

“Modernities and Modernization in North America“

**64th Annual Conference of the German Association for American Studies
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Workshops

1) Modernity/-ies and the Teaching of North American Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

Gabriele Blell (Hannover), Uwe Kuchler (Tübingen)

2) How to Read the Literary Market: A Forum on Theories and Methods

Dustin Breitenwischer (Freiburg), Johannes Voelz (Frankfurt)

3) Digital Modernities: America and American Studies in an Algorithmic Age

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8) Queer Modernities – Queer Mobilities

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10) “I Placed a Jar in Tennessee”: The Poetics and Topographies of the Frontier in American Modernism

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Olaf Stieglitz (Köln)

1) Modernity/-ies and the Teaching of North American Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

Chairs: Gabriele Blell (Hannover), Uwe KÜchler (Tübingen)

Since the Modern Language Reform Movement at the end of the 19th century, hardly any innovation or new paradigm in the field of Foreign Language Education has dared to explicitly use the attribute 'modern'. Throughout the 20th century, though, the urge to remodel and reshape the paradigms of teaching and learning languages has seen a swifter and ever swifter turnover. As a consequence, the academic discipline *Fachdidaktik* and the school subject English have seen and pushed ahead a steady broadening and expansion of their self-conceptualization (internally and externally controlled). With the remodeling and refashioning of the educational system in a European Higher Education Area, elements of North America have been borrowed, while at the same time, the two continental systems have been pitted against each other. Most recent paradigm shifts occur with regards to inclusive education/individualization, competence-orientation/standardization as well as multilingualism in the context of the refugee situation. Against the background of dynamic global exchanges, questions need to be raised regarding the development of historical as well as recent claims to a modernization of language education paradigms, principles or methodologies:

1.) Modern(ist) Literatures and North American cultures:

- How are modern(ist) texts (the visual arts, theatre, film and Web 2.0 included) represented in curricula or reflected in teaching materials focusing on North America?
- What chances and challenges do texts of the modern era offer for the EFL classroom (e.g. new and lasting topics and debates, changed aesthetic style and genres or translingual phenomena)?
- Do texts from that era open up new or specific methodological approaches and insights?

2.) Language Education and modernization processes:

- What implications do the claims to modernity (or anti-modernity) have for the field of foreign language education (e.g. the big market of digital EduApps) ?
- Where does *Fachdidaktik* take its reformative impulses from? Which internal and which external trends to modernization can be made out? Which implications do those trends entail for American Studies, *Fachdidaktik Englisch*, and school teaching respectively?
- How does the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language, and particularly the teaching of North American Literatures, Cultures, and Languages, position themselves in the forcefield of modernities?

Speakers:

Wolfgang Hallet (Giessen):

"Teaching the Rise of the Modern Western City in Graphic Fiction"

Laurenz Volkmann (Jena):

"Teaching the Modernist American Short Story"

Heike Schäfer (Konstanz):

"Teaching Modernist Poetics from an Intermedial Perspective"

Roman Bartosch (Köln):

"We've Always Been Modern?! World Literature, Globalization, and Modern Approaches to Teaching English"

2) How to Read the Literary Market: A Forum on Theories and Methods

Chairs: Dustin Breitenwischer (Freiburg), Johannes Voelz (Frankfurt)

Approached as a modern institution, literature is historically bound to the extension of market rationality. Since the late eighteenth century, literature has been commodified, which has fundamentally shaped the handling of literary works: rather than just perused by individual readers, books are promoted, traded, consumed, and legally protected. In the past decades scholars have increasingly debated how to conceptualize this encroachment of market principles into the sphere of culture. Theorists and critics such as Pierre Bourdieu, Martha Woodmansee, and Jean-Christophe Agnew have shown that concepts like “the fine arts,” “high literature,” and “autonomous aesthetics” ought to not be conceptualized as antitheses to market forces but rather as historical responses to, and functions of, the commercialization and professionalization of culture. Thus far, many variants of the economic criticism of literature have explicitly or implicitly pursued the aim of identifying the absent (economic) causes that determine literary production and consumption, as can be seen both in the works of marketplace critics of the 1980s (e.g. Gilmore, Michaels) and in much of the scholarship of the more recent “New Economic Criticism” (e.g. Poovey, McClanahan).

Recently, however, a number of competing approaches stemming from the resurgence of the sociology of literature and the rise of book history have provided alternatives to the premises established by economic literary criticism. Among other things, this research has taken into view the roles of different actors in the literary market, such as publishing houses, agencies, and retailers. While Theisohn and Weder have pointed out that many of these critical works still rest on the opposition of aesthetic and economic value, there have also been promising attempts to overcome such binary hierarchizations (e.g. English, Griem, Leypoldt). Presupposing neither economic determinism nor a rigid distinction between art and commerce, recent scholarship has thereby returned to questions of aesthetic experience and affect, and has reconceptualized the market as a social institution irreducible to its function of monetary allocation (e.g. Felski, Sklansky).

This workshop seeks to create a critical forum on theories and methods currently employed by Americanists who work at the intersection of culture and the economy.

Speakers:

Julika Griem (Frankfurt):

“Modeling Literary Markets: Spatial and Temporal Conceptualizations”

Tim Lanzendörfer (Mainz):

“How to Read the ‘Literary’ in the Market: On Genre, Prestige, Value

Philipp Löffler (Heidelberg):

“The Longfellow-Puzzle: Book Production, Popularity, Peer Recognition”

Stefanie Müller (Frankfurt):

“‘No more little boxes’: Poetic Positionings in the Literary Field”

Florian Sedlmeier (FU Berlin):

“Howells and the Properties of Literature”

Johanna Seibert (Mainz):

“Tasteful Networking: The Early African Caribbean Press and the Literary Market in the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic”

3) Digital Modernities: America and American Studies in an Algorithmic Age

Chairs: Alexander Dunst (Paderborn), Dennis Mischke (Stuttgart)

Since the 1980s, debates around modernity and modernization in the United States have been dominated by the promise and potential threat of computation. From William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) to the current wave of mobile and wearable technology, contemporary society has imagined itself in ever closer proximity with our "intimate machines" (Sherry Turkle). Responses to the omnipresence of computers in our everyday lives range from dystopian visions of surveillance and social sorting to utopic celebrations of free knowledge or new forms of social participation. In Thomas Pynchon's *Vineland* (1990), algorithmic calculation spells the end of political resistance, a theme to which he returns in *Bleeding Edge* (2013), his latest novel set between the dot-com bubble, the events of September 11, and the paranoid abyss of the deep web. In contrast, the Obama administration has seen the promotion of Silicon Valley's high-tech companies over more established industries and a president whose youthful image stems in part from his skillful use of social media.

As technology mutates with increasing speed and cultural production moves online, academic discussion may struggle to keep the pace. Most scholars today engage in digital scholarship, without necessarily doing so consciously: personalized searches on Google or in academic databases draw on complex forms of data mining and user profiling that produce results whose genesis we rarely understand. Similarly, the promotion of novels or the success of the newest TV show depends on algorithms that drive online bookstores and streaming sites. This workshop asks how we can analyze an American culture determined *by* and obsessed *with* computation, a society in which the algorithm has become a historical actor. What is the place of literature and literary criticism in digital society? Can formats like the novel, the feature film, or the photograph provide insight into an algorithmic age? One of the signature developments in academia over the last decade has been the arrival of the digital humanities (DH). Do quantitative methods provide the answers posed to scholars by ever larger archives and born-digital culture? Can DH deliver an emancipatory critique of contemporary society – program or be programmed, as Douglas Rushkoff has warned? Or do they threaten to subsume the humanities in a digital logic that is alien to their hermeneutical tradition and facilitates "a neoliberal takeover of the university" (Allington, Brouillette & Golumbia)? We invite contributions that answer these and related questions on the intersection of algorithmic culture and criticism in any aspect of US politics, literature, and culture. Papers that focus on transnational aspects, examine earlier historical periods with the help of digital methods, or engage with questions of race, gender, disability, and class are particularly welcome.

Part I. Algorithmic Cultures in America

Ingrid Gessner (Regensburg):

"Imagining Past and Future: Augmented Reality (AR) Installations and American Studies"

Melanie Eis (Köln):

"Reinventing the Archive: Mapping the Museum of the 21st Century"

Regina Schober (Mannheim):

"Networks, Algorithms, and the Quantified Self: New Models for the Humanities?"

Part II: Algorithmic Methods in American Studies

Frank Mehring (Nijmegen):

"Mapping Late Modernism: Digitizing and Clustering New Deal and Marshall Plan Photography"

Nils Reiter and Stephanie Siewert (Stuttgart):

"Collaborative Annotation: Exploring Episodic Narration in American Short Stories"

Melvin Wevers (Utrecht):

"Beyond Criticism: A Pragmatic Approach to Computation in American Studies"

4) Transparency and Security, Surveillance and Privacy and the Modern American State

Chairs: Philipp Gassert (Mannheim), Michael Wala (Bochum)

That transparency, the people's right to know, is of pivotal importance to a participatory and pluralistic society is not a very new idea. George Washington in his Farewell Address succinctly that "[i]n proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened." Thomas Jefferson in 1802 remarked that a "clear and intelligible" account is mandatory to be able to comprehend government activities "to investigate abuses, and consequently to control them." These well-worn quotes have lost little of their relevance over the past two centuries. They are often used to support a normative understanding of transparency as an unmoderated positive factor. That transparency should have its limits, however, that not all negotiations can be open if they should achieve compromises, not all business inventions, not all methods of building weapons should be revealed to the public, and not all activities of its citizens should be know is as pivotal a factor as the other.

Controversies over transparency are closely related to the rise of the modern American state with its growing capability of collecting and protecting information. Security and intelligence services, which are a product of "modern ways" of dealing with information, have claimed that they would be better able to protect society if they had as much knowledge as possible. Transparency of the individual, the proclaimed state's right to know, to protect the U.S. is a constant challenge to civil rights and liberties. Moreover, the increasing complexity of modern society has made it necessary to constantly re-negotiate the balance between transparency and security, with the Snowden controversy only one recent example.

Thus, a right to privacy vis a vis the state's obligations to keep its citizens safe had to be re-negotiated particularly in the 20th century when the U.S. seemed to have been threatened by political radicalism on the Right and the Left. One such example of an early venture into more state-control was the passage of the Espionage Act in 1917. While press-censorship provisions were eventually crossed out, the law legalized the surveillance und indictment of allegedly seditious elements. This century-old law reverberates to this date. Both Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden were/are to stand trial under this law.

Questions of how to respond to challenges to civil rights in times perceived or real threats will be addressed by this workshop. How was an ephemeral equilibrium of security on the one side and liberty and civil rights on the other achieved, what actors took part in these negotiations, and what and who empowered them with agency? How did this relate to shifting enemies and enemy images – ethnic groups such as Japanese and German Americans, Blacks, the political Right and the political Left as well as terrorist Militias? How are these processes communicated and negotiated by politicians, academics, and activists? The workshop addresses fundamental interdisciplinary concerns. Therefore, the organizers particularly encourage scholars from cultural studies and literature to submit proposals.

Speakers:

Bernhard Sassmann:

"If OSS has any future, a public-relations setup is a necessity." The Comprehensive PR Program of the Office of Strategic Services and the Founding of the Central Intelligence Agency, 1945-1947"

Stephan Kuhl:

"The Private and the I: Detective Fiction between Romanticism and Modernism"

Eva Jobs :

"Better than fiction? Myth-making and the Profession of Intelligence"

Diana Wagner:

"A Spectacle of Simulacra': Interveillance and the Ambiguities of Mediatization in Siri Hustvedt's Novels"

Verena Diersch:

"Making our foreign partners more capable also makes NSA more capable': Collaborative Cyber Activity and the Limits of Control and Accountability"

Andreas Beer:

"The Masked Multitude: Aporia of Mosaic Mass Identities in Protests against the State of Surveillance-for-Security"

5) Modernist Generation: The Making of Those Who Make It New

Chairs: Julius Greve (Köln), Sascha Pöhlmann (München)

This workshop seeks to critically inquire into the many ways in which Modernism has come to claim the very notion of beginning for itself so enduringly that it may even seem to have rendered genuinely post-Modernist beginnings impossible. By the same token, the workshop examines how Modernists have constructed themselves as individual and collective beginners in the process. Our approach to this issue is based on the ambiguity of the term *Modernist generation*, which links artistic generation in the sense of creation or construction to the temporal and communal notion of a generation as a collective (as in the “lost generation”). In the first sense, we are interested in how Modernists frame their acts of creation as generative acts; how they distinguish themselves from earlier (Romantic or Victorian) notions of originality and creativity; how they envision, frame, or determine later forms of creative expression that surpass them; and, most importantly, how they consider their aesthetics as *materially* productive in bringing new objects (poems, paintings, photographs, films, etc.) into the world. In the second, related sense, we are interested in how Modernists create themselves as Modernists, how they insert their own artistic generation into a larger context of a transnational generation of contemporaries who engage, despite their radical difference, in a common project of beginning culture itself anew, or how they might seek to reject that context in order to disassociate themselves from that generation.

In other words: how are those who make it new made themselves (in part *by themselves* and partly by others later on), and how do they consider and construct their making (*poiesis*) as generative in a material, temporal, and communal sense? This line of inquiry is inextricably linked to the historical context and sociopolitical outlook of the artists, their art, and those who received it as such, as Modernist generation and its reception occurs in a variety of ideological frameworks that often themselves claim to be generative with regard to the present and the future (cf. the very different promises simultaneously offered by communism and fascism in the early twentieth century). *Modernist generation*, then, can be related to a utopian notion of human agency that considers humankind—the masses or the chosen few—as makers of their own world and their own future in the beginnings they construct and experiment with. It entails a fantasy of power and control that needs further critical scrutiny from a contemporary perspective.

While such Modernist generation has its beginnings in painting but may be most evident in poetry (e.g. in Pound, Williams, and Stein), it relates to any artistic production in any medium, and we explicitly invite proposals that draw on the full range of aesthetics in their arguments, regardless of whether their focus is historical or cultural. Furthermore, we are also interested in how Modernist generation has affected later attempts to generate yet again, for example in the persistence of the eminently Modernist genre of the manifesto well into the twenty-first century, or in the various post-Modernist struggles to liberate the very notion of creation, beginning, and novelty from its Modernist framework.

Speakers:

Susanne Rohr (Hamburg):

“(Why We Can) Make It New—A Pragmaticist Approach”

Andrew Gross (Göttingen):

“Generating Value: Ezra Pound and the Modernist Lyric”

Philipp Schweighauser (Basel):

“Making It New, Differently: Margaret Mead's Poetry”

Miriam Strube (Paderborn):

“A Black Generation: (Self-)Making Afro-Modernism, Pragmatist Aesthetics and the Harlem Renaissance”

Birgit Capelle (Düsseldorf):

“Generating Newness in the Flow of Immediacy: Stein, Kerouac, and the Tao of Modernist Writing”

Birte Christ (Gießen):

“‘Still Doing Nothing New With Language or Form’: Middlebrow Modernism from Smart Magazines to John Irving”

6) The Latin Side of Modernity: Identities, Power Relations, and Modernization(s) in U.S. Latina/o Culture

Chairs: Astrid Haas (Wuppertal), Alexia Schemien (Duisburg-Essen)

The notions of modernity and modernization are frequently understood as inseparably linked to the United States and have become central aspects of the nation's self-conceptualization. This panel addresses the relations and contributions of Latinas/os to ideas and processes of modernity and modernization in the United States. To what extent have they been providing their own perspectives on understandings of modernity? How is latinidad constitutive of modernization processes?

In mainstream U.S. culture, Latinas/os are often framed as ethno-cultural Other, as a group that stubbornly resists cultural assimilation—and thereby modernization. However, as Walter Dignolo argues in *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, the Western concept of modernity “is inseparable from the logic of coloniality.” He questions the “sustainable system of knowledge” that was allegedly proposed by supporters of modernism and the idea of modernity in general. Corresponding to this perspective, W.E.B. DuBois already tackled what he considered to be the problem of modernity, namely the fusion of capitalism, colonialism, and ethno-racial distinction and hierarchy. Hence, it becomes clear that power relations have played a significant role in concepts and practices of modernity and modernization.

Speaking from a traditionally marginalized, although increasingly empowered, position in U.S. society, Latina/o culture, literature, and art have critically responded to these concepts of modernity and modernization. They have questioned the Eurocentric nature of modernity as well as its connections to ongoing discourses and practices of coloniality, especially the marginalization of communities of color and their cultures in the United States. The workshop invites a critical debate on the multiple relations and contributions of Latina/o culture to ideas, discourses, and practices of modernity and modernization. It predominantly asks two questions: 1) Is, and if yes, in how far is, latinidad unmodern, anti-modern, or alter-modern? 2) What are the modernization processes that Latina/o literature, visual art, music, and other cultural practices inspire and/or engender?

Questions to be addressed may include but are not limited to:

- Latin America and Latinas/os in the USA challenging key assumptions of the Western dominant model of modernity
- Debating the notion of latinidad as a product of anti-modern nostalgia
- Latina/o art, literature, film, and culture as an expression of modern life in the USA
- Latina/o modernization processes that transform U.S. culture, e.g. by expanding literary and artistic canons, questioning notions of “America,” or by political involvement
- Latinas/os providing a substantial impetus for modernization processes in the USA

Speakers:

Univ.-Prof. Astrid Fellner (Universität des Saarlandes):

“Another Map, Another Modernity: Border Thinking in the Americas”

Dr. Markus Heide (Universität Uppsala/Schweden):

“Américo Paredes and Countercultures of Modernity”

Dr. Claudia Roesch (Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster):

“Between Isolation and Change: Mexican American Families in the 1950s Southwest”

PD Dr. Karin Ikas (Goethe Universität Frankfurt/Main):

“Latinotopia, Modernity and the Chicana/o Imaginary”

Alexia Schemien, MA (Universität Duisburg-Essen):

“Of Freeways and Mechanical Tortoises: Solitude, Urbanity, and Modernity in *Their Dogs Came with Them* and *The People of Paper*”

7) Play, Narrative, and American Modernities

Chair: Sebastian M. Herrmann, Stefan Schubert (Leipzig)

As a cultural practice, narrative is often considered uniquely suited to textualize the experiences of modernity. This workshop aims to complement such an interest in the narratives of modernity by turning to a category that, to some of its proponents, is emphatically non-narrative: play. Indeed, discussions in game studies, not least in the context of the ludology-narratology debate, have accentuated 'the ludic' as an aesthetic, symbolic, or conceptual category in its own right. Thus understood, a ludic quality—an emphasis on interaction, a focus on winning, a suspension of the 'serious,' or a loosening of constraints of meaning—can be found in many different 'texts' and in a wide array of cultural sites: in literary texts, in political rhetoric, in (pop-)cultural performances, in games and sports, or in the gamification of education. In how it subverts, counters, or disrupts the more 'orderly,' linear qualities of narrative, playfulness is a socially symbolic dimension particularly well-suited to expressing, negotiating, and cushioning the social disruptions that mark processes of modernization, and modernities as such. In this sense, play emerges as a key idiom facilitating the kinds of self-reflexivity that mark modern societies, and American modernities in particular.

Our workshop therefore aims to explore the productivity of play and playfulness as categories for discussing the distinct qualities of (American) modernities. We are interested in case studies of texts, (video) games, or performative social interactions whose relationship to modernity becomes more legible or more meaningful when engaged with an interest in their ludic qualities. Topics we envision could include:

- actual games, such as board and parlor games, that, beginning in the 19th century, made chief contributions to negotiating modernity and experiences of modernization;
- video games, understood as a decidedly post-cinematic form of interactive storytelling or as a form of simulation;
- texts emulating individual ludic dynamics, such as reality TV shows, twist films, or choose-your-own-adventure stories;
- the playfulness of metafictional narration;
- the play of signifiers in the performance of cultural identities, e.g. drag or race or class passing;
- memes, boasting, tall tales, or bullshitting (Harry G. Frankfurt) as forms of speech that suspend seriousness in an imagined contest of outbidding the 'opponent.'

Speakers:

Birgit Bauridl (Regensburg):

"Zora Neale Hurston's Cultural Performance and the Politics of Play and Place in the New York Narratives"

Katja Kanzler (Dresden):

"*Westworld*: Television's 'Quality Turn' at the Crossroads of Narrative and Gameplay"

Sören Schoppmeier (FU Berlin):

"'There Are Better Options Than This' (i.e., Pony Lasers): *Pony Island* as Countergaming"

Svenja Fehlhaber (Osnabrück):

"Critical Subversion and a Generative Vision: A Liminoid Reading of American Modernization in Nathan Asch's *The Office* (1925)"

Stefan Schubert (Leipzig):

"Playing Modernities? (Meta)Textuality, Transmediality, and Self-Reflexivity in the Video Game *Alan Wake*"

8) Queer Modernities – Queer Mobilities

Chairs: Linda Hess (Münster), Judith Rauscher (Bamberg)

“Queer modernities” and “queer mobilities” are linked in a number of crucial ways, at times to the point of being codependent, be it with regard to the works of expatriate writers or queer migrants within and to the United States, the circulation of LGBT* texts among international readerships, the movement across borders of literary and cultural influences or the reconceptualizations of sexual and gender identities as highly fluid and indeed mobile formations. The papers in this workshop are to examine these interrelationships by focusing on queer literatures and cultures prefiguring, emerging from and looking back to the art of the modernist period as a key moment in the uneven transition from classical to late modernity (Beck, Giddens, and Lash). Modernity at large, like the modernist aesthetics, is frequently defined by accelerated movement and change, the questioning of standards, and the breaking out of norms – characteristics that also stand at the center of queer theory and queer studies scholars’ research. However, as Natalie Oswin notes in her contribution on “Queer Theory” to the *Routledge Handbook of Mobilities* (2014), mobilities scholarship has largely failed to “account for ‘queer’ lives as lives in motion” (86). Similarly, even though the field of queer studies has frequently touched upon questions of migration, exile and diaspora (cf. Lubheid and Cantú, Patton and Sánchez-Eppler), few publications to date have made mobility a central focus in their analysis of North American LGBT* literatures and cultures. Our workshop hopes to address this research gap by exploring the ways in which literary texts, films, and other cultural products negotiate queer mobilities in relation to queer modernities. It asks how representations of scientific progress, technological advances, as well as social and political change contribute to an imagination of queer cultures as cultures of modernization and mobility, and in doing so seeks to contribute to the study of modernist queer literatures and cultures, their precursors and legacies, as well as to ongoing discussions around the contested concepts of ‘modernity,’ ‘modernization’ and ‘the modern’ in North American literature and culture.

Presentations might focus on but are not limited to the following topics:

- Queer cultures of im/mobility
- Modern/ist queer geographies as mobile geographies
- Uneven modernities, mobility and Queer Studies/Theory
- Queer migrancy/ globalizations and sexual citizenship
- Transnational perspectives on queer modernity/modernism
- Exile and expatriatism in queer literature and culture
- Queer migrations and the modern/ist politics of gender/race/class
- Border-crossing, transgression and modernist techniques
- Modernization and mobilization in queer literatures/cultures
- Queer mobilities, technology in modern/ist literature and culture
- The politics of mobility and the history of LGBT* rights

Part I

PD Dr. Kathy-Ann Tan (FU Berlin/ Tübingen):

“Queer Expatriation and/in Modernist Writing”

Prof. Dr. Rai Peterson (Ball State University):

“Modern by Osmosis: Margaret Anderson, Solita Solano, Janet Flanner, and Sybille Bedford's Evolution on the Page”

Dr. Katrin Horn (Erlangen-Nürnberg):

“‘What is remembered?’ – Alice B. Toklas' Queer Autobiographies”

Part II

Dr. Iris-Aya Laemmerhirt (TU Dortmund):

“‘Nothing That Ever Was Changes’? Queer Mobilities in Gore Vidal’s *The City and the Pillar* (1946)”

Florian Weinzierl (Regensburg):

“Walking the Wilde Walk – Queer Temporal Mobility in *A Man of No Importance*”

Dr. Elena Kiesling (Mannheim):

“Moving Forward, Pushing Backward – An Intersectional Analysis of Blackness as Queerness”

9) Postmodernity and the Concept of Post-fact Society

Chairs: Curd Knüpfer, Christian Lammert (FU Berlin)

During the George W. Bush years, high-ranking officials had infamously declared reality to be whatever the administration said it was. Meanwhile, factual knowledge about foreign events or the possible implications of domestic policies have become part of ever-more polarized debates. Here, facts and rationality seem to be relegated to the sidelines. The campaign and election of Donald Trump combined with the rise of populist movements in democracies worldwide have reinvigorated debates around the concept of ‘post-truth politics’ and a ‘post-fact society.’ Signifying an apparent decline of institutional expertise and the rise of increasingly subjective modes of perception and deliberation, these developments are often attributed to postmodern and relativistic modes of thought. Meanwhile, voices from the right and the left have critiqued this line of argumentation as elitist and a manifestation of the political mainstream’s loss of political and informational hegemony. From this latter perspective, an increasingly open spectrum of exchange has made competing sites of deliberation visible, thus offering more room for contention of institutionalized modes of deliberation. Others have pointed out that any concept of factuality and truth has always held a strained relationship to politics. Whichever stance one assumes in regard to these debates, it seems clear that the developments they address hold immediate implications for political institutions, political elites, publics and electorates.

We invite papers that contribute to the debates of how and whether postmodernity can be linked to the notion of post-fact politics. How do political institutions adjust and how are policy fields such as welfare, healthcare, finance or foreign policy affected by these developments? How do new forms of digital media and processes of polarization and politicization exacerbate these dynamics? Theoretical pieces might address the more fundamental question of whether or not an actual shift has actually occurred and how prevalent notions of truth and factuality may need to be reevaluated. Grappling with these questions will help us investigate the drivers, the manifestations and the consequences of ongoing debates and shifts vis-à-vis the concept of a post-fact society.

Further proposals may focus on, but need not be limited to, the following topics:

- Institutional journalism and practices of fact checking
- Emotions versus facts? Shifts in campaign and framing strategies
- Generational change and shifting modes of political engagement
- Subjectivity and trust: negatively correlated?
- New forms of populism and its drivers
- Institutional power and concepts of truth

Speakers:

Nina Yermakov Morgan (Kennesaw State University):

“America’s Post-Truth in the Age of Technological Reproduction”

Michael Oswald (Universität Passau):

“Post-Fact Politics: The Modern Producerism and its Implications on Anti-Statist Sentiments”

Curd Knüpfer (FU Berlin):

“Split Realities: Conceptualizing Overlap and Divergence in Competing Modes of News Production”

Simon Schleusener (Freie Universität Berlin):

“Post-Truth Politics: The New Right and the Postmodern Legacy”

Florian Böller (TU Kaiserslautern):

“Fake Evidence, Threat Inflation, and the Post-fact Politics of Legitimizing Wars”

Yuwei Ge (Philipps-Universität Marburg):

“Post-truth Politics and Web 2.0: Deconstructing the 2016 American Presidential Campaign”

10) "I Placed a Jar in Tennessee": The Poetics and Topographies of the Frontier in American Modernism
Chairs: Jan D. Kucharzewski, Jolene Mathieson (Hamburg)

Ever since Thoreau called for an American art "which adequately expresses this yearning for the Wild" ("Walking" 1851), the American avant-garde understood the frontier as a principal source for renewal. Making things new often implied making things wild. This dynamic can be most potently experienced in Wallace Stevens' poem "Anecdote of the Jar" (1923). By placing "a jar in Tennessee," he not only established a modernist aesthetic meant to (en)counter the romantic image emblematically captured in John Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1819), he also linked modernism to topographical conceptualizations of the rural, the regional, and the wilderness. It shouldn't be surprising, then, that Edgar Lee Masters' regionalism in his poetics of the prairie (*Spoon River Anthology* 1915) can be traced to the short-story experiments of Sherwood Anderson (*Winesburg, Ohio* 1919); or that Willa Cather's frontier novels (e.g., *O Pioneers!* 1913) explore a correlation between psychological complexity, visionary politics, and farming technology. Or that the emergence of the Western as a genre coincided with the cultural period of early modernist literature (e.g., Owen Wister, Clarence Mulford, etc.). As genres that look back to a frontier already closed, it may be tempting to view the Western and regionalist literature as rather nostalgic forms more appropriately associated with the realist and imperialist modes of earlier epochs and thus at odds with the modernist paradigm of radical innovation. Nevertheless, by taking recent trends in New Modernist Studies into account, we argue that not only is there a detectable presence of a frontier discourse in many modernist texts, American modernism needs be more thoroughly explored within the frontier experience. This workshop therefore proposes a twofold investigation of the role of the frontier in early 20th century American modernism: We invite talks that conceptualize the modernist project as an (aesthetic and/or philosophical) frontier experience in which transitions and transgressions are vital components as well as papers that discuss the representation and construction of actual frontier topographies in the American imagination. The aim of the workshop is to investigate the extent to which the presence of the frontier, both mythically and materially, informed American modernism.

Speakers:

Herwig Friedl (Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf):

"American Modernist Thinking and the Frontier-Concept: Pragmatist Explorations of Liminal Realms"

Pierre-Héli Monot (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich):

"The Frontier as *Nomos*: Carl Schmitt, George Oppen, Cornelius Castoriadis and the Poetics of Democratic Self-Limitation"

Sascha Klein (University of Cologne):

"Frontiers on the Ground and in the Sky – The Dual Production of the Wild West and the Skyscraper in 20th Century American Culture"

Jolene Mathieson (University of Hamburg):

"The Outlaw in American Modernism"

Christa Buschendorf (Goethe University Frankfurt am Main):

"Decivilized Spaces: Representations of Violence in the American Modernist Novel"

11) Narratives of Entangled Histories of Uneven Modernities

Chairs: Annika McPherson (Augsburg), Wilfried Raussert (Bielefeld), Julia Roth (Bielefeld)

The idea of America – or “Americanness” (Wallerstein/Quijano) – is closely associated with the notion of ‘newness’ and, thus, the quintessence of “modernity”. However, what is ‘new’ or ‘modern’ is usually perceived in opposition to what is ‘old’ and ‘backward’, or ‘pre-modern.’ Conceptualizations of “multiple modernities” or “alternative modernities” more often than not assume a certain symmetry and disjunction of the thus defined processes. In contrast, based on the idea of “entangled histories of uneven modernities” (Conrad/Randeria) this workshop discusses concepts, debates, narratives and popular cultural forms of expression that point at the asymmetrical access to modernity of different groups and subject positions between North American societies and other places as well as between different positions within each society. In the wake of the entanglements of Early America and the subsequent history of modernity in the Americas, such positions have included e.g. colonizers vs. colonized, enslaved vs. slave holders, white vs. non-white, or US passport holders vs. illegalized immigrants. The panel examines how debates and cultural representations such as travel accounts, slave narratives, *testimonios*, literary texts or musical practices address the hierarchizations implicit in modernity, how they negotiate, re-define, and often subvert them in the quest for alternative notions of conviviality such as e.g. “transmodernity” (Dussel) or “transamericanity” (Saldívar). The panel contributions furthermore show that these groups’ asymmetrical access requires transcending the above-mentioned oppositions, which base on modernity’s binary thinking pattern by including theories and methodologies concerned with complexity, multiplicity, and mixing. These approaches offer new insights into the uneven constructedness of modernity and its social, political, and cultural consequences. In addition, they propose potential alternative concepts of knowledge production in favor of resistance to the unevenly and asymmetrically distributed privileges contained in the idea of modernity. Simultaneously, there have been intense debates in political movements of marginalized groups as well as in academic circles between those who reject “modernity” altogether, regarding it as a concept intrinsically linked to racial and colonial oppression and searching for inspiration in premodern and traditional societies and cultures, and those who advocate for understanding the emancipation struggles of these groups as immanent part of “modernity” and progress, criticizing the search for authenticity and purity as backward and reactionary. In which ways are these debates related to concepts of essentialism, universalism, and cosmopolitanism? What do they tell us about the contradictory implications of modernity in the Americas?

Speakers:

Matti Steinitz (Bielefeld):

“African roots vs. American modernity? Debates on cultural politics within the US Black Power movement and Brazil’s *Movimento Negro*”

Rebecca Fuchs (Mainz):

“Uneven Modernities/Decolonial Temporalities: Re-Appropriating Time in North American Indigenous Writing”

Sladja Blazan (Würzburg):

“Extramoderns and their Discontent”

Saskia Hertlein (Duisburg-Essen):

“Make America New Again? Inter-American Literature and New Frontiers between Love Songs and Open Wounds”

Dennis Büscher-Ulbrich (Kiel):

“No Future for Nobody: Zombie Neoliberalism and the Real of Capital”

12) The Shape of Things to Come: Modern Visions of the Future

Chair: Sabrina Mittermeier (München/Mainz)

According to historians and cultural critics such as Fredric Jameson or Lucian Hölscher, the end of modernity also marked the death of the future. Jameson, for instance, speaks of the “impossibility of imagining Utopia” within the “cultural logic of late capitalism,” and Hölscher argues that in the second half of the 20th century, there has been an increasing focus on preserving the – social, economic, ecological – status quo. The end of modernity for the US (as many claimed, a new era of post-modernity), was ushered in by a sense of disillusionment in the 1970s: following the tumultuous 1960s, the realization had set in that not even man on the moon would change anything about the seemingly bleak circumstances.

By contrast, during modern times new, radically different futures seemed alive and well. The era of modernity reached a high point at the turn of the century, when technological inventions such as electricity changed American society at its core, and the future suddenly seemed almost within one’s reach. Such progressivist thinking also inspired the arts: the imaginations of European writers like H.G. Wells and Jules Verne grasped the American mind, and the new medium of film further pushed the developing genre of “science-fiction.” Utopian ideas were also integral to modern political thinking: Karl Marx’s vision of a Communist state and philosophers following his theory equally shaped modernity and modernist thought. One thing seems therefore clear: how the Western world in general, and Americans in particular, have dealt with what is yet to come has continued to shape life in modernity more than in any other period. This panel thus aims to ask the following questions:

- How have visions of the future shaped modernity, and how have modernist visions of the future continued to inspire us until today?
- How has a dialogue between North America and Europe informed the thinking about the future in the Western world?
- What role(s) did exclusions based on race, class, and gender play in the development of modern visions of the future?
- What relevance does the idea of progress or a progressivist idea of history hold for modernity?
- What role has popular culture played in perpetuating futuristic thinking – be it literary fiction, film, television, music, world’s fairs, or even theme parks?
- What are the parallels and differences between the utopian and the dystopian?
- What ideological background comes with them, and how have they set political agendas in modernity?

Speakers:

Lisa Meinecke, M.A. (LMU München):

“The Golden Age of Automata and the Origins of Modern Robotics”

Florian Groß, M.A. (Leibniz Universität Hannover):

“The Future That Was Lost: Revisiting the New in the 1939 and 1964 World’s Fairs”

Dr. Florian Freitag (JGU Mainz):

“‘The Future That Never Was Is Finally Here’: Revisiting Modern Futures in Disney’s Tomorrowlands”

Dr. Torsten Kathke (JGU Mainz/MPI Köln):

“Futures Imperfect: Cognate Temporalities and Productive Dystopias in U.S. Non-Fiction Bestsellers, 1970–1990”

Dr. Christian Klöckner (Universität Bonn/ Barnard College, Columbia University)

“‘Find out what the future will cost you’: Finance’s Postapocalyptic Futures in Nathaniel Rich’s Odds Against Tomorrow”

Jens Temmen, M.A. (Universität Potsdam):

“Envisioning the Future as an Obscured Past: Imaginings of Mars Colonization and the Discourses of 19th Century U.S. Pacific Imperialism”

13) American Modernism Between Technology and Ecology

Chairs: Timo Müller (Regensburg), Clemens Spahr (Mainz)

This workshop seeks to address the links between technology and ecology in American modernism. It was in the early twentieth century, after all, that the belief in technological and economic progress began to be opposed by a profound, self-reflexive critique of modernity. The multiple ways in which modernity can be preserved without sacrificing ecology on the altar of technological advancement and economic profit are addressed by modernist works ranging from Crane's *The Bridge* to Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and Toomer's *Cane*. These forms of cultural critique are by no means attempts to discard the idea of modernity but rather, in Habermas's sense, an attempt to save the project of modernity from its detrimental sides.

Although the last two decades have seen a steady increase in scholarship on the technological dimensions of American modernist writing, these studies have isolated technology from economic and ecological perspectives. Meanwhile, scholarship on the ecological dimension of American modernism has remained limited in scope and number. It is the purpose of our workshop to bring debates on technology and the environment in American modernism together and to strengthen the ecological perspective in modernist literature and culture studies. We are interested in how modernist literature and culture investigate, propagate, or critique the role of technology and its environmental consequences. Paper topics might address but are not limited to the following questions:

- How do modernist literary and cultural texts stage the intersections between technology and nature? Do they complicate this relationship in ways that move beyond simplistic oppositions?
- Are modernist assessments of technology's ecological role significantly different from earlier conceptions? Do they reflect a thoroughly modernized era in which these earlier conceptions no longer hold?
- What is the economic rationale underlying representations of nature and technology in modernist literary and cultural texts? Is there an underlying systemic affirmation or critique of the economic conditions enabling these conceptions?
- How do different literary and cultural genres use their specific modes of expression to address the technological and environmental challenges of modernity?

Speakers:

Maximilian Meinhardt (Mainz):

"Mechanical Perfectibility: Modern Photography and the Techno-Ecological Dynamics of *The Bridge*"

Anna Flügge (Munich):

"After Nature: Fitzgerald's New World"

Martin Holtz (Greifswald):

"The Relationship between Nature and Technology in Three New Deal Documentaries: *The Plow that Broke the Plains*, *The River*, and *The City*"

Connor Pitetti (Marburg/Stony Brook):

"'Between two and three each morning it rains for exactly one hour': Technology, Ecology, and History in Hugo Gernsback's Pulp Modernism"

Christopher Schliephake (Augsburg):

"Simia et/ex machina: King Kong and the Ecological Imagination in Modern Culture"

Susanneh Bieber (Texas A&M):

"Towards an Ecology of Art: Claes Oldenburg's Hole and the Lower Manhattan Expressway"

14) Digitalization and the Future of Work

Chairs: Julia Püschel, Boris Vormann (Berlin)

Technological change has consistently and profoundly reshaped labor markets, at least since the first industrial revolution. With the beginning of the 21st century, we are witnessing yet another fundamental change in the way we produce, which will significantly alter our lives, most directly through the way we work. Computers and human beings are increasingly intertwined in ever more complex production processes. Over the last 30 years, computers have substituted for a number of jobs, ranging from manufacturing to the service sector. With the recent proliferation of digital data ('big data') the scope of what computers can do has expanded once again. The Fourth Industrial Revolution has turned 'Just-in-Time' from a production technique to a way of life, profoundly reorganizing the economic structure, political arrangements and urban realities of the United States. Anecdotal evidence on the increasing range of occupations that are prone to computerization abound and some researchers predict 47 percent of all US employment to be at risk of computerization. However, the various statements differ considerably in terms of the range of occupations that are affected and various questions with respect to the future of work remain open.

This workshop examines the impact of technological modernization on labor markets and what these changes imply on a socio-economic, political and geographical level. The increasing availability of digital data and high speed communication technologies opened up new opportunities for when, where, by whom and how jobs can be done. Which effects will these developments have on the organization of the work environment in terms of time (e.g. flexibilization) and space (e.g. offshoring)? The workshop looks back at how technological change has shaped the employment relationship in the United States - and, in comparison, in Europe - to extrapolate conclusions for the future of work and thereby analyzes the past, present, and future of this complex relationship.

These basic considerations raise a series of questions which serve as the conceptual framework for the workshop: What social implications does digitalization have? How does the educational system have to adapt? Is there a new need for a basic income due to 'technological unemployment' as Keynes already suggested in the first half of the 20th century? Which kinds of occupations and workers' skills have been the most susceptible to computerization over the last decade? Will we experience a replacement of high-skilled labor as in the 19th century, a threat to low-skilled labor as in the middle of the 20th century, a polarization of the labor market as in the last decades of the 20th century? Are new forms of work going to emerge (e.g. crowdworking)? How does the future of work change the way we live? What are the implications on family life and health? What does this change imply for the smart city of the future? And how would either of these developments impact the already frail social cohesion of the United States as well as the democratic quality of its political institutions?

Speakers:

Gina Glock (Freie Universität Berlin):

"Job Polarization in the US and Germany: Technology-Based, but Human Capital Driven?"

Christian Güse (Freie Universität Berlin):

"Technology vs Unions? The role of contingent work in sustaining supply networks"

Leonie Katharina Reher (Freie Universität Berlin):

"Can an unconditional basic income take away our fear of the future of work?"

Juliana Strätz (Uni Potsdam):

"Virtual Labor and the Rematerialization of Bodies"

15) Doing Modernity – American Bodies & Subjects in the Early Twentieth Century

Olaf Stieglitz (Köln)

In recent years, cultural historians have increasingly questioned the still popular idea of the United States as the very materialization of symbolic modernity. Instead of identifying 'America' as the prototypical modern nation, they have discussed ideas about multiple modernities (Eisenstadt) or fragmented modernities (Welskopp/Lessoft) that underlined the plurality and unevenness of 'modernizing' developments, both within the US and in relation to other countries or world regions. Moreover, scholars have also pushed for historicizing modernity as an unstable, contested period characterized by constant negotiations and conflicts about the meanings and consequences of change for different groups with varying amounts of social and cultural capital. The idea of America-as-modernity has been substituted by more nuanced and complex interpretations.

Against this backdrop, the panel wants to analyze the many contested debates about 'modern life' and its meanings during the period from about 1900 to the 1940s from the perspective of the history of the body. During this time, the emergence of modern subjects increasingly became inseparable from establishing, disseminating, and negotiating ideas about modern bodies, how they were supposed to look like, what they were supposed to do, or how they were supposed to react and adapt to a rapidly changing environment. Debates centered on nutrition and health, fitness and hygiene, sexuality and eugenics and were highly influential in fragmenting the notion of modernity along lines of class, race, ethnicity, gender, age, or (dis)ability. Displaying and practicing forms of 'modern' corporeality became crucial for signifying belonging to the United States' political body.

The guiding question of this workshop will be how Americans were actually 'doing modernity' during the first decades of the 20th century. We will ask how their bodies performed ideas about modern life or how their actions questioned, undermined, resisted or queered new physical demands and attributions, as well as how processes of subjectivation and (non-)identification were bound or related to corporeal practices. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- practices of subjectivation or (non-)identification, such as (autobiographical) writing
- practices related to aspects of food, nutrition, and diet
- practices of doing or watching sports, or of engaging in fitness culture
- health related practices, or those dealing with matters of hygiene or eugenics
- exploring or challenging changed opportunities for sexuality
- taking part in, challenging, or being excluded from entertainment and recreation
- economic practices of modern labor or (self-)financing
- doing politics and/or religion as practices of negotiating modernity

Speakers:

Johanna Heil (Marburg):

"From Organic Movement to Technique: Forging Bodies in American Modern Dance"

Björn Klein (Göttingen):

"Writing at the Margin - Fragmented Identities in New York around 1900"

Helena Körner (Tübingen):

"'There is no end to the round of use one can make of a paper': Doing Socialism in the 1900s"

Felix Krämer (Erfurt):

"Indebted Bodies – Struggling for Modern Interest during the 1920s"

Martin Lütke (Berlin):

"American Bell and American Bodies: Making and Marketing the Telephonic Body in the Early 20th Century"

Nina Mackert (Erfurt):

"Counting Calories, Becoming Able – Making Modern Bodies and Selves"