

Culture Department Course Offerings

Summer Term 2020

Due to the measures taken by the Freie Universität Berlin to contain the spread of COVID-19, the start of classes for the summer term has been postponed to April 20. All courses at the university during the summer semester will be held using digital formats. Due to these circumstances, faculty and lecturers at the JFKI will not be able to offer all the classes as they were initially planned. This document contains information on all the courses that will be offered by the Culture Department. Please note that all topical seminars, both on the BA and the MA level, are cross-listed within all applicable modules (Vertiefung A&B in the BA; Kultur A, B, and C in the Master) to ensure maximum flexibility for students.

The weekly time slots and the room numbers listed below have no official function at this point; the instructors may, however, use the scheduled time frames for group work, remote consultation, or other online activities in their classes. Each instructor will communicate the teaching mode, the readings, and the online tools for their respective course via Blackboard (students are automatically added to Blackboard when they sign up for their courses on Campus Management). If you run into any problems using Blackboard, please contact your instructor individually (via email) as soon as possible. Please also check the JFKI website regularly for updates.

Bachelor

Orientierungsmodul Kultur - Seminar

32100 Christina Meyer

Theorizing Culture

Wed 14-16 h, room 340

The object of this seminar is to introduce students to theories of culture(s) or cultural theory. With theories of culture abounding, we will only be able to discuss a selection of canonized texts. These texts will – hopefully – help to enhance our understanding of how we have come to theorize culture(s) in the field of literary and cultural studies, as well as cultural history. Furthermore, we will tackle various angles of how we make meaning of and through culture and how culture informs related fields of inquiry, such as, for example, media studies, philosophy, and sociology.

Vertiefungsseminare Kultur

32101 Joshua Shannon (Terra Visiting Professor)

The Human Being in Contemporary American Art (Vertiefung A & B)

Wed 10-12 h, room 319

This course offers an overview of innovations in American art since 1950, while specifically asking how this art has represented what a human being is, or could be. Thus, we will consider a range of ideas about the human that contemporary American art has proposed or played with: individualism, collectivity, heroism, modesty, dreams of mastery, dreams of merger with nature, etc. Of particular concern will be the fluctuating myth, in American culture in this period, of a universal human condition, as it has confronted identity categories such as gender, race, sexual orientation, and class. We will consider subjects ranging from portraiture and landscape art to abstraction, in media including painting, sculpture, photography, video, installation, and performance. Some meetings will be devoted broadly to movements, others to specific artists. Frequent in-class discussions will complement the lectures. **Please register at on Campus Management and via email at culture@jfki.fu-berlin.de with your name, matriculation number, study program, home university (if applicable), zedat email address or email address of home university, and type of exchange program (if applicable).**

32104 Alexander Starre

**American Print Cultures from the Colonial Era to the Digital Age:
Theory, Materiality, Aesthetics** (Vertiefung A & B)

Tue 16-18 h, room 201

Print culture studies and book history have been among the most vibrant fields of interdisciplinary inquiry in American Studies in the past decades. This course introduces students to the historical, cultural, and aesthetic analysis of material texts. While the printed book will be the center of interest, students will also investigate the expanded media ecology of print as embodied in pamphlets, magazines, and recent digital formats. The course first addresses theoretical and methodological dimensions; it will then follow a rough chronology of the evolution of print forms and technologies in North America. Each session covers foundational critical works and up-to-date scholarship on topics such as colonial print culture, print nationalism, shifting ideas of authorship and readership, multimodal literature, and the dynamics of race, class, and gender connected to material texts. Students will read seminal works by Robert Darnton, Elizabeth Eisenstein, Michael Warner, and Benedict Anderson alongside theoretical texts by Marshall McLuhan, Niklas Luhmann, and Amaranth Borsuk as well as recent interventions by Jonathan Senchyne, N. Katherine Hayles, and Trish Loughran. Pairing these readings with a set of primary “print objects,” the course explores key moments in American book history as represented in works by Benjamin

Franklin, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Harriet Monroe, Vladimir Nabokov, Jennifer Egan, and Mark Z. Danielewski.

32105 Maxi Albrecht

Speculative Survival: Genre, Identity, and Gender Politics in the 21st Century (Vertiefung A & B)

Mon 16-18 h, room 201

Speculative fiction builds imaginary story worlds that are alternative realities created through extrapolation, altering or removing those power structures that govern or even determine our real lives. Considering the history of the speculative genre as didactic, political and potentially even revolutionary genres, speculative fiction has been credited with offering visions of humanity beyond our socio-cultural constraints. Some see these narratives as postgender, postfeminist or postracial utopias, while others criticize their failures in terms of formulating progressive identity politics. A dominant streak of dystopian and post-apocalyptic fiction has marked US-American cultural production during the last decade. These dark speculations often focus intensely on the survival of humanity in general, of individuals and of collective groups of people. While real-world power structures may be absent, or altered, the ethos of survival takes on structural significance in this type of narrative. In this course, we will investigate the interconnection of survival in speculative fiction and identity and gender politics from a broad cultural and media studies frame. We will focus on different types of media, such as television series, film, novels, etc., as well as different genres such as dystopia, young adult fiction, post-apocalypse, zombie fiction and others, to tease out the complex negotiations of gender and identity politics in the speculative imagination of the 21st century, while also paying special attention to their historic embeddedness in the socio-economic moment of neoliberalism.

Colloquium

32104 Christina Meyer

BA-Colloquium Culture/Literature

Wed 16-18 h, room 319

This course will provide guidance to students who are preparing for or are in the process of writing their bachelor's thesis. The colloquium will be divided into two sections. Section 1 will feature individual sessions on the questions of 1) finding a topic, 2) literature research, 3) methodology/theory and 4) standards and structuring of academic writing. Written assignments are due for three of those sessions. Section 2 of the course will take the form of a symposium where students give presentations on their proposed topics and the progress of their research so far.

Master

Modul A

32110 Alexander Starre

Narrative, Ecology, and the Anthropocene (HS)

Wed 10-12 h, room 203

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, especially film. 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 American writers and artists—some historical, most from the contemporary era. Readings include texts by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Rachel Carson, Leslie Marmon Silko, Octavia Butler, Tomy Pico, and Richard Powers along recent films from the emerging genre of “cli-fi” such as *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012), *Snowpiercer* (2013), and *Interstellar* (2014).

Beyond these readings, the course serves as an introduction to the burgeoning field of environmental humanities and to diverse figurations of ecology and the Anthropocene in other domains of cultural theory. By thinking through the aesthetic challenges of going beyond the ideological divide between nature and culture, we will attempt to explore how *narrative*—and especially *narrative form*—can help us reimagine human subjectivities, temporalities, and spatialities in the precarious environments of the Anthropocene. Overall, the course seeks to identify modes of analysis and critique that American Studies can contribute to current debates on sustainability, climate change, and environmentalism.

32112 Christina Meyer

Print Capitalism: 1800-1900 (HS)

Thu 16-18 h, room 201

This seminar is designed to introduce students to print cultures and their publics in American history between the American Revolution and the end of the nineteenth century. Next to the economic, technological, political, and social environments of nineteenth-century publishing fields (e.g. the book trade, or the periodical press) we will examine a number of (written/drawn) reactions by different social agents – individuals and institutions – to new developments in these fields (as, for instance, the purity crusade and anti-vice campaigns by Anthony Comstock, legal commentary and the proposal of bills, diverse speeches and essays by social critics, novelists, temperance reformers, educators, theologians, legislators, librarians, etc., and caricatures and other forms of illustration). We will tackle such issues as the

evolution of the newspaper from partisan papers, the penny press, to the so-called yellow journals, the place of periodicals in the daily lives of Americans, the rise of mass magazines in the 1880s, the evolution and development of printing processes (e.g. engraving, lithography, chromolithography) and the impact on consumption habits, the reading of literature in installments, the exchange of ideas through advertising trade cards, and more. In this class, students are encouraged to develop their skills in visual and verbal analysis and critical reading of primary sources and secondary literature, and to develop strategies for historical research of cultural artifacts.

32115 Joshua Shannon (Terra Visiting Professor)

How to Look at American Art in the Era of Climate Change (HS)

Wed 14-16, room 319

Does the history of American art look different from the era of climate change? This course offers an MA-level overview of visual art in the United States since the Civil War, while specifically asking what relationships this art has represented (or imagined) between human beings and the non-human world. We will seek to identify and critique such evolving concepts in American art as *nature*, *wilderness*, *civilization*, and *the human being*. Looking especially at paintings, photographs, sculptures, films, and songs that represent the landscape, we will consider the history of these key concepts as they pertain to the sustainability of life on earth. How has art enabled environmental degradation and hastened climate change? How has it modeled a more sustainable set of relationships between the human and the non-human? Readings will cover climate change and ecocriticism as well as art history, while meetings will be devoted primarily to close interpretations of works of art. **Please register on Campus Management and via email at culture@jfki.fu-berlin.de with your name, matriculation number, study program, home university (if applicable), zedat email address or email address of home university, and type of exchange program (if applicable).**

32116 Brett Mills

Animals on Screen (HS)

Mon 12-14 h, room 340

This seminar asks the question: what happens to the study of television, film and other forms of mass media if the representation of animals is taken into account? Throughout this seminar you will discover, critique, engage with, and apply multiple frameworks useful for thinking about the functions animals fulfil within media. In doing so, you will critique the hitherto anthropocentric nature of the vast majority of academic thinking, and examine why thinking beyond the human matters. Key analytical frameworks that will be explored will include human-animal studies, critical animal studies, posthumanism and the environmental humanities. Given the seminar's focus on media

forms, it will explore the audio-visual nature of animal representation, as well as the relationships between animals and media contexts such as narrative and genre.

Key authors include Carol J. Adams, John Berger, Jonathan Burt, Jacques Derrida, Erica Fudge, Donna Haraway, and Akira Mizuta Lippit. The seminar will draw on a wide range of audio-visual media, including *Bear 71* (Mendes and Allion 2017), *Carnage* (BBC3 2017), *Electrocuting an Elephant* (Porter or Smith 1903), *Lassie* (CBS/Syndication 1954-73), *Me at the Zoo* (YouTube 2005), *Planet of the Apes* (Schaffner 1968) and pet videos on YouTube. Via this material the seminar will examine the contribution analytical approaches from the humanities can make to contemporary debates about human-animal relations, animal rights/justice/advocacy, animal labour, and the consequences of the normalisation of anthropocentrism.

Modul B

32111 Christina Meyer

Capitalism, Sectionalism, Immigration and American Nationhood
(Grundlagenvorlesung)

Thu 12-14 h, room 201

This lecture course deals with American culture in the four decades following the Civil War—from the “Gilded Age” to the Progressive Era. Topics include: the end of Reconstruction; Mark Twain’s *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; the emergence of a capitalist-nationalist imaginary; realism and naturalism as literary modes; the “New Woman”; urbanization and class conflict; social utopias, media transformations, and early cinema.

32112 Christina Meyer

Print Capitalism: 1800-1900 (HS)

Thu 16-18 h, room 201

(description see above)

32110 Alexander Starre

Narrative, Ecology, and the Anthropocene (HS)

Wed 10-12, room 203

(description see above)

32115 Joshua Shannon (Terra Visiting Professor)

How to Look at American Art in the Era of Climate Change (HS)

Wed 14-16, room 319

(description see above)

32116 Brett Mills

Animals on Screen (HS)

Mon 12-14 h, room 340

(description see above)

Modul C

32114 Frank Kelleter

American Modernities (Grundlagenvorlesung)

Tue 16-18 h, room 319

This lecture course deals with American culture between the 1910s and the 1940s: a period that saw the birth of new technologies of production, representation, and destruction as well as far-ranging revolutions in the organization of knowledge. Sociology, ethnology, psychoanalysis, and other disciplines emerged in the early 20th century as institutionalized modes of theorizing modernity. Many of these “modern” transformations can be witnessed in a prototypical fashion in the United States. Our topics in this lecture course include: early film; the New Immigration; the Hollywood studio system; the Great War and modernist aesthetics (fiction, poetry, drama); the “New Negro” movement and the Harlem Renaissance; radio and New Deal culture; the Southern agrarians and anti-modern modernisms.

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.

32112 Christina Meyer

Print Capitalism: 1800-1900 (HS)

Thu 16-18 h, room 201

(description see above)

32110 Alexander Starre

Narrative, Ecology, and the Anthropocene (HS)

Wed 10-12, room 203

(description see above)

32115 Joshua Shannon (Terra Visiting Professor)

How to Look at American Art in the Era of Climate Change (HS)

Wed 14-16, room 319

(description see above)

32116 Brett Mills

Animals on Screen (HS)

Mon 12-14 h, room 340

(description see above)

Graduate School

32120 Frank Kelleter:

Advanced Theory and Methods in the Study of Culture

(Oberseminar)

Tue 14-16 h, Villa

This Ph.D.-course continues last semester's "Theory and Methods in the Study of Culture." Members of the Graduate School are invited to attend. Please register prior to the first class with Prof. Kelleter.