

# Culture Department Course Offerings

## Summer Term 2023

### Bachelor

#### *Orientierungsmodul Kultur - Seminar*

32100 Martin Lütke

#### **Theorizing Culture** (Seminar)

Tue 10-12 h, R. 340

The object of this seminar is to introduce students to theories of culture(s) and cultural theory. With theories of culture abounding, we will only be able to discuss a selection of canonized texts. These texts will 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 Julia Rosenbaum

#### **Art and Environment: Perspectives on Land, Landscape, and Ecology in the US** (VM A & B)

Wed 14-16 h, R. 319

This course explores the relationship between the natural world and United States culture, considering specifically the visual expression of that relationship: How have Americans imagined “nature” and represented it? How have concepts of land and landscape shaped perceptions about social order, identity, and sustainability? The course provides both a historical framework for thinking about these questions as well as a contemporary perspective, particularly in the context of a potential new era known as the “Anthropocene.”

**Please register at:** [culture@jfki.fu-berlin.de](mailto: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). Deadline for registration is April 17, 2023. Please register on Campus Management as well and as soon as possible.

32102 Martin Lütke

**"It's Bigger than...": Hip Hop History and Hip Hop Studies (VM B)**

Tue 12-14 h, R. 319

The object of this seminar is to introduce students to two interrelated objects of study: hip hop culture on the one hand and the transnational scholarship on hip hop culture on the other. By explicating the "meta-perspective" on the study of hip hop within academic circles, we might be able to better access the crucial question of the kinds of cultural work hip hop has (and still does?) perform in North American culture and beyond the United States. If we can agree that it makes sense to study, for example, the complex politics of hip hop, are the politics of hip hop studies similarly complex or more straight-forward? Put simply: let us try to accomplish more than to revisit and reiterate the undoubtedly rich and complex entangled histories of MCing, DJing, graffiti, and breakdancing from the late 1970s on!

For **full credit**, you need to hand in **five** different responses to the readings for five different sessions; preferably at the beginning of the respective session! At the end of the semester, you will have to write a research paper or in-class exam. Please come and talk to me about either option, before you start researching for a specific topic. The deadline for the research paper would be **October 1, 2023**.

If all you need is **participation**, I would like you to briefly present in-class on a topic of your choosing and submit the **five** responses (as outlined above).

32103 Max McKenna

**American Road Cultures after 1945 (VM B)**

Thu 14-16 h, R. 201

The space of the road has loomed large in the American cultural imaginary since at least the period of westward expansion, when covered wagons rolling along dirt turnpikes symbolized white Americans' supposed Manifest Destiny. After the Second World War, the United States underwent a period of automobilization that forever remade the American road, making it synonymous with traffic, smog, suburban development, and franchise businesses. In this class, we will examine the uneasy ways that the myth of the open road has persisted from the second half of the twentieth century to today. We will study foundational American road narratives as well as texts, films, visual media, and even popular songs that rewrite or otherwise contest the cultural significance of cars, driving, and highways. Sessions will address such topics as: the "existential road movie"; gender dynamics and automobility; race and the road in rock 'n' roll music; and the postapocalyptic road novel. Along the way, we will engage with relevant and interrelated methods in the study of American culture, such as theories of space, mobility studies, infrastructuralism, and ecocritique.

32105 Mahshid Mayar

**E is for Empire –Scripts of Empire in U.S. Literature and Culture (VM A & B)**

Fri 14-16 h, R. 201 (see complete list of sessions online!)

**E is for Empire** embraces a broad literary-cultural-historical frame in order to study U.S. imperialism over the course of its history, starting, roughly, with the American Revolution in 1776 and ending with twenty-first-century confusions and debates over what it has metamorphosed into and whether or not we can call it an empire. What is left in the end is, rather confusingly, a nation, a republic, and an ever-expanding empire – all at once. Therefore, what **E is for Empire** explores is a conglomerate entity shaped by centuries of forceful policymaking, aggressive expansionism, and active rejection of the language of “empire” in favor of a language of “democracy.” ----- The seminar’s founding premise is that building and sustaining (but also resisting or critiquing) such an empire involve rhetoric, law and policy, imagination, and action. Which further means that the U.S. empire has not been an accident, nor has it been born out of an imposition by circumstances or foreign powers that carved it into being. Rather, it has been a project that has taken many forms and has drawn upon many resources to build and boost it. And as all projects, it has a language of its own, with which it has left behind what can be identified as “scripts” of empire. ----- Focusing inter-sectional, critical attention on these evolving, at-times conflicting scripts of empire, the seminar aims to explore a number of verbs – such as “to dream,” “to document,” “to legitimize,” “to teach,” “to militarize,” “to resist,” “to lyricize,” and so on – with which these scripts have been written, revised, and performed. As the course focuses on multiple scripts of empire, the discussions go beyond the examination of historical, political, or legal texts in vacuum. Rather, **E is for Empire** proposes that to read and make sense of the language and the scripts of empire require us to pay equal attention to the fictions of violence, adventure, and power as is paid to the politics of advertisement, legitimation, and education.

*Colloquium*

32104 Martin Lütke

**BA-Colloquium Culture/Literature**

Wed 12-14 h, R. 201

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 center on questions such as finding a topic, literature research, methodologies and theories, and academic writing. 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*

not offered this semester

## *Modul B*

32110 Frank Kelleter

### **Capitalism, Sectionalism, and American Nationhood**

(Grundlagenvorlesung)

Mon 16-19 h, R. 340

This lecture course deals with American culture in the four decades following the Civil War. Topics include: the failure of Reconstruction; Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; the interlocking of progressivism and imperialism; African American activism; anarchism (Lucy Parsons, Emma Goldman); the emergence of a capitalist-nationalist imaginary; realism and naturalism as literary modes; the "New Woman"; urbanization and turn-of-the-century media transformations.

The lecture course serves as "**Vorlesung**" of Culture-**Module B** (*Kultur der Nationalität und Diversität*) in the **Master's degree program**. **Registration:** All participants need to be registered via Blackboard *and* Campus Management by the first session. If you cannot register online, please contact Prof. Kelleter before the beginning of the term. **Requirements and Organization:** See **Syllabus and Course Description** in the "Teaching" section of Prof. Kelleter's JFKI website or on Blackboard (go to "Kursmaterial"; you may have to click on "open Syllabus here" to download it; if this doesn't work, try a different browser: students have reported problems with the Chrome browser). Please note that this course is listed as a three-hour "Vorlesung mit integriertem Tutorium." However, participants will gain credit on the basis of the regular two-hour lecture slot (4-6); attendance of the additional academic hour ("tutorial" with further time for Q&A, 6-7) is optional. **First session:** April 17.

32111 Hannah Spahn

### **Cultures of Contagion (HS)**

Wed 12-14 h, R. 319

From the revolutionary period to today, narratives about epidemics and pandemics have played important roles in US culture. In this seminar, we will combine approaches from intellectual history and cultural history and theory to read these narratives through the lens of changing concepts and metaphors of *contagion*. Studying newspaper accounts, short stories, novels, autobiographies, and films, we will aim at getting a better understanding of how historically different cultures of contagion, in their oscillation between problems of social cohesion and social disintegration, have informed modern American concepts of personal identity, nationhood, and race.

32112 Hannah Spahn

**Before Harlem** (HS)

Thu 16-18 h, R. 340

The Harlem Renaissance has long been regarded as the period when African American literature first came into its own. However, this period can also be seen as the outcome and culmination point of the rich intellectual, literary, and cultural tradition that preceded it in the long nineteenth century, between the American Revolution and the First World War. In this seminar, we will study concepts of diversity and nationhood in the work of major African American writers “before Harlem,” from Phillis Wheatley and Lemuel Haynes in the late eighteenth to Charles Chesnutt and Pauline Hopkins in the early twentieth century.

*Modul C*

32113 Frank Kelleter

**American Modernities** (Grundlagenvorlesung)

Thu 16-19 h, R. 340

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, along with 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 studied in a prototypical fashion in US history. 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.

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, please contact Prof. Kelleter before the beginning of the term. **Requirements and Organization:** See **Syllabus and Course Description** in the “Teaching” section of Prof. Kelleter’s JFKI website or on Blackboard (go to “Kursmaterial”; you may have to click on “open Syllabus here” to download it; if this doesn’t work, try a different browser: students have reported problems with the Chrome browser). Please note that this course is listed as a three-hour “Vorlesung mit integriertem Tutorium.” However, participants will gain credit on the basis of the regular two-hour (4-6) lecture slot; attendance of the additional hour (“tutorial” with further time for Q&A, 6-7) is optional. **First session:** April 18.

32114 Martin Lütke

### **Network Nation: Media Change and Media Theory in the United States (in the 20th Century) (HS)**

Wed 10-12 h, R. 319

This seminar aspires to introduce students to the history of media change in the United States. Starting from the assumption that media matter – and have mattered – in the United States (and beyond), we will explore and discuss the changing media ecologies in U.S. history, beginning with the American Revolution and all the way through to the 21st century. Not only, but also, in light of the recent debates in the context of the digital turn, we will re-visit crucial moments in the history of United States decisively from the vantage point of media history and media theory. From Bernard Bailyn's ideas regarding the American Revolution as the result of printing technologies (and the medial form of the pamphlet) all the way up to Katherine N. Hayles' "Writing Machines" and contemporary debates in the context of the post-human era, this seminar will hopefully provide a space for us to think critically through the media/history nexus.

**Course requirements:** We will discuss course requirements in our first session, as they depend on the number of students enrolled in the seminar. In addition to regular attendance and active participation (in the shape of group assignments), you will either write a final research paper with a deadline of October 1, 2023, or an in-class exam (in the form of an essay).

32115 Julia Rosenbaum

### **Visualizing Freedom: Revolution, Emancipation, Rights (HS)**

Thu 14-16 h, R. 319

Political and cultural revolutions from the eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries ignited debates about basic human rights and equality. How were these rights defined, promoted, and resisted? This course explores the role of visual material in developing discourses of freedom in the Atlantic World of this period. Fundamental to that pursuit were, and are, conceptions of what makes a citizen. We will examine the relationship between art and citizenship through three lenses: revolution, abolitionism, and enfranchisement. The class will address a range of media as well as reflect critically on connections between historical and present-day struggles for political, racial, and gender equity.

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# Graduate School

32120 Frank Kelleter

## **Advanced Theory and Methods in the Study of Culture**

(Oberseminar)

Tue 14-16 h, 319

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 (no later than April 6).

32130 Karin Höpker / Frank Kelleter

## **Research Colloquium Culture/Literature**

Wed 18-20 h, room 201

Each summer semester, the Department of Culture and the Department of Literature organize a joint research colloquium with international speakers. This course is addressed chiefly to Ph.D. students, post-docs, visiting scholars, and faculty members, but it is open to B.A. and M.A. students and the general public as well. It cannot be taken for credit; it is not an "M.A.-Kolloquium." For details, please see poster and program (online).