

Veranstaltungen der Abteilung Kultur – Sommersemester 2016

Bachelor

Orientierungsmodul Kultur - Seminar

32100 Martin Lütke

Theorizing Culture

Mo 16-18 Uhr, Raum 203

The object of this seminar is to introduce students to theories of culture(s) or cultural theory. With the abundance of theories of culture(s) at hand, we will discuss a selection of canonized text on how we have come to theorize culture(s) in the fields of literary and cultural studies, and cultural history. Rather than aspiring to provide a definitive answer to the question of what culture is, the seminar sets out to explore the complexities that emerge from efforts to define and theorize culture in the first place and the methodological implications these complexities hold or produce. Still, the class is a survey and introductory class and serves as a foundation to critically think through and with culture as a (very broad) concept.

Vertiefungsseminare Kultur

32101 Heather Diack (Terra Gastprofessur)

The Challenge of Contemporary Art within American Culture

Mi 10-13 Uhr, Raum 319 (Beginn: 15.5.)

This course provides a critical survey of visual art practices from the 1950s to the present with the United States. By analyzing the multiple legacies of the early avant-garde and the development of the global art market, this course will consider the social, political, and philosophical questions raised by postmodernism and its formative influence on art after WWII. Movements to be covered include Conceptual art, Land art, Performance, installation, site-specificity, relational aesthetics, and other manifestations of the expanded field. Methodological approaches include deconstruction, as well as feminist and post-colonial critique. Students are encouraged to critically consider the changing status of social and cultural values in an image-saturated world alongside themes and concepts such as the everyday, the artificial, hyperreality, mass-reproduction, difference, appropriation, and affect.

32102 Edward Birzin / Joscha Spoellmink

Urban Interventions: Art and the City

Do 16-18 Uhr, Raum 203

In this course, we will explore forms of art and activism that treat the city as a space in which concepts of the common are most visibly negotiated and contested. The interventions we will investigate, ranging from alternative communities to public performances, candy piles waiting to be picked up by gallery visitors, 'bombed' walls and bathroom scribbles, pose questions like: How do we share and live space? What is the relation between art and participation? How can art provide ways to confront and reshape urban experience in neoliberal times? Rather than looking for clear-cut answers, we will borrow from fields like Urban Studies, Art History and Cultural Theory to open up different perspectives on these issues.

32103 Julian Henneberg

American Alienation: Discontent and Disappointment in U.S. Culture

Di 12-14 Uhr, Raum 203

When the "American Dream" proves elusive, its flipside comes into view. Dissatisfaction, discontent, and disappointment form the shadow that trails the characteristically American belief in societal and individual progress. Estrangement or separation from the good life (however one wishes to define it) therefore represents an important impetus of U.S. cultural production: "Alienation," Blanche Gelfant wrote in a 1973 article, "is the inextricable theme of American literature." While the term has lost currency with critics since the seventies, alienation and negative affects like displeasure continue to figure as potent and productive cultural forces. Focusing on the contradictions inherent in the pursuit of happiness, one encounters the kinds of narratives that replace progress with stasis, hope with despondency, and contentment with frustration, but also those that document the will to protest, resist, and rebel. Conventionally, the decade following the Second World War is regarded as the historical moment when, faced with the collectivist ethos of the Soviet state, the American ideal of individual fulfillment through material accumulation truly comes into its own, and the promise of prosperity emerges as the domestic face of "an imperial power making the world safe for consumer capitalism" (Pankaj Mishra). This course will therefore take the postwar era as its starting point, and move from the 1950s to the present. Along the way, we will discuss texts that point to the persistence of social and economic inequality or express frustration with a society that understands the "good life" exclusively in material terms, and thereby call into question the U.S. national myth of material progress and individual freedom. Readings will range from novels by Saul Bellow and James Baldwin to rap lyrics and television shows like *Mad Men*, *The Wire*, and *Mr. Robot*.

Colloquium

32105 Alexander Starre:

BA-Colloquium Kultur/Literatur

Mi 12-14 Uhr, Raum 201

This colloquium is divided into two parts: during the first half of the term, we will engage with the mechanics of scholarly writing, strategies for research, as well as the formatting and editing of a final thesis. Later in the course, participants will be asked to present their ongoing project to receive feedback from the group. Aside from this presentation, students need to complete two assignments and submit a written proposal for their BA thesis to receive credit.

Master

Modul A

32110 Frank Kelleter:

Discourses and Practices of Colonization and Settlement

(Grundlagenvorlesung)

Di 16-18, Raum 319

This lecture course deals with colonial societies and intercultural contact zones in North America between the 15th and 18th centuries. We will look at competing European settler cultures, practices of intercultural conflict and intermixture, as well as interdependent socio-economic, aesthetic, and ecological transformations in early modern times (shifting perspective from a Europe-centered narrative of "discovery" to a postcolonial account of conflictive hybridity). Topics include: Early European New World writings (Bacon, Montaigne, Shakespeare, Las Casas, De Vaca, etc.), the first British descriptions of Virginia and New England (John Smith, Thomas Harriot, William Bradford, Thomas Morton), Puritan writings both orthodox and heterodox (John Winthrop, Anne Hutchinson, Edward Taylor, Anne Bradstreet, and others), Indian captivity narratives and missionary tracts (Mary Rowlandson, John Eliot, the Gookins), mental and intellectual shifts in the late 17th century and in the context of the Great Awakening (Cotton Mather, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Chauncy, Benjamin Franklin). This lecture course serves as "**Vorlesung**" of Culture-**Module A** ("Amerikanische Ideengeschichte und Theorien amerikanischer Kultur") 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 cannot attend the first session, please contact Prof. Kelleter before the beginning of the term. **Requirements:** see Syllabus and Course Description (on Blackboard).

32111 Alexander Starre:
American Ecologies (HS)
Di 14-16, Raum 319

“To have ecology, we must give up Nature” (Timothy Morton)

This seminar surveys the history of ecological thinking in American culture and addresses the aesthetic and ideological functions of nature in literature and visual culture. Based on a capacious understanding of ecology as a mode of describing the interdependence and interaction of living organisms (including humans) and their environment, we will investigate influential works by writers and artists from the colonial period to the present. Readings include the work of authors such as Mary Rowlandson, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Rachel Carson, and Leslie Marmon Silko along with samplings from the emerging genre of “cli-fi” (climate fiction). Several sections on visual culture will address portrayals of the environment in American art from the Hudson River School to contemporary land art, as well as cinematic representations of ecological catastrophe in recent films such as *Wall-E* and *Beasts of the Southern Wild*.

Beyond these readings, the course serves as an introduction to the burgeoning field of ecocriticism and to diverse figurations of ecology in other domains of cultural theory. Through such concepts as Donna Haraway’s “cyborgs,” Bruno Latour’s “nature-culture,” and Timothy Morton’s “hyperobjects,” critical theory has attempted to bridge the divide between the human and the non-human. In our current moment of ecological crisis, these complex reorientations challenge us to rethink established notions of environmentalism, preservation, and sustainability. Overall, the course seeks to identify modes of analysis and critique that American Studies can contribute to current ecological debates.

32112 Martin Lütke:
Media and Technological Change in the Culture of the Progressive Era (HS)
Mo 12-14 Uhr, Raum 319

The object of this seminar is to introduce and critically rethink the relationship between “the media” and the cultural and social realities in a specific period of North American culture. When we consider the *Progressive Era*, we are typically (,roughly) aware of its periodization and of the significant role the period has played in shaping U.S. social programs, policies, and activism. After all, this is what – to a large extent – defined *progressivism*, for better or for worse. One could make the case, however, that this specific branch of *social progressivism* was thoroughly embedded in the broader cultural *Zeitgeist* of progress and emerged in response to, or in close correspondence, with the changing media ecological landscape of the late 19th and early 20th century. Such embeddedness and the complex interrelationships between *progressivism*, *the*

Progressive Era, media technological change and communicative practices, and cultural production at large, is what this MA seminar sets out to examine and explore.

We will discuss course requirements in our first session, as they partly depend on the number of enrolled students. For full credit, we will either write an in-class exam or a full research paper.

Modul B

32113 Kathleen Loock

Dystopian Visions of America (HS)

Mi 14-16 Uhr, Raum 201

The rise of fascism, consequences of socialism, global nuclear warfare, overpopulation, genetic engineering, climate change, and pandemic diseases – dystopian fiction projects a dark future for mankind. Distant settings and shocking scenarios serve to de-familiarize the dystopian world from the known world, thereby foregrounding and commenting on the social, political, and cultural conditions of the present. In this sense, many dystopias are cautionary tales that imagine possible futures on the basis of contemporary preoccupations and in response to Utopian ideals and modern critical thought. This seminar explores the concept of dystopia and traces its historical development in North America from the late-nineteenth century to today. We will first address a number of theoretical concerns and examine the cultural work dystopias perform. Then, we will study influential literary and cinematic dystopias in historical context, and analyze and discuss their forms and themes in class. Among the primary texts are novels by Sinclair Lewis, Margaret Atwood, and Cormac McCarthy as well as the *Terminator* film franchise. An entire workshop on May 13 will be dedicated to climate-fiction.

Modul C

32114 Frank Kelleter:

American (Media) Culture after WW II (Vorlesung)

Mo 14-16, Raum 319

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 its changed position in the world. Topics discussed in this lecture course include the advent of a postindustrial economic order, suburbanization, the decline of New Deal liberalism, the entangled rise of cultural radicalism on the left and right. In the early 21st century, many of these developments have been radicalized under conditions of military hegemony, globalized capitalism,

corporate anti-statism, and potentially catastrophic ecological transformations. Altogether, the lecture course focuses on select phases and moments of *cultural production* between 1945 and 2016, when American novels and films, TV shows and songs defined the global state of art in their respective fields. This has been one of the most innovative but also one of the most nervous periods in American cultural history, equally playful and belligerent, hilarious and outrageous. It gave us the Beat Movement, the 1960s counterculture, PopArt, the New Hollywood, the blockbuster movie, postmodernism, identity politics, neoliberalism, meritocratic extremism, various golden ages of television, transmedia franchises, and the internet. We will concentrate on literary sources but individual sessions will also be dedicated to political and sociological writings, 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 must be registered via Blackboard and Campus Management before 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:** See Syllabus and Course Description (on Blackboard). Students can take this lecture course in conjunction with the seminar "Media, Aesthetics, Culture (1945-2016)" (same room, immediately after the lecture); other seminars in Module C will be available as well.

32113 Kathleen Loock

Dystopian Visions of America (HS)

Mi 14-16, Raum 201

[Description see above]

32115 Kelleter:

Media, Aesthetics, Popular Culture (1946-2016) (HS),

Mo 16-18, Raum 319

This seminar builds on—and ideally should be taken in conjunction with—the lecture course "American Culture after World War II" (same room, immediately preceding the seminar). It serves as "**Hauptseminar**" of Culture-**Module C** ("*Kulturgeschichte einzelner Medien und ästhetischer Darstellungsformen*") in the **Master's program**. Unlike the lecture, this course will be almost completely student-driven: participants will be in charge of nearly all sessions, topics, and discussions. While the lecture course provides broad historical background information, focusing on a wide range of representative texts (mostly but not exclusively literary), the seminar will concentrate on the aesthetics and politics of media transformations in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, especially concerning the (often implicit) influence of digital communication on American literature, cinema, television, and comics (or popular music). Participants are expected to have familiarized themselves with theories of media change before the

semester starts (see, for instance, Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* and/or Lisa Gitelman, *Always Already New: Media, History, and the Data of Culture*). All participants will have to propose potential research projects in the beginning of the term (compare Seminar Description; further readings listed there). **Registration:** All participants must be registered via Blackboard *and* Campus Management before the first session. If you cannot register online, please contact Prof. Kelleter before the beginning of the term. **Requirements and Organization:** See Seminar Description (on Blackboard). To participate in this course, you need to be present and prepared in the first session. Preparation includes being ready to present and discuss possible research topics. If you would like to participate but cannot attend the first session, please contact Prof. Kelleter immediately (not later than April 11).

32112 Martin Lütke:

Media and Technological Change in the Culture of the Progressive Era (HS)

Mo 12-14 Uhr, Raum 319

[Description see above]

32116 Heather Diack (Terra)

Theorizing American Photography (HS)

Mi 13-16 Uhr, Raum 319 (Beginn: 15.5.)

This seminar introduces students to critical methodologies for studying American photography, interrogates the historic and aesthetic boundaries between art and documentary in the American context, and examines how the photograph has been established as the central mode of self-representation in the United States for both individuals and the nation at large. Other topics under consideration include, how the American landscape has served particular intellectual constructions of 'nature' in the American tradition, the ways in which attitudes towards social change, along with the history of poverty, immigration, and urban development in the United States, have evolved within American documentary photography, and how the American obsession with advertising and the media shape the production of contemporary modes of image-making. Using foundational art historical texts about photography as well as recent American studies approaches to the analysis of visual culture, we will examine the cultural and political work that photographs perform at particular historical moments. We will explore the larger discourses they participate in, with a focus on the contingent roles of race, gender, class, nation, and citizenship.

Graduiertenschule:

32120 Frank Kelleter:

Advanced Disciplinary Theory and Methods in the Study of Culture

(Oberseminar),

Di 12-14 Uhr, Villa

32130 Frank Kelleter / MaryAnn Snyder-Körper

Forschungskolloquium Kultur/Literatur

Mi 18-20 Uhr, Raum 201