

Literature Department Course Offering Winter Semester 2020/21

Due to the measures taken by Freie Universität to contain the spread of COVID-19, the start of classes for the winter term has been postponed to November 2. All courses at the university during the winter semester will be held using digital formats. The time slots for digital courses listed below will be used by instructors in individual fashion, depending on their teaching format. For courses taught on-site, the room assignments are based on the Institute's COVID-19 hygiene guidelines. All instructors will communicate further details about their teaching modes via Blackboard, where all courses will be set up to let students self-enroll (and self-unenroll) so that they can access course syllabi. As usual, students are also automatically added to Blackboard when they sign up for their courses on Campus Management. If you run into any problems using Blackboard or if you have other concerns regarding your participation, please contact your instructor individually (via email) as soon as possible. Please confirm the course times and room numbers in the official course catalog (Vorlesungsverzeichnis) and also check the JFKI website regularly for further updates.

TEACHING FORMATS: Each course bears a number designation from 1-4, corresponding to the Institute's teaching formats for the hybrid semester as follows:

- 1: asynchronous online teaching (e.g. recorded lecture)
- 2: synchronous online teaching (e.g. live seminar via WebEx at designated time)
- 3: synchronous online teaching with some on-campus sessions in very small groups (optional)

A. Bachelor-Program

Course	Title	Lecturer
Fundamentals course 32000-W20	Understanding North America	Ulla Haselstein, Sebastian Jobs, Martin Lütke Fri 10-12, 14-16, TEACHING FORMAT 2

Understanding North America" (UNA) is one of the most challenging courses you will take here at the John F. Kennedy-Institute, it will reward you with insight into the perspectives of multiple disciplines along with a solid foundation of knowledge and skills for your further studies. For UNA A, there are three things that you must do to succeed: 1) attend and actively participate in all course components (both lectures on Friday and one tutorial session on Wednesday), 2) prepare all readings and study questions, and, 3) work through the arguments and materials of the course throughout the lecture (not just the week before the exam!). Lectures and tutorials complement each other in their format. The lectures offer an overview of developments, concepts, and questions of American culture, literature and history to puzzle over. The tutorials, in contrast, develop close-up views and introduce more "mechanical" issues (e.g. how to write an academic essay). You will have the chance to go over the lectures, but also dive into materials and issues in smaller group discussions. COVID Contingencies: Tutorial sessions and lectures alternate between the disciplines. What does not alternate is your participation in a tutorial group. We are currently looking into how exactly we will facilitate UNA A, but it looks like it is unrealistic to conduct the class fully on campus. Rather, we aspire to provide a mixed bag of meetings in person and remote lectures/meetings. For now, it is crucial that you enroll for the class on Blackboard, as soon as it is possible. After all, the online learning platform contains all the organizational information and readings for this course. It is also the primary way in which the teaching teams communicate with course participants, before more infrastructure and tools are in place. Please make sure that you register for and regularly check Blackboard.

Introductory Module: Basics of literary scientific Working Methods

Course	Title	Lecturer
PS 32200-W20	Introduction to Literary Studies I	Birte Wege Tue 14-16, 340 TEACHING FORMAT 2

In this seminar, students will be introduced to the basic terms and methods for analyzing and interpreting literary texts. We will read classic works of 19th and 20th-century American literature, focusing on prose, drama, and poetry. We will discuss how narrative functions, learn how to perform in-

depth close readings of prose as well as poetry, and how to analyze drama. This seminar provides a better understanding of how literature works and offers students a vital toolbox to be used throughout their studies.

Intensive Module A: Literary Epochs

Course	Title	Lecturer
VS 32201-W20	Aesthetics of Intimacy in Recent American Fiction	Fabian Eggers Mon 14-16, 340 TEACHING FORMAT 2
<p>"We were the only two left. Just the two of us, you and me." These concluding lines of Joshua Ferris's <i>Then We Came to the End</i> (2007) seem to address the reader of the novel directly. Similarly, Jennifer Egan's sci-fi spy story "Black Box" (2012) can be seen to speak to the reader when it states: "You are an ordinary person undertaking an extraordinary task." These two examples contain a palpable acknowledgement of an 'other' beyond the respective text, but also hint at a desire for community, mutual recognition and approval. This outreaching rhetoric and a topical attention to the difficulties of sincere and meaningful exchanges delineate "aesthetics of intimacy" in recent American fiction. Whether this relational longing is fulfilled remains to be seen in each case, but it is the very desire for intimacy that is of interest in this BA course. Because much of today's communication feels corrupted, true intimacy seems impossible to achieve (not only in literary texts). This course seeks to explore the reasons for this disappointment through the transformations of private and professional lives in recent decades. Alongside literary and social theory, we will read fiction by Tao Lin, Jennifer Egan, Ottessa Moshfegh and David Foster Wallace. In addition to studying how the literary texts discuss (and perhaps create) intimacy, we will place them in the literary history 'after postmodernism,' explore the relationship to their media-saturated environment and look for connections to the growing importance of affect and emotion in professional contexts.</p>		
VS 32202-W20	Classics of African American Literature: From Richard Wright to Toni Morrison	Birte Wege Thu 10-12, TEACHING FORMAT 2

In this seminar, we will closely analyze key texts by some of the most important American authors of the twentieth century, from the 1940s to the 1980s: Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, James Baldwin's *Another Country* and various essays, Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*, selected writings by Audre Lorde and Amiri Baraka, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, and Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*. We will discuss the complicated (and contentious) category of 'African American Literature' itself, and supplement our analysis with readings on Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality, Womanism, and other secondary material.

32203-W20	Racial Conflicts and Academia: Campus Novels in African American Literature,	Francesco Bacci Fri 8-10 TEACHING FORMAT 3
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In the investigation of the history of the Black academic experience, African American campus novels, written by Alice Walker, Paul Beatty, Gil Scott Heron, Elizabeth Nunez, and various others, constitute a self-reflexion medium that comments upon American race relations. The first part of this course includes the analysis of theoretical studies concerning African American literature, the literary genre, and Black studies. We will start with a brief overview of the history of the changes happening in US colleges throughout the last decades of the twentieth century. Racism, discrimination, protests, relations, and individualism are central in these narratives, and the stories will be discussed in a broader literary, historical and sociological perspective. We will then use theories in dialogue with readings of parts of my archive's main novels to familiarize with the primary texts and create a discussion on specific aspects and questions. All course materials will be distributed via Blackboard.

VS 32204-W20	B.A. Colloquium Literature/Culture	Florian Sedlmeier Mon 14-16, TEACHING FORMAT 2
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In the colloquium students learn everything they need to know to plan, compose and submit their final theses, including administrative formalities, proper research, choice of topic, questions of method/theory, and standards of structuring academic writing. The course has two parts. In the first few weeks we address these aspects in a general way. After the winter break, we shift to a symposium-style format where students are asked to present their topics and discuss them with each other. This presentation is a prerequisite for obtaining credits. Until further notice and due to the unpredictable

pandemic situation, students should expect a seminar that is largely, perhaps exclusively held online.

VS 32205-W20	Delirious American Fictions on Drugs	Tobias Jochum Tue 14-16, TEACHING FORMAT 3
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The philosophical term of the pharmakon denotes a poison, remedy, and magic potion, and is furthermore associated with productivity and the figure of the scapegoat. In ethnobotany, meanwhile, psychoactive plants can take on the roles of powerful allies or foes: beneficial tools, guardians to secret knowledge, shortcuts to spiritual transcendence, or conduits to perdition. The extent to which these agents have shaped cultures and civilizations around the globe (even human evolution itself) continues to be a matter of debate; but the critical part that goods like tea, coffee, tobacco, or opium have played in the colonial making of the modern world system can hardly be overstated. Drugs, in short, are commodities and cultural artifacts of profound ambivalences. And between pre-Columbian plant cults and the Puritanical underpinnings of the U.S., these contradictions are maybe particularly evident on the North American continent, where licit and illicit drugs have engendered artistic and intellectual movements, billion-dollar industries, as well as fierce opposition and regulatory regimes, from Prohibition in the 1920s to the ongoing racist and imperialistic "War on Drugs." The aim of this seminar is to trace this history of intoxication and sobriety through the catalyst of literature and storytelling. With the trope of the pharmakon as our guiding motif, we will parse through literary explorations of quests for utopian transformations and hedonistic excess alongside cautionary tales of alienation and addiction. Primary readings will include works by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway; Walter Benjamin and Aldous Huxley; William S. Burroughs, Ken Kesey, Hunter S. Thompson and Maxine Hong Kingston; Joan Didion, Philip K. Dick, Tao Lin and Michelle Tea; Leslie Jamison and Yaa Gyasi.

B. Master Program

Course	Title	Lecturer
HS A & HS B (Literary History and Literary Theory) VL 32210-W10	Theory and Practice of Postdramatic Theatre	Birte Wege Tue 10-12, TEACHING FORMAT 2

At its broadest, 'Postdramatic Theatre' can be defined as reflecting a development in mid- to late-twentieth century avant-garde theatre practice that is marked by a turning away from viewing the script, the written text – the literary genre of 'drama' – as central to theatrical work. Using this definition as our starting point, this seminar will offer an introduction to experimental theatre in America in the twentieth- and twenty-first century. We will ground our work in a wide range of theoretical texts from literary-theatre- and performance studies (beginning with early texts by Antonin Artaud, Gertrude Stein, and Peter Szondi, all the way to contemporary work including that of Erika Fischer-Lichte and Hans-Thies Lehmann, as well as a number of English-language scholars). In conjunction with these theory texts, we will explore the full range of American experimental theatre, including Expressionist Drama in the early twentieth century, the work of the post-war theatre avant-garde, and a variety contemporary developments. Given that theatre work in the American context has a tradition of not only responding to social, political, and cultural concerns of the day but, as critic Theresa Saxon argues, utilizing the affordances of the form to "actively [participate] in social debates, operating as a platform for examining construction of racial, ethnic, gendered, national and ultimately human identities" (American Theatre: History, Context, Form. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011, 1), our focus here will be on the works that specifically engage these categories

SE B (Literary Theory) und SE C (Textual Analysis) HS 32211-W20	Literary Form	Florian Sedlmeier Tue 14-16, TEACHING FORMAT 2
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The seminar takes its cue from a much-noticed recent contribution by Caroline Levine, who discusses the relation between literary and social forms, which she considers underrepresented in current debates. One could indeed argue that questions of literary form are not necessarily viewed in correspondence to social formation. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the category of form becomes crucial to the aesthetic philosophy of European Romanticism. And if we follow Pierre Bourdieu's field theory, it may facilitate the emergence of the discourse of aesthetic autonomy, which is crucial for the conception of modern literature. At the inception of literary studies as an academic discipline in the twentieth century, Russian formalism, French structuralism, and Anglo-American new criticism emphasize the primacy and specificity of literary form to varying degrees, divergent effects, and different ends. At least since the New Social Movements, though, literature's relation to the material realities of social formations has been reclaimed, to the point that the forms literature

can take are tied to notions of social commitment, political protest, and historical revision. Drawing on a range of theoretical literature from Victor Shklovsky to Phillip Brian Harper, we review some key critical debates and concepts to ask how exactly both conventions and experimentations of literary form can relate to social formations. We read literary prose (short fiction, novellas and novels) by a diverse cast of writers that cover much of the spectrum of multicultural literatures, including Sherman Alexie, Sebastian Barry, Sandra Cisneros, Younghill Kang and Fran Ross. Until further notice and due to the unpredictable pandemic situation, students should expect a seminar that is largely, perhaps exclusively held online. Requirements for participation include regular, active attendance and a five-minute presentation or a two-page short essay on a specific topic/text. In order to obtain a graded "Schein," students are expected to write a term paper.

HS A & C (Literary History & Textual Analysis) 32212-W20	Love and Marriage in the 19 th Century Novel	Ulla Haselstein Thu 14-16, TEACHING FORMAT 2
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Love and marriage are the most frequent topics of the 19th century novel. In the seminar we will explore the genre as a literary medium of individualization that produces interiority and establishes expressive codes of intimacy. We will discuss critical views of this process of subjectivization and compare them to the novelists' self-understanding. Texts: Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*; Fanny Fern, *Ruth Hall*; Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Awkward Age*.

HS A & C (Literary History & Textual Analysis) 32213-W20	Utopia in the American Literary Imagination	Tobias Jochum Wed 12-14, TEACHING FORMAT 2
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As a popular adage goes, it often seems "easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism." When Frederic Jameson picked up the phrase, he was lamenting a profusion of dystopic fiction in U.S. popular culture, more so under contemporary neoliberalism since the collapse of the Communist block. The material crises of late capitalism may indeed be matched by a profound crisis of the imagination. However, with our current timeline accelerating into real-world dystopia—ecological, political, technological—the implicit warnings issued by speculative worst-case scenarios ring hollow, while the need for utopian thinking, for articulating radical visions of alternative futures and more equitable, sustainable ways of living, is becoming as urgent as ever. In this seminar we will first trace the

philosophical genealogy of utopia in the Western imagination, along writings by Thomas More, Ernst Bloch, and several contemporary Marxist thinkers; then turn to a number of emblematic literary works from the U.S.—the notion of "utopia" of course being baked into the very conception of the American project—which will be historicized within their respective contexts and probed for resonances with the historical present. After examining Edward Bellamy's influential socialist utopia *Looking Backward* (1888), the main focus will be on the 20th century, where we will review a long-neglected tradition of Black American utopian thought (WEB DuBois, Octavia Butler, Afrofuturism), seminal feminist fictions (Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Marge Piercy, Ursula LeGuin), and further texts arising out of the cultural upheavals of the sixties, such as *Island* (1961), Aldous Huxley's late rejoinder to his earlier, more pessimistic work, and Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1976), one of the foundational texts of the Green movement, which points us back to current struggles for planetary survival, exemplified in proposals like the Green New Deal.

Interdisciplinary Studies - Seminar 32116_W20	American Institutions of Literature	Sedlmeier/Starre Tue 16-18, TEACHING FORMAT 3(in-person teaching on February 9 and 16,2021)
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This interdisciplinary seminar builds on and examines a recent trend in American studies: the turn to the institutional conditions of literary production and reception. For well more than a decade now, scholars of contemporary American literature in particular have explored the role of creative writing programs (Mark McGurl), shifting publishing technologies and economics (Amy Hungerford), civic institutions (Merve Emre), literary prizes (James English), and other institutional parameters. To be sure, though, the power of institutions to shape notions of American literature reaches further back—at least to the infamous tribunal that probed the enslaved Black poet Phillis Wheatley's literary credentials. With the expansion and professionalization of the literary marketplace in the nineteenth century, the domain of literature took on its modern contours as an autonomous field, as the sociological theorist Pierre Bourdieu has proposed. Under the conditions of modernity and an accelerated print capitalism, institutions are created in the name of literature that reinforce and renegotiate its social status and its shifting valences. Focusing on case studies from the nineteenth through the twenty-first centuries, we trace the role and influence of several of these institutions, including lecture circuits, little magazines, libraries, professional reviews, and Oprah's Book Club. Drawing on influential theoretical and methodological accounts, we ask how

these institutions fix and destabilize competing notions of literature. But we also look at how both paratexts (prefaces, magazine editorials, interviews, and reviews) and literary texts (poems, short stories, and novels) address and dramatize their modes of production and reception. This last question may lead us to sketching the contours of a poetics of literary institutions. Covering critical materials from literary studies, cultural studies, literary sociology, as well as book history and material text studies, this course will challenge students to find new ways of reading beyond the text. Until further notice and due to the unpredictable pandemic situation, students should expect an asynchronous online seminar with a few optional in-person meetings to be announced in the course of the semester. For each seminar session, we will provide input in video or audio form in addition to the week's reading. We expect all students to participate actively and regularly on Blackboard. In order to obtain full, graded credit, students will have to master a take-home exam, in addition to the participation requirements.

C. Lecture Series, WS 2020/21:

<p>Lecture Series V 32000-W20</p>	<p>Coping with Fear: Disaster and Disease in North America</p>	<p>Ulla Haselstein, Jessica Gienow-Hecht, Wed 18-20 , Teaching Format 2</p>
<p>Topic: Disasters and epidemic diseases are extremely disruptive to social life and cause widespread fear and anxiety. To maintain safety and security, the state and its political institutions respond to such emergencies by creating and implementing measures to control damage and ensure the eventual return to everyday life. But as the recent series of disasters in the U.S. -- the AIDS epidemic (1980s), 9/11 (2001), Hurricane Katrina (2005), the Financial Crisis (2008/9) or the current COVID-19 epidemic -- have shown, vulnerability varies within different social groups. Disasters and diseases expose and exacerbate systemic social problems such as racism and social inequality, which counter-measures often fail to address. Questions: With a series of presentations, the John F. Kennedy Institute wishes to look into the political, social and cultural efforts to cope with disaster in the US and Canada in the past and in the present. Which cultural scripts are available to cope with disaster and trauma? How do communication, coping mechanisms and cultural scripts, compare to previous pandemics and catastrophes? What was and is the role of the old and the new media in framing and explaining disaster and in legitimizing or de-legitimizing counter-measures? What were</p>		

and are the long-term effects of disaster, and how are they retroactively evaluated in public discourse? Which role did and do transnational networks or institutions play in damage control? How do social movements renegotiate current political realities? What about visions of the future or of future transformative action mobilized by disasters? Requirements: The core of this lecture constitutes a series of interdisciplinary online presentations offered by international scholars from within and outside of the JFKI. Students are expected to register on Blackboard, attend all lectures, participate in the ensuing discussions and post a response paper (1 page each, Times New Roman 12, spacing 1,5) on Blackboard every four weeks (total of three). No more than two no-shows.

D. Graduate School

OS 32217	Methods in Literary and Cultural Studies	Ulla Haselstein, Thu, 18-20, 340 TEACHING FORMAT 2
This class is for members of the Graduate School of North American Studies and faculty only.		