Masterstudiengang JFKI,

Kultur-Modul C

(*Kulturgeschichte einzelner Medien und ästhetischer Darstellungsformen*):

Hauptseminar

Post-Classical Theory

Prof. Dr. F. Kelleter

Monday, 16.15 – 18.00 (JFK 319)
(Winter Term 2017/18)

Please read this syllabus carefully; it contains detailed information about the seminar's structure, the requirements for topic proposals, and suggestions for preparing "your" session. Please contact me if you have any questions. Note that we will **finalize our class schedule in the first two meetings**! This means that everyone who wants to attend this course needs to **be present in the first session** (October 16) in order to **propose a session topic (theoretical paradigm and set of texts for classroom use)** *or* **have contacted me beforehand by e-mail** with their session proposal (no later than October 15). No additional students can be admitted after our first meeting! Please understand that no exceptions can be made.

This course is not an introductory course to Cultural Theory; it is designed for advanced M.A. students. First-semester students can sign up but some background knowledge in classical and contemporary Theory is recommended.

Course Organization: This seminar serves as *Hauptseminar* within Culture-**Module C** in the JFKI's Master's program. Alternatively, if you want me to supervise your Master's Thesis, you can use this seminar to discuss your M.A. project (as a substitute for *Master-Kolloquium*; see "M.A. Policy" below). There is no auditing this course.

After November 20, **the seminar will be completely student-run**, i.e., participants will be in charge of all sessions, topics, and discussions. If less than 5 students attend this course, each participant will organize two sessions. If more than 8 students attend this course, individual sessions will be organized as group-led sessions. Students may already organize in groups of 3-4 participants before our first session and propose session topics as a group.

In case of group-led sessions, the students in charge need to **coordinate their efforts both logistically and thematically**, so that their session will be a joint and coherent endeavor rather than a disconnected collection of individual presentations. Even as a group, they will need to focus on **one shared set of texts or excerpts** (not exceeding 20 pages), representing **one particular theoretical paradigm**.

Registration: To gain credit for this course, you need to **have registered on Blackboard *and* Campus Management System**. Please do so before our first session! If you are not a student of Freie Universität and cannot register on either Blackboard or Campus Management, please contact Regina Wenzel, administrator of the Kennedy Institute's Department of Culture, who will set up an account for you or manually register you for this class. Please note that your **registration is only finalized after you have proposed a session topic** (theoretical paradigm and set of texts for classroom use). This can be done in the first session or by advance e-mail (no later than October 15).

Course Description: This seminar deals with **select examples of cultural theory** that have emerged **after the "classical" paradigms** of psychoanalysis, phenomenology, postcolonialism, and "traditional" Marxism. Three initial sessions will be dedicated to the larger frameworks of social field theory, actor-network-theory, and systems theory; additional topics will be chosen and prepared by students. They can include, but are not restricted to: post-critique, critical race theory, intersectionality, critical whiteness studies, new queer theory, new media studies (seriality, digital culture, etc.), post-cinema theory, critical university studies, global history, the settler colonialism paradigm, theories of neoliberalism, and other theoretical models. Thus, participants are expected to **have familiarized themselves with potential course material (theoretical paradigms and texts)** *before* **the first session.**

Attendance Policy: To participate in this course, you must be present in the first session and have proposed a topic for student-run sessions individually or as a group (see "Session Proposals" below). If you cannot attend the first session, please let me know in advance (e-mail or office hours) but no later than October 15. Students who miss more than two classes altogether without medical notice will be taken off the class roster.

Requirements for Student-Run Sessions: Each participant will organize and conduct one session about a specific theoretical paradigm. This paradigm will be represented by **a set of central texts (or excerpts)**, which will be **chosen by the "session leader(s)"** and **studied by all course participants.** Assigned material should **not exceed 20 pages** per session.

Once you have signed up to lead a session (individually or as a group), you are **completely in charge of all organizational details**. This includes **making available all course material for your session at least two weeks (14 days) in advance**, using the Blackboard group-email function for this purpose. **Important:** All material you distribute needs to include **proper bibliographical information**, so that students can assess its publication contexts (and cite it in their own research). Please **follow MLA citation standards!** If more than one version of a text exists, make an informed choice about which edition/variant you are using. You may want to address this issue in the beginning of your session.

Session Proposals: Each participant needs to propose one topic (theoretical paradigm and set of texts) for student-run sessions in our first meeting or beforehand via e-mail. Please **name your topic**, **specify your choice of texts**, and **elaborate on the issues or questions you want to focus on** in "your" session! Thus, a session proposal consists of **one sentence** of the form:

"I want to look at [A], focusing on [B] in order to discuss [C]",

with *[A]* being **a contemporary (or "post-classical") theoretical paradigm** of your choice, *[B]* being **a particular text or set of (excerpted) texts** representing this paradigm, and *[C]* being a **concrete controversy** that animates this theoretical field **or a concrete methodological problem** that is encountered in applications of this theory. The latter can be done by showing the theory "in action."

In other words: You may use your session to discuss a paper you are writing for another course (or a paper you have already written for another course), illustrating how the theoretical paradigm *[A]* can be put to analytical use or gauging its methodological limits. Advanced students may use their session to workshop (aspects of) their Master's Thesis (*Abschlussarbeit*) in this manner.

In either case, you need to **have familiarized yourself with potential course material** ("post-classical" paradigms and texts) *before* the first session. Ideally, you will have started to look into controversies, reviews, "roundtables," etc. that help you to contextualize your text selections and to subdivide the chosen paradigm into competing positions, sub-theories, debates, etc.

Thus, not all texts that you are going to discuss in your session should be assigned as full texts. Instead, you may want to assign short selections from texts that critique or speak to each other—or you may want to distinguish between a full text you assign for close analysis and texts you simply present and summarize in class. In either case, as "the expert in the room," you need to study more material than you assign. This is why identifying a concrete controversy or methodological problem beforehand (even if you should choose another focus later on) is crucial for any session proposal.

Examples of contemporary theoretical paradigms (in random order, many of them overlapping):

Post-Critique (e.g., Stephen Best/Sharon Marcus; Rita Felski; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick; Heather Love)

Intersectionality (e.g., Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw; Patricia Hill Collins; Edward Schiappa's *Beyond Representational Correctness*; David Roediger's intersectionality chapter in *Class, Race and Marxism*; Cinzia Arruzza's critique of the intersectionality paradigm in *Viewpoint* magazine)

Afropessimism vs. Black Marxism (e.g., Frank B. Wilderson, Fred Moten vs. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, R.L. Stephens, David Roediger)

Identity Politics vs./and Class Politics (e.g., Walter Benn Michaels's *The Trouble with Diversity*; Mark Lilla; Cinzia Arruzza; Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor; R.L. Stephens; David Roediger; Paula Moya)

Critical Whiteness Studies (e.g., Theodore W. Allen's *The Invention of the White Race*; Alexander Saxton's *Rise and Fall of the White Republic*; Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark*; David Roediger's historiographical studies)

Media Studies / Digital Culture (e.g., Lisa Gitelman; Lev Manovich; Jay Bolter & Richard Grusin)

Seriality Studies (e.g., *Media of Serial Narrative*; with Jason Mittell; Ruth Mayer; Shane Denson; Frank Kelleter, and others)

Print Culture and History of the Book (e.g. Alexander Starre's *Metamedia*; Johanna Drucker; Lisa Gitelman; Ben Kafka)

New Cinema Studies (e.g., Mary Ann Doane's *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*; Jonathan Beller's *The Cinematic Mode of Production*)

Post-Cinema Studies (e.g., Steven Shaviro; Shane Denson and Julia Leyda)

Studies of Neoliberalism (e.g., Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism*; John T. Caldwell on "spec labor"; Richard Florida on "creative classes"; Andreas Reckwitz on "Kreativitätsdispositif"; David Graeber; David Harvey; Walter Benn Michaels; Mark Blyth)

Critical University Studies (e.g., Christopher Newfield's *The Great Mistake*)

Feminism and Science (e.g., Karen Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway*)

Modernity Studies (e.g., Benedict Anderson; Arjun Appadurai; Charles Taylor)

Global History (e.g., Sven Beckert)

Object-Oriented Ontology and Its Critics (e.g., Graham Harman; Timothy Morton's *Hyperobjects*; Peter Wolfendale)

Affect Theory (e.g., Brian Massumi; Margaret Wetherell)

Accelerationism (e.g., Robin Mackay; Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams; Steven Shaviro; Benjamin Noys)

New Queer Theory (e.g., Lauren Berlant; Robyn Wiegman; José Munoz)

Sexuality and Feminist Standpoint Theory (e.g., Sandra Harding; Nancy Hartsock; Patricia Hill Collins)

Neo-Formalism (e.g., Caroline Levine's *Forms*)

Cultural Economy (e.g., Boris Groys's *On the New*)

Systems Theory and the Study of Narrative (e.g., Elena Esposito; Mark McGurl's *The Program Era*)

Digital Humanities and Distant Reading (e.g., Franco Moretti; the Stanford Humanities Lab; *Debates in Digital Humanities*)

The "settler colonialism" paradigm (e.g., James Belich; Lorenzo Veracini)

Critical Race Studies and Narrative (e.g., Paula Moya's *The Social Imperative*; Robert Reid-Pharr's *Archives of the Flesh*; Walter Benn Michaels's critique of race-centered readings)

Post-Philosophy (François Laruelle; Alexander Galloway)

… many other options

You may propose theoretical frameworks / controversies / texts that are not included in this list! You can also focus on **one important contemporary book or article** that is perhaps not yet representative of a larger field but has already produced numerous discussions or has simply proven valuable to your own work. Alternatively, you can also focus on the intellectual work of **a specific journal**—or on how a journal has developed in its theoretical outlook and allegiance—or **other topics and other kinds of material!** If you're not sure if a topic is suitable or not, feel free to contact me by e-mail (frank.kelleter@fu-berlin.de) or let's discuss it in my office hours.

Organization of Syllabus: Based on all session proposals, I will suggest certain groupings and an overall semester schedule in our second session on October 23. This means that not everyone might get to work on *exactly* the topic that he or she proposed. Some participants will be asked to "join" a different session topic, preferably one that is thematically close to their own (but already further developed). (Example: A student proposing a rather general question about critical race studies might be asked to join a session proposed by another student on a more concrete question centering on David Roediger's discussion of the relationship of race and class in whiteness studies.) If this happens, students can still use their original proposal as a starting point for the topic of their final paper.

Organizing and Conducting a Session: You are **in full charge of "your" session** (i.e., all 90 minutes), including time management and learning objectives. You will be in charge of starting and concluding your session. You will be expected to **act as an expert on your topic**, having studied your material in depth, including secondary literature, larger historical contexts, reviews, "roundtables," and cultural implications. Although not everything you have read and researched will—or should—be "presented" in your session, it should nevertheless be reflected in the way you approach your topic and organize your session.

To ensure that your session will both **be interactive** (with a lot of student activity) and **engage in detailed analytical work** (rather than giving "another survey lecture" in the form of a presentation), you should structure your session according to the same model that rules your research question:

"We will now look at [A], focusing on [B] in order to find out [C]."

In terms of conducting your session, this means:

- In the beginning, after briefly **explaining the structure of your session**, you should **present [A], i.e., the larger theoretical framework under discussion**: what are its initial publications or foundational texts? How were they reviewed or discussed at the time? How does this approach situate itself on the larger field of Theory production in the humanities? How did it develop? Which actors can be identified, which controversies? This part (which is probably best done in the form of a presentation) **should not exceed 15 minutes!** Please avoid reciting historical data or biographical information if there is no analytical or argumentative engagement with them. In other words: everything presented should be functional to your analytical goals!
- The first analytical part of the session **(approx. 30 minutes)** can then consist of *[B]*, i.e., a close analysis—together with all seminar participants!—of your textual material. In this part, you want to **reconstruct the logic of your chosen text(s)**: what central theses are put forward? How are rhetoric and argument related? Is there a specific hierarchy to the development of the argument? Which underlying assumptions can be identified? To pursue these questions with all participants, you may want to **select a number of short passages** that are then analyzed in detail. In any case, **this part should not be done in the form of one uninterrupted presentation but in more interactive ways,** such as a moderated discussion,

group work, Q&A, interspersed video essays, short "theoretical" prompts about core concepts, pre-assigned tasks for all participants (via Blackboard), bringing in additional material for contextualization and contrast (reviews, other passages, additional sources you have researched), shortly presenting a canonized reading in order to challenge it or to carry it forward, or other strategies.

- A second core part **(approx. 30 minutes)** can consist of addressing your research question *[C]* while engaging all participants in a discussion of your focal object *[B]*! In other words, after having reconstructed the "logic" of the assigned text(s), you may want to **discuss internal controversies** within "your" theoretical paradigm **or to put this paradigm to a practical test**, applying it to a specific research problem or comparing different methodological applications. For example, you can use your session to discuss a research paper you are preparing for another course (or that you have already written for another course), showing how the theoretical framework can be put to analytical use or gauging its methodological limits.

- These are just suggestions! You can mix up parts *[B]* and *[C]* in whatever way you think is sensible! **Unconventional and creative approaches to class organization are explicitly encouraged**—anything goes! As "the expert in the room" you may bring in any kind of material and arrange it in any way you see fit as long as it meaningfully relates to your focus and research question. Thus, everything you discuss (or put up for discussion) should *explicitly* contribute to an understanding of your reading assignments. This is your anchor for everything else—and you may want to return to the assigned text(s) repeatedly. Whichever structure you choose, you should reserve another **10 minutes in the end of your session** in which you **summarize the session's results**, compare them to your initial goals, and give yourself and everyone else (including me) some time to "critique" the session. (What worked well? What didn't? Are there any lessons for future session organizers?)

Remember that every group session needs to be a concerted effort that focuses on *one* set of texts and approaches it with *one* research question in mind.

Important: Please note that the **first three thematic sessions** (30 October—13 November), which are not run by students, **will follow a different structure!** These sessions are meant as **survey-type introductions** to three central theories in the humanities today, namely, social habitus and field theory, actor-network-theory (ANT), and systems theory. These larger theories often serve as backgrounds for the paradigms listed above. Hence, the **assignments for these sessions will probably exceed 20 pages** and there will be **no direct engagement with practical applications** of these theories. Instead, their relation to "classical" theory (psychoanalysis, phenomenology, Marxism, etc.) will be discussed. Furthermore, these sessions are supposed to create a time buffer for all participants to research their own topics before the student-run sessions commence.

Audiovisuals and Technological Requirements: If you plan to make use of audiovisual equipment, **have all media clips saved as files to your hard-drive—do not rely on internet access for a presentation**, as this can derail the "flow" of your session when everyone is waiting for a video to load! For the same reason, please **have tested and resolved all technological requirements (software and hardware compatibility, sound, adapter cables, aspect ratio, etc.)** *before* class—do **not start to take care of these issues during class!**

Assigning Additional Material: One of the best ways to prepare your session is to tell us how *we* should prepare for it! For all assignments, please use Blackboard's group-email function, announcing assignments, attaching reading material, etc. **at least two weeks (14 days) prior to your session.** Remember that reading assignments should not exceed 20 pages per session. Never assign something which you are not going to make (central) use of in your session!

When you send out material, **always include the proper and complete bibliographical information** for this material, ideally documented directly on the material itself (not just in your e-mail), so that other students can cite it in their own research. Please always **assess your sources**, i.e., select the most authoritative text version you can find. For example, if there is a critical edition available, do not link to some unedited online edition, even if it comes with a university affiliation. If there are different

authoritative editions—or only various non-authoritative versions—always indicate *which* version you have selected and why. This kind of source criticism is an important and indispensable part of any type of humanities research. In fact, you may want to explicitly address these points in the beginning of your session.

A Note on Video Essays: If you want to produce video essays (or if you want to learn more about the video essay as an educational and scholarly genre), have a look at the MediaCommons project *[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film and Moving Image Studies* (online: http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/intransition/). Your final paper can consist of a video essay plus written discussion. Please contact me if this is your goal.

Final Papers: The topic of your final paper can—but does not have to—be based on the topic of your session. Paper topics need to address a **focused research question** (that is, a question to which you don't know the answer yet) connected to a **suitable set of material**. Thus, your paper should **foreground analytical engagement** with a **manageably sized research corpus**.
Particularly welcome are paper (and session) topics that engage in **original and archival research** (making new material accessible) or topics that **"follow" their texts into their wider spheres of cultural activity** (newspapers, paratexts, public debates, intertextual dialogues, media effects, etc.). Master's Theses, in particular, should engage in original/archival research.
For questions of methodology in the study of culture, you may want to consult Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005) or chapters 1 and 2 in Latour's *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2013).
If you're interested in writing a paper that "applies" a specific theoretical framework to a concrete research problem, you can do so if your paper explicitly reflects on the methodological "test" character of this project. Avoid picking a "master theory" to project it unto the material (as in "A[n] ~ist/ ~ian reading of …").
For all formal questions, please follow the requirements specified in the *Modulkatalog / Studienordnung*. For citation, use MLA style throughout.
Papers are to be handed in by **April 9, 2018**. If you need an extension, it can be granted if you ask for it before this date. Please specify the reasons for your delay, indicate the exact date on which you intend to submit your paper, and document the state of your work.
Participants who don't have to write a paper can gain credit for participation (*Teilnahmeschein*) by organizing and conducting one or two class sessions (depending on the number of participants), according to the model described above.

Electronic Etiquette Policy: Studies have shown that students who bring laptops to class are much less likely to pay attention to classroom discussions. Laptops or tablet computers can also be a distraction for other students in the classroom. Since this seminar is meant to provide a more interactive learning format than the module's lecture course, please **keep all electronic screens turned off at all times**. As a courtesy to the students in charge of a session, **turn off all cell phones in the beginning of class (no text messaging)!** To access readings, please **bring print-outs (or the reader) to class**. *Exceptions:* Students with special needs that can be accommodated by using a computer should contact me in the beginning of the semester. Laptops, tablets, or cell phones can also be used during class if this is part of your planned setup for a session. Furthermore, students in charge of a session may use laptops or tablets to run clips, presentations, etc.

A Note on the Selection of Course Material: 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 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 would create a significant issue for you—we can then work out alternative arrangements.

Plagiarism: Always indicate your sources, even when you're "only" paraphrasing them. Everything else constitutes plagiarism and is a serious breach of academic ethics that will not only result in immediate failure of this course but can endanger your career as a student at this Institute. Please take this issue seriously, because plagiarism is a severe scholarly offense! This goes for papers as well as for presentations. To find out more about what constitutes plagiarism, see definitions and examples collected in the *MLA Handbook* (and similar textbooks). **All cases of plagiarism involving exchange students will be reported to the student's home institution. There are no exceptions to this rule.**

M.A. Policy: If you want me to supervise your Master's Thesis (*Abschlussarbeit*), you should have written at least one paper in one of my seminars. Alternatively, you can use one of my seminars (such as this one) as an M.A. colloquium, preferably in conjunction with the corresponding lecture course. You will have to choose a topic connected to the seminar's material; please see me in my office hours before the first session to discuss possible options. Similar arrangements can be made for B.A. Theses. Seminar topics are always broad enough—usually covering an entire period—to provide fruitful material and interesting M.A. research questions for all students of American cultural history.

SEMESTER SCHEDULE

16 October 2017
Organizational Matters
Assignments: Please have read this syllabus carefully and prepare a Session Proposal.

23 October 2017
Semester Schedule

THREE EXAMPLES OF POST-CLASSICAL THEORY
(SURVEY PART)

30 October 2017
Field and Habitus Theory (Pierre Bourdieu)
Assignment: to be announced

6 November 2017
Actor-Network-Theory (Bruno Latour)
Assignment: to be announced

13 November 2017
Systems Theory (Niklas Luhmann)
Assignment: to be announced

20 November 2017
– [no session] –

STUDENT-ORGANIZED SESSIONS

27 November 2017
Topic:
<u>Session Organizer(s):</u>
<u>Assignment:</u>

4 December 2017
Topic:
<u>Session Organizer(s):</u>
<u>Assignment:</u>

11 December 2017
Topic:
<u>Session Organizer(s):</u>
<u>Assignment:</u>

18 December 2017
Topic:
<u>Session Organizer(s):</u>
<u>Assignment:</u>

8 January 2018
– [no session] –

15 January 2018 –
– [no session] –

22 January 2018
Topic:
<u>Session Organizer(s):</u>
<u>Assignment:</u>

29 January 2018
Topic:
<u>Session Organizer(s):</u>
<u>Assignment:</u>

5 February 2018
Topic:
<u>Session Organizer(s):</u>
<u>Assignment:</u>

12 February 2018
Topic:
<u>Session Organizer(s):</u>
<u>Assignment:</u>