

Culture Department Course Offerings

Winter Term 2022/2023

Bachelor

Grundlagenmodul

32001 Ulla Haselstein, Sönke Kunkel, Martin Lütke

Understanding North America A

Fri 10-12 and 14-16 h, R. 340

This comprehensive course introduces students to the fundamentals of the interdisciplinary field of North American Studies. "Understanding North America" (UNA) follows a two-semester format, with the first part (UNA-A) covering the disciplines of literary studies, cultural studies, and history. The second part (UNA-B) will be offered during the summer term and expands the overall framework with the disciplinary perspectives of sociology, economics, and political science. While UNA is one of the most challenging courses at the John F. Kennedy-Institute, it will reward students with insights into multiple disciplines along with a solid foundation of knowledge and skills for further studies.

This class consists of a lecture part and the tutorials.

Orientierungsmodul Kultur - Seminar

32100 Hannah Spahn

Rhetoric of Continuity and Change: A Survey of American Cultural History (Proseminar)

Wed 12-14 h, R. 203

This course provides an extended overview of US-American cultural history ranging from the period of British settlement in the 17th century to present issues in US society. We will read influential texts (speeches, legal documents, essays, etc.) by authors such as John Cotton, Thomas Jefferson, Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells, Martin Luther King, and Betty Friedan. This course will attempt to overview US-American history by way of key texts while also examining marginalized voices. Throughout our readings, we will explore public rhetoric as key factors shaping the cultural trajectory of the United States. After a brief introduction to basic methodologies of cultural analysis, students will investigate the rhetorical, structural, and discursive features of the primary texts through close readings. We will also explore select representations from the fields of visual culture, art, and film. In addition, students need to do independent research on a selection of key terms that are essential for understanding the evolution of American public discourse and intellectual history.

Vertiefungsseminare Kultur

32101 Mahshid Mayar

US-American Cultures of Childhood (Vertiefung A/B)

Blockseminar, R. 340

Dates:

Thurs, 20.10. 10:00-12:00 h (Introductory session)

Fr, 28.10. 10:00 - 16:00

Fr, 11.11. 10:00 - 16:00

Fr, 25.11. 10:00 - 16:00

Fr, 09.12. 10:00 - 16:00

Sa, 10.12. 10:00 - 16:00

Designed as a semi-block seminar over the course of WS 2022-23, US-American Cultures of Childhood adopts a literary-historical perspective to the study of US-American childhoods from the end of the 18th century to the present. Throughout the seminar, we step into the world of American children, delving into the ways adults conceived of, disciplined, cared for, educated, and imagined American children at various points in the history of the colonies and later the young nation. Furthermore, we will examine some of the ways childhood has been discussed and understood as a 'cultural artifact' by American adults during this time period and the ways these discussions and definitions have been reflected in the history of American childhood. Third, we will engage in critical discussions on the affinities of childhood and the U.S. national, and later imperial, identity and their intersections at the nexus of age, race, gender, religion, and citizenship/coloniality. ----- **Please note that this course is reading- and writing-intensive.**

32102 Heinrich-David Baumgart, LA GSNAS

Evolution and Late-Nineteenth-Century Culture (Vertiefung A/B)

Fr 12-14 h, R. 201

This seminar seeks to familiarize students with the major strands of the theory of evolution – perhaps the most important scientific theory of the nineteenth century – and demonstrate how these strands flourished in American (literary) culture in the late nineteenth century. Emphasis will be placed on the ways in which evolutionary theory informed constructions of collective identities along the lines of “race,” “sex,” and “class.” In so doing, the seminar provides students with an overview over what contemporaries considered to be the most important social issues of their time: the so-called “race question,” the “woman question,” and the “labor question.” ----- The text corpus includes seminal texts of evolutionary theory (Lamarck, Darwin, Spencer), legal documents, newspaper articles, and advice literature. Three novels – Frances Harper’s *Iola Leroy* (1892), Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Crux* (1911), and Jack London’s *The Iron Heel* (1908) – complete this selection. ----- This blend of texts

records not only hegemonic social Darwinist discourses but also heterodox critiques thereof, including early forms of Black and white feminism as well as socialist critiques of American capitalism. ----- To gain attendance for this course, students will have to submit three response papers (1-2 pages, 1,5 spacing) and at least one study question for our discussions (to be explained during the first session of the seminar). Full credit requires the submission of a term paper (15-20 pages, 1,5 spacing) on a topic closely related to seminar discussions. These papers are due on March 31.

32103 Martin Lütke

U.S. (Un)Popular Culture in the 20th Century (Vertiefung A/B)

Wed 10-12 h, R. 201

The (long) 20th century encompasses a broad range of pop cultural practices, forms, innovations, and interventions. Cultural practices that are not primarily textual, such as music, performance, and film and television, have garnered increasing academic and critical attention in the course of the 20th century; consider Kendrick Lamar's Pulitzer prize win (2017) for his "vernacular authenticity and rhythmic dynamism" here. In the course of this class, we will focus on important moments and crucial cultural "texts" and performances from roughly the 1920s through the 1990s and thus aspire to come to terms with the changes and continuities of the last century in U.S. pop-cultural production. What is more, the performers, artifacts, or performances we will consider here were often popular and unpopular at the same time – not only, but often, depending on the kind of audiences they spoke to or were discussed by. Consider, for example, the 1990s boyband phenomenon, but also performers like Madonna, who are adored by some, but hated by others. It is thus the question of (un)popularity that serves as a guiding light for the seminar at hand to make sense of U.S. cultural production in the 20th century and across media.

Master

Modul A

32110 Winfried Fluck

A Revolutionary Culture: Sources of America's Political Imaginary (Grundlagenvorlesung)

Wed 12-14 h, R. 340

In American self-descriptions, the early republic has long been presented as the story of a glorious beginning founded on democratic ideals. The revisionist scholarship of the last decades has put a question mark on this story and has added important new dimensions. This lecture course will draw on the revisionist scholarship of recent decades to correct and complement earlier narratives and introduce new perspectives into the understanding of the period. Among the topics covered will be: The American Enlightenment I: The Political Contract; The American Enlightenment II: The African American Enlightenment; The Founders and Slavery; Questions of Political Ideology: Liberalism and Republicanism; The Public Sphere of the Early Republic; The Role of Women; Expansion, Conquest and Native Americans; Success and Virtue: The Protestant Ethic and the Beginnings of Capitalism; Classicism and the Arts: Architecture and History Painting; The Changing Role of Literature: Satire, Sentimental Novel and Gothic Novel. ----- **Registration:** All participants must be registered via Blackboard and Campus Management before the first session. If you cannot register online, please contact the department's secretary Regina Götz (culture@fki.fu-berlin.de) before the beginning of the term; or if you would like to participate, but cannot attend the first session, please contact me (winfried.fluck@fu-berlin.de). **Course Material:** A detailed syllabus for the course will be available at the beginning of the winter semester. Students are expected to read a key text for each session. The major reading material will be posted as PDF documents on Blackboard. **Credits:** This is a lecture course (Vorlesung), there are no graded term papers (Modulprüfungen) in this course.

32111 Winfried Fluck

Changing Narratives about 'America' (HS)

Wed 16-18 h, R. 319

American Studies as a field of study has been established to gain a better understanding of "America," both as an idea and as a nation. It does so by contributing ever new observations and research data. But these single items have to be connected in order to be able to draw larger conclusions. The form in which this is usually done is by inserting a single phenomenon into a larger explanatory pattern for which, in following the historian Hayden White, American studies scholars now use the term narrative. This course will trace some of the main narratives that have been created in order to make sense of American society and culture, starting with the foundational narrative of American studies, that of American exceptionalism.

However, the main focus will lie on recent revisions such as the Cold War-narrative, the American Empire-narrative, the frontier-narrative and settler colonialism, the diversity narrative, narratives about the central role of slavery in the formation of the U.S., the 1619 project, indigenous people's histories, and the feminist debate between Lauren Berlant's Cruel Optimism and Robyn Wiegman's essay "Cruel Pessimism." In each case, the seminar discussion will be based on a few key texts. --
--- **Credits:** To receive participation credit in this course, a 10-15 minute presentation is required, plus regular attendance. To obtain a full credit, a term paper (of about 15 pages) on one of the seminar topics or texts is required, plus regular attendance. **Registration:** All participants must be registered via Blackboard and Campus Management before the first session. If you cannot register online, please contact the department's secretary Regina Götz (culture@fki.fu-berlin.de) before the beginning of the term; or if you would like to participate, but cannot attend the first session, please contact me (winfried.fluck@fu-berlin.de). **Course Material** All of the reading material will be posted as PDF documents on Blackboard. Students are expected to read the main texts for each session. A detailed syllabus will be available on Blackboard at the beginning of the winter semester.

Modul B

32112 Martin Lütke

Reform, Diversity, and Cultural Nationalism in the Age of Romanticism (Grundlagenvorlesung)

Thurs 10-12 h, R. 340

This lecture course deals with the interlocking of Romanticism, cultural nationalism, and practices of political reform, focusing on documents, debates, and literary works from the period in-between the Jacksonian era and the Civil War. Topics include: "Indian Removal," transcendentalism, the importance of Moby-Dick, debates on slavery and national expansion, sentimentalism and the abolitionist imagination, proslavery philosophies, the slave narrative, and other critical issues of the time. -----
The lecture course serves as "Grundlagenvorlesung" of Culture-Module B in the M.A. program. ----- **Registration:** all participants must be registered via Blackboard and Campus Management before the first session. If you cannot register online, or if you would like to participate, but cannot attend the first session, please contact Prof. Dr. Lütke before the beginning of the term.

32113 Martin Lütke

U.S. Romanticism as Period and Practice (HS)

Thurs 14-16 h, R. 340

Like the lecture class in the same module, the seminar deals with the interlocking of Romanticism, cultural nationalism, and practices of political reform. In the seminar, we will discuss the documents, debates, and literary works from the period in-between the Jacksonian era and the Civil War in greater detail and we will also aspire to more explicitly establish readings against the "comfortable" settler-colonialist canon and the white imaginary of what U.S. romanticism entails and signifies. Topics

include: “Indian Removal,” transcendentalism, debates on slavery and national expansion, sentimentalism and the abolitionist imagination, an emerging scientification of racist epistemologies, and the above-mentioned practices and texts of “writing back/against”.

32114 Hannah Spahn

Representations of War in American Culture (HS)

Tues 12-14 h, R. 203

In 1882 the poet Walt Whitman, who had volunteered in army hospitals during the Civil War, published a remark that has since become famous: “The real war will never get in the books.” In this seminar, we will approach Whitman’s prophecy as the combination of at least two related problems. From the perspective of intellectual history, we will try to get a sense of different concepts of war at different moments in time, including Whitman’s idea that “real war” necessarily resists attempts at representation. And from the perspective of cultural studies, we will try to find answers to the question of how war gets, or does not really get, “in the books” and other media. Focusing on American accounts of the Civil War, World War I, and World War II, we will study poems, diaries, letters, short stories, novels, essays, photographs, and films, by authors such as Ambrose Bierce, Mary Chesnut, Henry James, Stephen Crane, Edith Wharton, Randolph Bourne, Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, Gwendolyn Brooks, Frank Capra, and Ralph Ellison.

Modul C

Not offered this semester

Colloquium

32115 Martin Lütke

MA-Colloquium Culture & Literature

Thurs 16-18 h, R. 319

The colloquium is designed to support MA students in the processes immediately before and during the writing of their respective theses. So, the overall purpose of the course is to provide you with a space to present potential theses (topics, outlines, arguments, ideas) in whichever state they currently come in. ----- Course requirements: We will discuss course requirements and the syllabus in our first session. In addition to regular attendance, you should be prepared to present a tentative trajectory of your project to get the participation credits.

Graduate School

32120 Frank Kelleter

Theory and Methods in the Study of Culture (Oberseminar)

Tue 14-16 h, room 319

This Ph.D.-course deals with theoretical and methodological issues in the study of American culture, focussing on current research projects (doctoral and post-doctoral level) at the John F. Kennedy Institute. Members of the Graduate School are invited to attend; please register prior to the first class with Prof. Kelleter (no later than October 17).