

# Veranstaltungen der Abteilung Literatur

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## Sommersemester 2019 Bachelor

### *Orientierungsmodul Literatur – Seminar*

32200 Birte Wege

#### **Introduction to Literary Studies II**

Mi 12-14 Uhr, Raum 201

This seminar complements the class “Introduction to Literary Studies I,” familiarizing students further with conventions of genre and methods of interpretation. We will begin with an introduction to literary theory. We will then focus on literary modes of cultural expression that are of particular relevance to American literary history and American culture at large. The assigned texts will cover several centuries, and include forms and genres such as the jeremiad, the slave narrative, science fiction, and comics.

### *Vertiefungsseminare Literatur*

32201 James Dorson

#### **Posthumanism and the Novel: Brute, Cyborg, Zombie, Superhero**

(Vorlesung oder Vertiefungsseminar A & B)

Di 12-14 Uhr, Raum 201

The critical consensus that we have never been human is gathering force. The “human being” is increasingly regarded as a construct of the Enlightenment invented to shore up boundaries between humans, animals, and machines. Since the 1990s, scholarship on posthumanism has actively sought to deconstruct such boundaries by firmly re-embedding humanity in its biological and technological environments. Human exceptionalism is giving way to a view of human-machine coevolution that radically questions long cherished preconceptions about human agency and autonomy, individualism and universalism, along with the political, economic, and cultural beliefs tied up with these issues. At the same time, since the late nineteenth century the novel—a privileged medium for rendering human consciousness—has been invaded by a host of characters with decidedly sub- or suprahuman characteristics: the figure of the brute (animal and human), the cyborg (human and machine), the zombie (dead and alive), and the superhero (human and god) have all helped to unsettle the humanist assumptions underlying the novel form. At once terrifying and exhilarating, these liminal characters are used to negotiate difficult issues at the heart of contemporary debates about the future of humanity. By combining readings of posthumanist theory with readings of four novels that problematize what it means to be human in different ways, the aim of this class is both to familiarize students with the

field of critical posthumanism and to develop the reading skills that will allow us to decipher the current infestation of posthuman monsters in contemporary US culture. The four novels that we will read are Frank Norris's *Vandover and the Brute* (1914), Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968), Colson Whitehead's *Zone One* (2011), and Nnedi Okorafor's *Lagoon* (2014).

32202 Ulla Haselstein

**E. A. Poe** (Vertiefung A & B)

Di 10-12 Uhr, Raum 203

Edgar Allan Poe is the internationally best known American writer of all times: his Gothic stories have entertained the world, and he was also the founder of the genre of detective fiction. But he is not only a popular writer, but also one of the first modernist writers. The seminar will explore the cultural site of Poe's writings between Romanticism and modernism, his reception of scientific experiment, and his psychological concepts. We will discuss the grotesque side of his work and put it into historical context. We will also look at the economic conditions of the American literary market and investigate Poe's work as produced by a writer who originated from the American South. And we will discuss different genres. Though Poe is famous for his short stories, he also wrote poetry, and a novel.

32203 Thomas Dikant

**Life Writing: Exploring the Self** (Vertiefung A & B)

Di 16-18 Uhr, Raum 201

What are the shapes of our lives, and what does it mean to be a person? Life-writing, a term used to describe a wide variety of literary texts including autobiographies and biographies, memoirs, and autofictional experiments raises these and similar questions. In this seminar, we will start by looking at the genre of the autobiography, and study how the exploration and mediation of a self in writing becomes transformed over the 19th and 20th century, ending with recent experimental texts that probe the boundaries between non-fiction and fiction. Readings will include life-writings by Benjamin Franklin, Harriet Jacobs, Henry Adams, H. D., Gertrude Stein, James Baldwin, Maggie Nelson, and Ben Lerner.

### *Colloquium*

32104 Talel Ben Jemia:

**BA-Colloquium Kultur/Literatur**

Mo 12-14 Uhr, Raum 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 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. ----- The first meeting will take place on April 15. Please make sure to sign up on Blackboard as soon as possible. For any questions, send an email to [talel@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:talel@zedat.fu-berlin.de).

## **Master**

### *Modul A*

32210 Birte Wege

**"I would prefer not to": Reading Herman Melville (+ Modul C)**

Di 12-14, Raum 203

Few works of fiction can lay quite as strong a claim to being the great American novel as can Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*; or, *The Whale* (1851). In this seminar, intended as an introduction to Melville's groundbreaking work, we will explore the challenging complex formal and thematic aspects of this book, as well as examining a broad cross-section of Melville's writing, ranging from his early adventure fiction to his final novel, *Billy Budd, Sailor*. The focus will be on the primary texts, which will include *Moby-Dick*, *Typee*, *The Confidence-man*, and *Billy Budd*, as well as some of the author's shorter fiction.

### *Modul B*

32111 Thomas Dikant

**Narrative Theory (HS)**

Mo 14-16, Raum 203

This seminar introduces students to narrative theory and provides them with the tools for engaging in sophisticated analyses of narrative in both literature and film. We will look at folk tales, short stories, novels, and films, and discuss formalist, structuralist, poststructuralist, Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytic as well as digital approaches to the study of narrative. Major theorists included in this seminar are: E. M. Foster and Vladimir Propp, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Gerard Genette, Fredric Jameson, Shoshana Felman, and Hayden White. Literary readings and films will include works by E. A. Poe, Henry James, and Alfred Hitchcock.

32212 James Dorson

**Network Narratives: The Poetics of Interconnectivity (HS)**

Di 14-16 Uhr, Raum 201

We live in an age of networks. Since the 1990s, the network form has not only become a privileged model of socioeconomic organization but has also reorganized knowledge: we don't only live interconnected lives, we also increasingly think in terms of interconnectivity. While decentralized network forms have posed a challenge to hierarchical forms of organization, alternately subverting and intensifying mechanicism of social control, networks also pose a challenge to narrative forms of representation. If a narrative may be defined as "a causally related sequence of events" (Cohn), how then can narratives be used to represent a dynamic, fluid reality—a "space of flows" (Castells)—defined by open-ended, closure-defying, multidirectional causality? This class takes up the question of how we may conceptualize "network narratives" by examining how contemporary U.S. authors have experimented with the network form in order to represent the experience of interconnectivity. Besides theoretical texts on networks from the perspectives of science, sociology, aesthetics, and philosophy, we will be reading the following literary texts: Nicholson Baker's *Mezzanine* (1988), Karen Tei Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange* (1997), Juliana Spahr's *The Transformation* (2007), and Jena Osman's *The Network* (2010).

## *Modul C*

32113 Ulla Haselstein

**Recent Fiction (Seminar) (+ Modul A)**

Do 14-16 Uhr, Raum 203

It is difficult to assess the literary and cultural changes of the present. One way to do it is by looking at the production of fiction and taking stock of its dominant, its emergent and its residual features. The material of inquiry will be both the texts themselves and their reception by reviewers, critics, talkshow hosts. A conceptualization of the current literary market will be essential, as will be an awareness of the history of the novel. In making the following selection of texts, I have tried to produce an overview of current market segments. In the first session of the seminar, participants will be invited to make further suggestions and give reasons for doing so. **WARNING:** this seminar will mean a lot of reading.

Danzy Senna, *New People*

Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad*

Maggie Nelson, *Bluets*

Joshua Ferris, *The Dinner Party*

Louise Erdrich, *Future Home of the Living God*

32114 James Dorson

**Mastercolloquium Literatur/Kultur (C)**

Do 12-14 Uhr, Raum 203

## **Graduiertenschule:**

32230 Ulla Haselstein

### **Literary Theory**

Do 10-12, Villa, Lansstr. 5

32130 Ulla Haselstein/ Frank Kelleter

### **Forschungskolloquium Literatur/ Kultur**

Mi 18-20 Uhr, Raum 201

Each summer semester, the Department of Literature and the Department of Culture 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).