Author*, Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Zabriskie Point*, Raymond Carver’s *Cathedral* and Rachel Kushner’s *The Hard Crowd*

VS 32203-S21	Modern Men: Modes of Masculinity in Modernist Prose	Birte Wege Wed 10-12
<p>By all accounts, the nineteenth century is the century when American literature consolidates itself as such, gradually emancipating itself from its European predecessors. This process depends on the consolidation of a literary market and generates the emergence of new genres. The seminar discusses the varieties of the short form in C19 against the backdrop of these and other factors. We look at various genres of the short form such as essays, portraits, travel sketches, tales, tall tales, and the early short story. While we examine genre conventions and differences, we also discuss the possibility of a general affordance of the short form in the nineteenth century. Here a double contextualization seems crucial: on the one hand, the social and aesthetic effects resulting from an exponentially growing magazine market; on the other, the tension between experimental openness and pointed conciseness, which, per suggested hypothesis, may characterize the short form in general. Not least, toward the close of the nineteenth century short forms play a prominent role in the context of discourses of difference and their corresponding authorships ("women's writing," immigrant literatures, African American literature, Native American literature). Students are expected to be diligently prepared and attend regularly. Term paper topics should be developed over the course of the semester.</p>		
VS 32204-S21	The Other Half: Literatures of American Poverty	James Dorson Tue 12-14
<p>As millions of people have been thrown into poverty during the Covid-19 pandemic, sensational news coverage of overrun food banks and partisan disputes over the size of "relief packages" have once again rendered poverty visible in public discourse. While poverty in the US has periodically been discovered and rediscovered since at least the middle of the 19th century, Judith Goode and Jeff Maskovsky observe that "the problem lies not in poor people's invisibility but in the terms on which they are permitted to be visible in public discourse" (2001; 2). Taking up the question of how the poverty of what Jacob Riis famously called "the other half" is rendered visible, this class examines the affordances of different literary genres for mediating discourses on poverty in the US. Looking at genres such as sentimentalism, social realism, documentary photography, life writing, and drama, questions that we will address include: How and for whom is poverty made visible in literature? How are different forms of hunger (material, social, spiritual, artistic, etc.) related and ranked? How are processes of impoverishment depicted and what</p>		

representational strategies are used to either depoliticize or repoliticize poverty? How is the agency of the poor disregarded or asserted? How does literature negotiate or perpetuate pitfalls of poverty discourse such as the “culturalization” or “scientization” of poverty? And how do changing genres and discourses of poverty represent the thorny relationship between race and class? The primary literature we will be reading spans the period from the middle of the 19th century to the present. Most of the material for the class will be uploaded to Blackboard. Only the following two texts will not be made available and should be acquired: Suzan-Lori Parks’s play “In the Blood” from *The Red Letter Plays* (2001) and Madeline Ffitch’s novel *Stay and Fight* (2019).

VS 16031-S21	Theories of Racial Enslavement – Introduction to Black Studies	Matthew Milbourne, Henrike Elisabeth Kohpeiß, Jan Slaby Thu 14-16
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The transatlantic slave trade is a historical point of departure for many of the theories running under the label Black Studies. Approaching this four-centuries long “non-event” (Moten 2003) as an object of theoretical thought holds out the challenge of finding a language for the violence committed and endured, of coming to terms with both the “sayable” and the “unsayable”, and embracing what language affords and where words have never gone. In our seminar we will read so-called slave narratives as well as theoretical accounts of racial slavery and discuss them with a focus on their literary strategies and philosophical perspectives. We are interested in reflecting on the ways in which affective spheres of enslavement are transmitted textually. We also aim familiarize ourselves with discourses about memory, repair, and subjectivity that evolve around the “afterlives of slavery” (Hartman 1997). This course is an introduction to theories of blackness and is an interdisciplinary collaboration between the Institute of Philosophy and the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies. The teaching language is English.

VS 32205-S21	True Story: American Crime Writing from Poe to Podcasts	Tobias Jochum Tue 10-12
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The rise of crime fiction as a prominent literary genre in the United States coincided with the arrival of industrialized modernity and mass media. The murder of a beautiful woman—once famously called “the most poetical topic in the world” by Edgar Allan Poe—has problematically remained the master trope of the form since its inception. True Crime’s particular allure then—in addition to the often voyeuristic spectacularization of victimhood and the concurrent fascination with a singular, unfathomable “evil”—lies in its claim to

authenticity, which has helped it endure as a hybrid mode that went through several formal and stylistic transformations over time. If the traditional genre template purges challenges to the status quo by banishing acts of violence into the realm of aberration—the solving of the crime effectively re-establishing social order—a recent resurgence of the genre in TV and podcast (but also written formats) re-purposes and contextualizes the crime scene as a metonymic space to extrapolate critiques of structural injustices along vectors of class, race, and gender. This seminar turns to canonical and non-canonical examples of true-crime writing to grapple with their aesthetic, ethical, and political implications. How is reality—history, subjectivity, affective spaces—constructed in these self-declared "truth" narratives? By which means do these texts reinforce or confront power relations of their respective historical eras? And how can we, as readers, approach sensationalist texts trafficking in scenes of gendered or racialized violence in a manner that avoids the symbolic re-victimization of marginalized communities? The syllabus includes writing by E.A. Poe, Truman Capote, Joan Didion, James Baldwin, Jorge Ibarguengoitia, James Ellroy, Maggie Nelson and Marlon James; as well as the podcast series *Serial* and recent Netflix miniseries *When They See Us* and *Unbelievable*.

B. Master Program

Course	Title	Lecturer
Module A VL 32210-S21 (Literary History)	Postmodernism	Ulla Haselstein Wed 10-12
There was a debate when the term "Postmodernism" was launched, and in recent years many voices declared the end of postmodernism. But there is widespread critical agreement today about some central features of postmodern art, literature, music, theater, and architecture. We will look at the range of the postmodern across the arts, and read seminal critical contributions that define the term postmodernism and its cognate term postmodernity. As far as fiction is concerned, we will discuss works by Kathy Acker, Margaret Atwood, Donald Barthelme, Samuel Beckett, Don DeLillo, Toni Morrison, Thomas Pynchon and Ishmael Reed.		
Module A/B HS 32218-S21 (Literary History/ Literary Theory)	Canons and Revisions	Florian Sedlmeier Thu 10-12
As the OED suggests, "canon" initially means "a rule, law, or decree of the Church" (the etymological root is the Greek <i>kanon</i> , which roughly translates to		

“measuring stick”); with respect to a corpus of texts, it refers to “the collection or list of books accepted by the Christian Church as genuine and inspired.” From these religious origins, the concept retains many elements in its secular versions: the formal presentation as a collection or a list, affective qualities such as genuineness, ingenuity and inspiration, as well as normative judgments of literary valence. Likewise, the metaphors of the sacred feature prominently in the transfer to the presumably secular domain of literature. The canon has caring and protective “custodians”; authors and works are “enshrined” in the canon. At the same time, a canon is inextricable from its revision, prompting us to think multiple canons and their ongoing corrections.

In the past four decades in particular, the reach of the canonical has been significantly extended. This extension rests on at least three developments that have shifted the grounds of literary valence: first, the notion of literature has been expanded beyond what previously qualified as high literature; second, writers’ ascribed identities at the intersection of race and gender have become a key criterion of canon revision, exposing what Barbara Herrnstein Smith calls “the contingencies of value”; third, the proliferation of literary prizes and notable books lists pose the question of instant canonization in relation to notions such as trend and *Zeitgeist*. In contradistinction, one may argue that precisely because of these developments, the question of whether we can do without some notion of a canon or canons remains a vital one to ask, also considering the rather paradoxical relation between an unprecedented production of contemporary literature and a frequently diagnosed decline of reading.

Taking our critical cues from Pierre Bourdieu, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., D. H. Lawrence, Jane Tompkins, and others, we revisit general debates such as the “canon wars” in English literature departments of the 1980s and 1990s as well as specific instances of canonization and controversies from the twenty and twenty-first centuries. We explore related concepts such as author, classics, curriculum, greatness, tradition, and work; and we look at anthologies and book series as publication formats in the service of the canonical, conceived as a mechanism of the “institutional control of interpretation” (Frank Kermode).

Students are expected to participate actively with regular contributions to class discussion. As a short assignment, they are asked to draft both a syllabus and a canonical list of their own. For a graded “Schein,” they will have to write a term paper.

Module A/C HS 32219-S21	Literary Magazines	Florian Sedlmeier Fri 10:00-12:00
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(Literary Theory/Textual Analysis)		
<p>By convention, our diachronic literary histories are organized by authors' names and oeuvres. As the burgeoning field of the history of the book shows, however, since the nineteenth century the focus on individual writers and their works, anchored in a range of critical practices, ought to be balanced by taking account of the function of literary magazines. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the number of magazines that publish literary texts grow exponentially. While this growth not only enables the professionalization of authorship in the first place, magazines also shape and create genres and they influence the practice of writing novels, as these are subject to serial modes of publication, and lead to debates about practices of reading. While most late-nineteenth-century observers view the flood of magazines in the context of pervasive anxieties of the market, others emphasize their participatory potential and embrace the shifting conditions of literary value these periodicals afford. In the twentieth century, artistic and literary avantgardes often rely on the so-called little magazines to consolidate themselves vis-à-vis existing literary institutions, including established periodicals. With the current shift to digitization, magazines have become extended platforms that negotiate literary value against the backdrop of a productive tension between print and digital culture.</p> <p>Pairing key accounts from book and magazine studies with several case studies, we will trace these developments. Our discussions will focus on the aesthetic, economic, and political ends of literary magazine culture as it structures the literary field and marketplace from the nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries. Most centrally, we will ask how literary magazines over the course of decades and centuries have shaped and challenged aesthetic dispositions. Not least we will read William Dean Howells's <i>A Hazard of New Fortunes</i> (1890; suitable editions are Penguin Classics and Modern Library). Set and published, both as a serial and as a book, at the heyday of magazine culture, the novel is partly organized around a fictive literary magazine and negotiates many of the questions that will structure our critical examinations.</p> <p>Students are expected to participate actively with regular contributions to class discussion. As a creative assignment, they are asked to collectively design and edit a little magazine of their own. For a graded "Schein," they will have to write a term paper.</p>		

Modul B/C HS 32213-S1 (Literary Theory, Textual Analysis)	The Power of You? Self-Help Literature in America	James Dorson Tue 10-12
<p>The only obstacle to your dreams is you! Be your best self! Unleash the power within! Even if the evidence of structural constraints to our “dreams” is overwhelming, motivational rallying cries like these are more ubiquitous than ever today. Few people believe that such self-help sloganeering actually works—so what is their persistent appeal? Are they ubiquitous not in spite of but because of diminishing social mobility? What cultural work do they perform if economic success or self-realization are rarely their function? Why, in short, is self-help literature a multi-billion-dollar industry? This class examines the appeal, hitches, and harms of self-help literature in the US. Divided into four segments each focusing on a popular area of self-help—Will, Spirit, Body, and Mind—the class looks at different constructions of selfhood and technologies for disciplining, managing, optimizing, or actualizing the self sold to us by advice books from the nineteenth century to the present. In addition to reading critical assessments of self-help culture and excerpts from classic and contemporary self-help manuals, we will also read the following literary texts that creatively explore, exploit, or challenge the language and meaning of self-help: Helen DeWitt’s <i>Lightning Rods</i> (2011), Roxane Gay’s <i>Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body</i> (2017), and Sheila Heti’s <i>How Should a Person Be: A Novel from Life</i> (2010).</p>		
Interdisciplinary Studies 1 - Seminar 32515-S20	Making Public History: Slaves, Migrants, and Mass Migration in the Atlantic World	Birte Weg/ Sönke Kunkel Mon 14-16
<p>This course explores the public history of slavery within American culture and the Atlantic world. The history and legacy of slavery, long a blind spot within U.S. memory culture, has become a crucial theme of public debate these days that resonates through novels, films, museums or TV shows. In our seminar, we will discuss how newer scholarship on public history engages with the issue of slavery, but we will also develop our own readings of the ways memories and meanings of slavery are constructed across various media. Please note that you will have to watch a few films online as part of the course that you may have to pay for on your own.</p>		
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Module C S 32516-S21 (Textual Analysis)	It Can Happen Here: Narratives of American Fascism	Tobias Jochum Wed 12-14
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In the wake of the Trump presidency capped off by the assault on the Capitol in January, we would be wise to remember that the specter of fascism in the American context far precedes and transcends the breathless news cycles of the past five years. As Sinclair Lewis (supposedly) anticipated back in the 1930s, "When Fascism comes to America it will be wrapped in a flag and carrying a cross." Less a novel threat than "a permanent temptation" (Jason Stanley), fascism, as political style, ideology, or form of government, kept rearing its head in the American hemisphere throughout the 20th century: examples range from Jim Crow and the Ku Klux Klan to the John Birch Society and explicit Neo-Nazi formations, to a number of U.S.-backed fascist terror regimes in Latin America. Against the backdrop of rising rightwing extremism around the globe, this seminar will trace back the "F word" along a number of literary texts that critically and imaginatively probe into these reactionary American currents in various aesthetic modes: Primary readings will include satirical interventions by Nathanael West and Roberto Bolaño, speculative fictions by Sinclair Lewis, Philip K. Dick and Octavia Butler, and Alan Moore's dark meditation on vigilantism in the American comic tradition, Watchmen, together with its recent timely TV adaptation. We will bring these projections of fascisms past, present and future into dialogue with a cross selection of essays and political theory, among others, by Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno, Aimé Césaire, Susan Sontag, Benedict Anderson, and Paul Gilroy.

Interdisciplinary Studies 1 Seminar – Literature/Politics 32211-S21	The Truth is out there- Conspiracy Theories and the "Politics of Fear"	Birte Wege/David Bosold Tue 12-14
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"9/11 was an inside job." Birtherism. Pizzagate. QAnon. Jewish space lasers? In the past two decades – and especially the current moment – we appear to

have a proliferation (and acceleration) of conspiracy theories. Look a little further into the past, and we see that conspiracies – some real, many more imagined – have been with us for a long time: be it the antisemitic mythology around the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” fears among American slave owners of organized slave rebellion, fears of communist infiltration into the highest levels of US government, questions about who “really” assassinated JFK (as well as MLK and Malcolm X), Watergate, CIA mind-control experiments, chem trails, Area 51... The list appears endless, and raises a number of questions. What is the appeal of conspiracy theories, and why do so many people continue to believe them in spite of all factual evidence to the contrary? What makes a successful conspiracy theory? What role does fear play? How have certain conspiracy theories developed and changed over time? What is new about the current moment? And what can we learn from the many works of fiction that center on conspiracy? In this course we will seek to answer these questions by analyzing a range of conspiracies, from alien abductions to QAnon. We will take an interdisciplinary perspective of conspiracy theories – or rather: conspiracy myths – in recent US history, examining the political, sociological, and economic ramifications of conspiracy theories, as well as their many variations in literature, television, and film. There will also be room within the course structure for students to pursue their own interests in this area via group research projects.

Master Colloquium Literatur/Kultur 32214-S20	M.A. Colloquium Literature/Culture	Haselstein Wed 18:00-20:00
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This colloquium is primarily designed for M.A. students getting ready to write a thesis and complete the same within the next semester. If you are not ready to prepare yourself for this task, you should not yet sign up for this course.

Research Colloquium Culture/Literature 32616-S20	Research Colloquium Culture/Literature	Haselstein/Kelleter Wed 18:00-20:00
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Each summer semester, the Department of Culture and the Department of Literature organize a joint research colloquium with international speakers. This course is addressed chiefly to Ph.D. students, post-docs, visiting scholars, and faculty members, but it is open to B.A. and M.A. students and the general public as well. It cannot be taken for credit; it is not an “M.A.-Kolloquium.” For details, please see poster and program (online).

C. GSNAS

Lehrangebot der GSNAS	Literary Theory	Ulla Haselstein
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V 32210		Thu 18:00-20:00
This class is for members of the Graduate School of North American Studies and faculty only.		