

Masterstudiengang JFKI,

Kultur-Modul C

(*Kulturgeschichte einzelner Medien und ästhetischer
Darstellungsformen*):

Vorlesung

Lecture Course C2: American Culture after World War II

Prof. Dr. F. Kelleter

Online Course – Lecture Uploads: Tuesdays
(Winter Semester 2020/21)

Having emerged from World War II as a world power, the United States faced numerous problems of cultural self-definition in the second half of the 20th century. The Cold War produced not only an ideology of international leadership but also new anxieties about America's social identity and the nation's changed position in the world. Topics discussed in this lecture course include the advent of a postindustrial economic order, the decline of New Deal liberalism, postmodernist aesthetics, the New Hollywood, and the interrelated emergence of the New Left and the New Right. In the early 21st century, many of these developments have been radicalized under conditions of military hegemony, globalized capitalism, corporate anti-statism, neoliberal governance, and catastrophic ecological transformations. Our lecture course focuses on select phases and moments of cultural production between 1945 and 2020, when American novels, poems, films, and TV shows often defined the state of the art in their respective fields. We will concentrate on literary sources (especially poetry and fiction), sociological writings, political documents, cinema, television, and other cultural fields.

The lecture course serves as “**Vorlesung**” of Culture-**Module C** (*Kulturgeschichte einzelner Medien und ästhetischer Darstellungsformen*) in the M.A. program. **Registration:** All participants need to be registered via Blackboard *and* Campus Management by the first session. If you cannot register online or cannot attend the first session, please contact Prof. Kelleter before the beginning of the term. **Requirements and Online Organization:** See Syllabus and Course Description (on Blackboard and below). All communication about and within this class will be channeled through the course's Blackboard site; please make sure you're registered there. **First session:** November 3.

3 November 2020

Cold War Culture

Assigned Reading/Viewing: none.

Suggested (Voluntary) Background Reading: from *The Enduring Vision*, ed. Paul Boyer et al., “America at Midcentury, 1952-1960” (*), “A Time of Upheaval, 1968-1974” (*); David Riesman, “The Suburban Sadness.”

Suggested Viewing: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (dir. Don Siegel) (*); *The Manchurian Candidate* (dir. John Frankenheimer) (*).

10 November 2020

In the Post-Industrial Bathroom

Assigned Reading: David Riesman, from *The Lonely Crowd*: “Changes in the Role of the Parents”; J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*: chapters 1-4, 6-9, 12, 16, 18, 21-23, 25, 26; John Updike, “Separating.”

Suggested Reading: J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, entire novel (*).

17 November 2020

Confessional Poetry and the Politics of Identity

Assigned Reading: Robert Lowell, “Inauguration Day: January 1953,” “Memories of West Street and Lepke,” “Skunk Hour”; Sylvia Plath, “Lady Lazarus”; Adrienne Rich, “Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law” and from *Of Woman Born*: section 2 (selections).

Suggested Reading: Robert Lowell, “Sailing Home from Rapallo,” “Man and Wife,” “To Speak of Woe That Is in Marriage,” “For the Union Dead”; Betty Friedan, from *The Feminine Mystique* (selections); Sylvia Plath, “Daddy”; Anne Sexton, “Sylvia’s Death”; Adrienne Rich, “Diving into the Wreck.”

Note: Please see paragraph on the Selection of Course Material (below).

24 November 2020

From Beat to Pop

Assigned Reading: Allen Ginsberg, “A Supermarket in California,” “Howl,” “Footnote to ‘Howl’”; Norman Mailer, from “The White Negro”: sections I, II, V, VI; Joan Didion, “Slouching towards Bethlehem”; Andy Warhol, from *THE Philosophy of Andy Warhol (from A to B and Back Again)*: chapter 6 “Work” (selections), chapter 15 “Underwear Power.”

Note: Please see paragraph on the Selection of Course Material (below).

1 December 2020

From the “New Hollywood” to the Blockbuster Era

Assigned Viewing: *Bonnie and Clyde* (dir. Arthur Penn) (*); *The Exorcist* (dir. William Friedkin) (*); *Jaws* (dir. Steven Spielberg); *Taxi Driver* (dir. Martin Scorsese) (*).

Suggested Viewing: *Easy Rider* (dir. Dennis Hopper) (*); *Wanda* (dir. Barbara Loden) (*); *Sweet Sweetback’s Baadasssss Song* (dir. Melvin Van Peebles) (*); *The Godfather* (dir. Francis Ford Coppola) (*); *The Godfather Part II* (dir. Francis Ford Coppola) (*); *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (dir. Miloš Forman); *Three Days of the Condor* (dir. Sydney Pollack) (*); *Network* (dir. Sidney Lumet) (*); *Star Wars* (dir. George Lucas) (*); *The Deer Hunter* (dir. Michael Cimino) (*); *First Blood* (dir. Ted Kotcheff) (*).

Note: Please see paragraph on the Selection of Course Material (below).

8 December 2020

The “Liberal” Non-Consensus: Civil Rights, Cultural Radicalism, Lifestyle Politics

Assigned Reading: *Brown v. Board of Education at Topeka*; Martin Luther King, “Address to the March on Washington”; Malcolm X, “Message to the Grass Roots,” “The Ballot or the Bullet”; Black Panther Party, “The Ten-Point Program”; Stokely Carmichael, “What We Want”; Chicago Office of SNCC, “We Must Fill Ourselves with Hate for All White Things”; Eldridge Cleaver, “Open Letter to Stokely Carmichael”; The Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement.”

Suggested Reading: Tom Wolfe, from *Radical Chic and Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers*: “Radical Chic” (selections); Winfried Fluck, “The Humanities in the Age of Expressive Individualism and Cultural Radicalism.”

15 December 2020

Identity Aesthetics (1): African American Culture and Literature, 1950s-1960s

Assigned Reading: Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*: “Prologue,” “Chapter I. [Battle Royal],” “Epilogue”; Gwendolyn Brooks, “We Real Cool”; Amiri Baraka, *Slave Ship*; Ron Karenga, “Black Cultural Nationalism.”

Suggested Reading: Langston Hughes, “Harlem”; Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, entire novel (*).

Note: Please see paragraph on the Selection of Course Material (below).

5 January 2021

– [No Session!] –

12 January 2021

Identity Aesthetics (2): Jewish American Culture and Literature, 1950s-1970s

Assigned Reading: Saul Bellow, “Looking for Mr. Green”; Cynthia Ozick, “The Shawl”; Philip Roth, from *Portnoy’s Complaint*: chapters “The Most Unforgettable Character I’ve Met,” “Whacking Off,” “The Jewish Blues” (selections), “In Exile,” “Punchline.”

Suggested Reading: Philip Roth, *Portnoy’s Complaint*, entire novel (*).

Suggested Viewing: *Annie Hall* (dir. Woody Allen) (*).

Note: Please see paragraph on the Selection of Course Material (below).

19 January 2021

Postmodernism

Assigned Reading: Thomas Pynchon, *The Crying of Lot 49* (*); Leslie Fiedler, “Cross the Border—Close the Gap.”

Suggested Reading: Thomas Pynchon, “Entropy”; Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context.”

26 January 2021

Beyond Postmodernism

Assigned Reading: Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (*), especially Chapter One.

Suggested Reading: Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark* (*).

Note: Please see paragraph on the Selection of Course Material (below).

2 February 2021

Conservatism? (Neoliberalism, Anticommunism, Movement Conservatism, Neo-Conservatism, Tea Party Populism)

Assigned Reading: Friedrich Hayek, from *The Road to Serfdom*: “Introduction”; Ayn Rand, from *The Virtue of Selfishness*: “Introduction”; Milton Friedman, from *Capitalism and Freedom*: “Introduction,” “Conclusion”; Ronald Reagan, “Speech on Behalf of Barry Goldwater”; Lewis F. Powell, Jr., “Confidential Memorandum: Attack of American Free Enterprise System”; Charles Krauthammer, “In Defense of Democratic Realism”; Ron Paul,

“The Neoconservative Empire”; Dick Armev & Matt Kibbe, “A Tea Party Manifesto”; Sarah Palin, from *Going Rogue*: “Epilogue.”

Suggested Reading: Thomas Frank, from *What’s the Matter with Kansas?*: “The Two Nations” (selections).

9 February 2021

To Be Continued: Trumpism | #BlackLivesMatter

Assigned Reading: Publius Decius Mus [Michael Anton], “The Flight 93 Election,” “Restatement on Flight 93”; Michael Wolff, “Ringside With Steve Bannon at Trump Tower”; “Stephen Bannon: Core Of Trump’s Platform Is ‘Deconstruction Of The Administrative State’” (transcript and video); May 2017 White House Memo [Richard Higgins], “POTUS & Political Warfare”; Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The First White President”; Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, from *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*: “Introduction: Black Awakening in Obama’s America,” “The Political Economy of Racism,” “White Supremacy for Some, Not Others.”

Suggested Listening/Reading/Viewing: Merle Haggard, “Okie from Muskogee” (song, 1969 version); Michelle Alexander, from *The New Jim Crow*: “Introduction”; Ava DuVernay, *13th* (*) (Netflix documentary).

16 February 2021

Television in the Digital Age

Assigned Viewing: *The Sopranos* (*): I/5 (“College”), VI/2.9 (“Made in America”).

Suggested Viewing: selections from (*) *Twin Peaks*, *Seinfeld*, *Lost*, *The Wire*, and/or *Orange Is the New Black*.

Suggested Reading: Frank Kelleter, *Serial Agencies: “The Wire” and Its Readers* (*); “Five Ways of Looking at Popular Seriality.”

Online Organization: Because of the current COVID-19 situation, this course will be offered as an **online course**. My goal is to make the lecture course as rewarding for you as possible while allowing for the possibility that other concerns take precedence. Even if you do not have permanent internet access, or if you cannot do all the readings because you have to take care of others, or of yourself, we will find a solution for you to take and pass this course. **Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns!** Starting November 3, I will provide all students who are signed up on Blackboard for this course with video lectures on a weekly basis, making **a new lecture available each Tuesday** around 2 p.m. The lectures will **not take place as live-streams**. Instead, I will provide you with files to watch online (and possibly download; two files per lecture). This will probably be done on the video-site Loom or, if this should turn out to be inconvenient, another fileshare platform.

General Course Information: This course will **not be graded**. The grade of your Module will be identical with the grade received in Module C’s seminar. However, to **gain credit** for this course within Module C, you need to document both your **regular attendance** and your **active attendance** (“regelmäßige und aktive Teilnahme” according to Campus Management). How this can be done is explained below.

Documentation of Regular and Active Attendance: To **gain credit** for this course (“aktive und regelmäßige Teilnahme”), you should have been **active in the online discussions of at least seven different sessions, either by opening a new thread on our Blackboard**

“Discussion Board” (“Diskussionsforum”) or by **posting a response** in another student’s thread. Threads can be dedicated to your observations on the course material, or they can address ideas and questions that came up during the video lectures, or both. You don’t have to compose mini-essays; posts and responses can be tweet-length, if you wish. They need not be longer than a sentence or two.

Alternatively, if you do not want—or cannot—use the “Discussion Board,” you may submit **two one-page informal reflection papers** on two sessions of your choice: one in the first half of the semester (by December 15), the other before the end of the semester (by February 16). If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, either by e-mail or directly on Blackboard. If you have technical difficulties or other important concerns that make it difficult for you to participate in our online activities, please reach out to me and we will make special arrangements.

Course Reader (Assigned Readings/Viewings): All unmarked texts are included in a Course Reader. The **Course Reader** will be made available before the beginning of the semester as a PDF file on **Blackboard** (go to “Kursmaterial”; you may have to click on “open Course Reader here” to download it; if this doesn’t work, try a different browser: students have reported problems with the Chrome browser). Marked texts (*) are not included in the Course Reader; they will be made available on the reserve shelf in the JFKI library. Films/audiovisual material will be made available if a DVD or Blu-ray disc exists; if not, please stream, rent, or watch online. If this is not possible, simply watch the film lecture(s) without preparation! In our “New Hollywood” session, I will show clips and fill you in on all necessary details. Two longer texts (novels) should be bought, if possible, in authoritative editions: Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49* (e.g., Harper Perennial edition) and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (e.g., Vintage Classics edition).

A Note on Workload: I encourage you to do as many of the weekly readings/viewings as possible, but I will not monitor if you have done so or not. You will get a chance to discuss the course material on our **Blackboard “Diskussionsforum” / “Discussion Board”** at your own pace and convenience (no live chats). I encourage you to use this forum to engage with each other’s reading and viewing experiences, as you would in a seminar. I will also be available to answer questions there.

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 that analyzes powerful American self-descriptions and self-performances from a non-U.S. perspective. Thus, some canonical sources have been selected precisely *because* they are canonical, i.e., because of their prevailing agency within the cultural system we’re investigating as observers (not 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; 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 experienced 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. Among others, the following sessions deal with material that contains depictions of sexuality; violence, including sexual violence; suicide; addiction and substance abuse; or other potentially sensitive issues: Confessional Poetry (17 November), Beat Poetry (24 November), The New Hollywood (1 December), African-American Literature 1950-70 (15 December),

Jewish American Literature 1950-70 (12 January), Toni Morrison (26 January), Television (16 February).

A Note on Language: I will not voice the N-word (or other racial invectives) in this course, also not when I'm quoting it visually from a primary source and even when this source text uses the word not as an invective, but as an in-group expression. I would like to ask all non-Black students to follow the same practice. By contrast, the word "negro" has a different semantic history. In many texts that we will study in this course, it is used both by Black and White writers as an accepted term of ethnic identification without overt motivations to voice an insult. As a self-attribution in the writings of people such as Martin Luther King, Jr. or Ralph Ellison (or, earlier, in the poetry of Langston Hughes and the self-attribution of the Harlem Renaissance as the "New Negro Movement," which we discussed last semester), it is not used as an exclusive in-group marker, but as an unmarked expression in accordance with the political parlance of the day. Therefore, I will quote the word whenever it occurs but will not use it as a descriptive term myself (outside of quotations). We will address the word's increasingly critical usage, and its subsequent substitution by (often semantically related) terms in the writings of people such as Malcolm X and Angela Davis. To the extent that we're students of communicative history, it is important to understand that the English word "negro" is not completely identical with its German dictionary translation. Both terms, however, and also their French and Spanish equivalents, are ultimately rooted in colonialist discourse. Therefore, if anyone in this course feels personally offended by these quotations, please do not hesitate to let me know and I will try to find individual ways of historicizing our texts without de-historicizing their language.