

Culture Department Course Offerings Winter Term 2024/25

Bachelor

Grundlagenmodul

32001 James Dorson/Jessica Gienow-Hecht/Martin Lütke

Understanding North America A

Fri 10-12 and 14-16 h, room 340 (JFKI)

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.

Orientierungsmodul Kultur - Proseminar

32100 Hannah Spahn

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

Tue 12-14 h, room 340 (JFKI)

This course provides an extended overview of American cultural history ranging from the period of British settlement in the seventeenth 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, Randolph Bourne, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Martin Luther King, Joan Didion, Barack Obama, and many others. Throughout our readings, we will explore public rhetoric as a key factor 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 Alexis Salas (Terra Visiting Professor)

Latinx Art (Vertiefung A/B)

Wed 14-16 h, room 319 (JFKI)

This introductory course in contemporary art focuses upon Latinx art produced between 1960 and 2024, with an emphasis on art from the 1990s to the present. Readings, primary source documents, lectures, and

museum visits include sociological accounts, meetings with artists and artists and theorists, and historical overviews. The course explores bodies of work by artists who experimented with materials and contextual relationships, and considers how avant-garde art confronts institutions (galleries, museums and cultural centers) and functions as protest. Using a number of theoretical frameworks (biopolitics, politics of difference, rasquachismo, relational aesthetics, repudiation of respectability politics, Third World-ism/Majority World-ism) in order to discuss political realities (migration, globalization, diaspora, crisis, and violence) we engage the works of artist collectives and artists. This is a course in active learning with communities who live and thrive in the present. As we work with contemporary art and mostly living artists, we will critically engage with methodologies in oral histories, reflect on our own relationship to these communities, Our historical scope encompasses various Civil Rights movements in order to critically scrutinize the boundaries of contemporary "American" through critical race studies. Case studies include art of the 1992 Los Angeles Riots, environmental racism, Afro-American punk queers, and indigenous photographers from throughout the Americas. How do Latinx artists allow us to understand the contemporary art world as a space of critique of both institutions and the art historical canon? How does Latinx art, like contemporary art on the whole, both participate in and stand apart from the world in which and for which it was made? Please register at: culture@jfki.fu-berlin.de with your name, matriculation number, study program, and zedat email address before lecture time starts.

32103 Max McKenna

Investigating Noir: Classic, Neo, Eco (Vertiefung A)

Thu 16-18 h, room 201 (JFKI)

Private eyes, femmes fatales, petty crooks, con artists down on their luck, gloomy non-places and brooding underworlds. The tropes of noir are easy to name, but this popular narrative genre remains difficult to define despite its century-old appeal. In this seminar, we will examine three different periods in the U.S. American noir tradition: the classic era, the neo- or postmodern revival, and the contemporary flourishing of dark and gritty crime narratives with ecological themes. Along the way, we will pay close attention to how noir stories address sociopolitical problems and how their concerns have evolved over time. We will also critically engage a number of different theories of this enduring genre as we try to figure out what noir is. Most of the primary texts in this course are narrative, and we will compare how noir functions in film vs. literary fiction. However, we will also expand our scope to different forms of culture that might be considered noir. Among the questions we will try to answer together are: what value does noir have for the present? How does it address current issues, like climate change? Who gets included and who remains excluded from this pop-culture phenomenon?

32104 Martin Lütke

The Culture of the (Long) Civil Rights Movement: From Jean Toomer's *Cane* to Beyoncé's *Cowboy Carter* (Vertiefung A/B)

Wed 12-14 h, room 201 (JFKI)

In this seminar we attempt to analyze the cultural practices, performances, discourses, and affects that emerge in the context of the "long" Civil Rights Movement. The long here designates that the master narrative of the Civil Rights Movement, which center-stages the period from the mid-1950s to the mid-to-late 1960s, is flawed and limited and serves a specific (political) purpose itself, as Jacqueline Dowd Hall argued in her essay of the same title. We will utilize an array of different source materials and some theoretical texts to inspire discussions and analyses of the cultural history of African American life in the face of anti-black violence, a racist carceral state, of persisting economic and political disenfranchisement, and of the biopolitics of racial capitalism. As these levels of an anti-black racist formation serve as driving forces of U.S. life realities since the end of slavery and to this day, they have and continue to become visible, articulated, scrutinized, and criticized in African American cultural performances from the Harlem Renaissance to Beyoncé's *Cowboy Carter* (or the Kendrick Lamar-Drake beef and, for example, the song "You're Not Like Us").

Master

Modul A

32113 Hannah Spahn

Dependence and Independence in American Culture (HS)

Thu 12-14 h, room 319 (JFKI)

The tension between independence and dependence has always been central to the meaning of the United States. In a democracy that retained the institution of slavery in the first eighty years of its existence and in a philosophical tradition that tended to emphasize the compatibility of liberty and necessity, the Declaration of Independence was written in a language of compulsion, the free exercise of religion was described as the ability to follow the "dictates" of conscience, and the emancipation of women and the enslaved was expected to "force" itself into American public opinion. In this seminar, we will explore the imbrications of independence and dependence in American debates about nationhood and international relations, slavery and race, women's and worker's rights by studying the Declaration of Independence both on its own terms and as a genre of writing. We will look at precursors such as George Mason's Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776), alternative models such as the Haitian Declaration of Independence (1804), critical variations such as the Woman's Rights Declaration at Seneca Falls (1848), racist distortions such as the White Declaration of Independence (1898), and international echoes such as the Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945). The leading scholar of Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence, Peter S. Onuf (University of Virginia), will join us on October 31 to discuss his latest research on the Declaration in his lecture "Declarations of War, Aspirations for Peace."

Modul B

32110 Frank Kelleter

Capitalism, Sectionalism, Immigration and American Nationhood (Grundlagenvorlesung)

Mon 16-19 h, room 319 (JFKI)

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"; feminist utopias; 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 should 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:** October 14.

32111 Winfried Fluck

Redefining 'America': Cultural Struggles for Recognition between the Civil War and World War I (HS)

Wed 14-16 h, room 203 (JFKI)

"Are We a Plutocracy?," W. D. Howells, the leading American realist of the so-called Gilded Age, but by no means a radical, asked in 1894 to give expression to a growing concern that America was losing control

over a new business elite that had emerged in the wake of industrialization, and that it was, in consequence, also losing control over its democracy. The term Gilded Age, now used to describe the period between the end of the Civil War and 1900, was coined by Mark Twain, the most popular American writer of the time, to highlight a public perception that America, up to this point seen as an exceptional nation, was turning increasingly materialistic and betraying its ideals. The guiding assumption of this seminar is that such far-reaching social changes produce new struggles for recognition and that culture is a realm in which these struggles take place. New cultural themes and forms developed that make the period between 1865 and the beginning of World War I one of the most interesting in American cultural history. Topics will include the cultural meaning of the American self-made man and the robber baron, realism and naturalism as two literary movements that redefined literature's approach to reality, a literature of social protest and social reform such as the muckrakers, the impact of Social Darwinism on changing views of immigration and imperialism, the attempts of women and African Americans to gain entry into the American cultural system, the frontier and the Western as redefinitions of masculinity, and the emergence of new media and popular forms that challenged the authority of the dominant cultural system. To obtain a credit, course requirements are regular attendance and a term paper on a topic of the seminar.

32112 Alexis Salas (Terra Visiting Professor)
Queer Trans Feminist Art of the Americas (HS)
Wed 12-14 h, room 319 (JFKI)

This seminar examines queer, trans, and feminist art practices of the Americas (North + Central + South America + the Caribbean) which challenge heteronormative, cis, settler colonialist, Western, and patriarchal frameworks of bodies, histories, and, ideas. Transnational and transgenerational love letters and critiques help us consider the tensions at work between allies in the destabilized discourses of gender, sexuality, and body. We survey the state of research by reviewing exhibitions, reading and meeting with theorists and practitioners, and taking inventory of archives and resources. Using tools from queer theory, Latin American and Latinx studies, women's, gender, and sexuality studies, critical race studies, as well as media and visual culture studies; we discuss works of performance art, craft, conceptual practices, fashion, public actions, music videos, and fine art. We culminate with the presentation of a research-based project. **Please register at:** culture@jfki.fu-berlin.de with your name, matriculation number, study program, and zedat email address before lecture time starts.

32113 Hannah Spahn
Dependence and Independence in American Culture (HS)
Thu 12-14 h, room 319 (JFKI)

The tension between independence and dependence has always been central to the meaning of the United States. In a democracy that retained the institution of slavery in the first eighty years of its existence and in a philosophical tradition that tended to emphasize the compatibility of liberty and necessity, the Declaration of Independence was written in a language of compulsion, the free exercise of religion was described as the ability to follow the "dictates" of conscience, and the emancipation of women and the enslaved was expected to "force" itself into American public opinion. In this seminar, we will explore the imbrications of independence and dependence in American debates about nationhood and international relations, slavery and race, women's and worker's rights by studying the Declaration of Independence both on its own terms and as a genre of writing. We will look at precursors such as George Mason's Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776), alternative models such as the Haitian Declaration of Independence (1804), critical variations such as the Woman's Rights Declaration at Seneca Falls (1848), racist distortions such as the White Declaration of Independence (1898), and international echoes such as the Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945). The leading scholar of Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence, Peter S. Onuf (University of Virginia), will join us on October 31 to discuss his latest research on the Declaration in his lecture "Declarations of War, Aspirations for Peace."

Modul C

32114 Frank Kelleter
American Modernities (Grundlagenvorlesung)
Tue 16-19 h, room 319 (JFKI)

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 new modes (and institutions) of theorizing modernity. "Modernity" itself was often perceived and propagated as a distinctly American phenomenon. 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 the New Deal; 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 should 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:** October 15.

32115 Frank Kelleter

Post-Classical Theory (HS)

Mon 14-16 h, room 319 (JFKI)

This seminar serves as "**Hauptseminar**" of Culture-**Module C** in the **Master's degree program**. We will study different types of cultural theory that have emerged after the "classical" paradigms of psychoanalysis, phenomenology, orthodox Marxism, and their poststructuralist inflections. Our introductory sessions will survey different developments from the 1970s-2000s (revisionary Marxism, field theory, actor-network-theory, systems theory). Additional topics (to be chosen and prepared by students) can include, but are not limited to, later or other paradigms such as poststructuralism (e.g., Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida), affect theory (e.g., Lauren Berlant, Kathleen Stewart, Sara Ahmed, Margaret Wetherell), post-critique and new formalism (e.g., Rita Felski, Caroline Levine), new queer theories (e.g., José Esteban Muñoz), trans theories (e.g. Jack Halberstam, Paul Preciado), media archaeology and media ecology (e.g., Lisa Gitelman, Katherine Hayles, Jay Bolter, Richard Grusin), post-cinema theories (e.g., Shane Denson), seriality studies (the JFKI's own Popular Seriality Research Unit, e.g., Kathleen Lock, Maria Sulimma, Daniel Stein, Ruth Mayer, Frank Kelleter), contemporary aesthetic theories (e.g., Sianne Ngai), critiques of postfeminism (e.g., the Judith Butler-Nancy Fraser debate, Catherine Rottenberg), black feminism and intersectionality (e.g., Combahee River Collective, Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Kimberlé Crenshaw), theories of neoliberalism (e.g., David Harvey, Wendy Brown), critical university studies (e.g., Christopher Newfield), critical whiteness studies (e.g., Claudia Rankine, David Roediger), Afropessimism and philosophies of blackness (e.g., Hortense Spillers, Saidiya Hartman, Fred Moten), black Marxism (e.g., Angela Davis, Cedric Robinson, Karen and Barbara Fields), or any other new publication or trend you would like to discuss.

Unlike Prof. Kelleter's lecture course, this seminar will be largely student-driven; more than half of our sessions will be designed and moderated by the participants. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with potential course material (theoretical paradigms and texts) *before* the first meeting, when all participants will be asked to propose and sign up for one session topic (theoretical paradigm and/or set of texts; compare Syllabus). **Registration:** All participants need to be registered via Blackboard *and* Campus Management by the first session. If you cannot register online or cannot attend the first session, please contact Prof. Kelleter before the beginning of the term (no later than October 7). Before our first meeting, all communication about and within this class will be channeled through the course's Blackboard site, so make sure you are registered there. **Organization:** Please download the **Syllabus and Course Description** (with a description of all course requirements) from the "Teaching" section of Prof. Kelleter's JFKI website or from 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 read the Syllabus/Course Description carefully!** It contains detailed information on the seminar's structure and suggestions for preparing "your" session. Note that we will finalize our class schedule in the first two meetings. This means that everyone who wants to attend this course needs to **be present in the first session** in order to sign up for a topic (student-run session) *or* have contacted Prof. Kelleter beforehand by e-mail (no later than October 7). There is no auditing this class. **First session:** October 14.

32116 Martin Lütke

Digital Games (Studies) and North American Culture (HS)

Wed 16-18 h, room 340 (JFKI)

The object of this seminar is to explore the performances, discourses, and affects that emerge in the context of digital gaming as a cultural practice in the United States (and North America). There is, of course, a longer relevant history of gaming and/as entertainment in North America of relevance, but we will mostly focus on the historical convergence of gaming/play and digitization (or digitality). How do we make sense of gaming in the discipline called (digital) games studies? What are the meaningful contexts for digital gaming (and digital games studies) and what is gaming's relationship to other media practices and media affordances? Is digital gaming primarily or originally a North American practice and if so, does that even matter? How is gaming related to late capitalism, or neoliberalism, and what are its ideological implications (if there are any)? While we will sideline some exclusively theoretical concerns, the object of this seminar is also to provide students with a language (and a set of tools) to analyze cultural and media practices such as digital gaming. After all, EA might be right: "It's in the game!"

32117 Simon Schleusener

Climate Imaginaries: Cultural Perspectives on Ecological Crisis (HS)

Thu 18-20 h, room 319 (JFKI)

In recent years, anthropogenic climate change has become one of the most hotly debated societal issues in the US, whose level of carbon emissions is among the highest in the world. Besides the various ecological, economic, and political problems surrounding the necessary transformation of carbon-driven economies, the findings of contemporary climate science also raise epistemological and cultural-studies-based questions of aesthetics and representation, cultural framing and the performative force of language. On the one hand, this "cultural" dimension of climate change concerns the way in which global warming and its devastating repercussions are reflected and discussed in fictional literature and popular media (such as cli-fi novels, disaster movies, or dystopian television series). On the other hand, it also concerns the cultural discourses and attitudes that are mobilized in the political conflict about energy transition, ecocide, and the Anthropocene. Furthermore, the material implications of climate change have motivated practitioners in the humanities to rethink some of the premises of contemporary critical discourse and cultural theory.

In this seminar, we will reflect on a wide variety of cultural responses to climate change and ecological crisis, ranging from degrowth activism and "carbon guilt" to climate denial and apocalyptic catastrophism. With regard to environmental disasters in the US such as Hurricane Katrina, we will discuss the entanglements of ecology and economy as well as race and class. Moreover, we will read and discuss central theoretical writings on climate change and the Anthropocene by authors such as Dipesh Chakrabarty, Donna Haraway, Amitav Ghosh, and McKenzie Wark. In addition, we will reflect on contemporary climate novels such as Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Ministry for the Future* (2020) and on Hollywood films such as *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012).

In order to receive full credit, students are required to write a term paper and either give a short oral presentation or take part in a "group of experts" on a selected topic in one of the sessions.

Interdisziplinäre Module

32116 Martin Lütke

Digital Games (Studies) and North American Culture (HS)

Wed 16-18 h, room 340 (JFKI)

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32118 Martin Lütke

MA-Colloquium Culture & Literature

Wed 18-20 h, room 319 (JFKI)

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 (JFKI)

This Ph.D.-course deals with theoretical and methodological issues in the study of American culture, focusing 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.