

**Workshops 66th Annual Meeting of the GAAS,
Hamburg, June 13-15, 2019: “U.S. American Culture as Popular Culture”**

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- 10. Pop Culture Goes Business: Self-Help, Advice, the Motivational Industry, and Positive Psychology**
Kristina Graaff, Martin Klepper, Simon Rienäcker (Berlin)
- 11. “This Is America”: Music, Video, and Medial Entanglement in the Popular**
Julius Greve (Oldenburg), Martin Lütke (FU Berlin)
- 12. Lyric Poetry as Popular Culture**
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- 13. Forms, Features, Facets: Genre in American Popular Culture**
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- 14. Pop Academics: The Public Intellectual in the American Imagination**
Rieke Jordan (Frankfurt), Cord-Heinrich Plinke (University of Southern California)

15. Popular Culture(s) in the Classroom

Uwe Kuchler (Tübingen), Laurenz Volkmann (Jena)

16. Religion and American Popular Culture

Sabrina Mittermeier (Independent Scholar), Michael Hochgeschwender (Munich)

17. Popular Culture and ‘Knowledge from Below’

Katharina Motyl (Mannheim), Katrin Horn (Bayreuth)

18. #Feminism: The Fourth Wave

Maria Verena Peters (FernUniversität Hagen)

19. Black Womanhood in Popular Culture

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20. Rightwing POPulism: Remapping Popular Culture in the Age of Trump and the Alt-Right

Simon Schleusener, Simon Strick (FU Berlin)

1. Video Games and the Politics of Popular Culture

Nathalie Aghoro (Eichstätt), Mahshid Mayar (Bielefeld), Dietmar Meinel (Duisburg-Essen), Stefan Schubert (Leipzig)

In the last decade, the video game industry surpassed both the film and the music industries in terms of revenue. Whether on personal computers, gaming consoles, handheld devices, or mobile phones, video games are the most popular form of entertainment in the twenty-first century. They are entangled in contemporary convergence cultures as they effectively combine narrative, audiovisual, technological, interactive, and ludic elements.

Video games prompt subjects to emulate, question, and develop social practices and cultural norms within game environments that register ideological, political, and popular trends. As an integral part of US popular culture, they challenge paradigms of cultural studies, such as strict separations of production and ('active' or 'passive') consumption, and they complicate the notion of *the popular* in its capacity to exceed its definition as cultural mainstream.

The present panel is thus interested in examining video games as popular cultural productions from a variety of perspectives, including cultural studies, literary studies, history, politics, sociology, critical race theory, or gender studies. Seeking to engage critically with the exchange between gaming and culture—what Muriel and Crawford (2018) identify as “video game culture, video games in culture, and video games as culture” (5)—as well as in the complex, mostly masked commerce between gaming, politics, and the popular in the neoliberal age, we understand the interplay between politics, gaming, and the popular along three different dimensions of 'politics' in/of video games: 1) a game's direct engagement with historical or political themes; 2) the larger cultural and political reception of games; and 3) the 'textual politics' of games themselves. Overall, we aim to explore the contact zones between politics and video games in order to refine our understanding of contemporary US popular culture and to map the interconnectedness of American studies and games as a popular medium.

Possible topics may include:

- mediations of historical events or political agendas and ideologies in video games;
- cultural and political discourses or movements surrounding games, such as the anti-feminist 'gamergate' controversy;
- 'textual politics' of video games, e.g. how they relate to questions of racialization, class, gender, sexuality, or (dis)ability;
- how games engage with old and emerging American myths in the digital space;
- video games as transnational phenomena and the place they secure for US popular culture in the global consumer market.

Confirmed Speakers

Prof. Dr. Randi Gunzenhäuser, “‘Playing in the Dark’: Whiteness in Video Games” (TU Dortmund)

Prof. Dr. Sascha Pöhlmann, “Ludic Populism and its Unpopular Subversion” (University of Konstanz)

Please send your paper proposal of no more than 300 words and a short biographical note to

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2. Popularization of a Mysterious Other: American Orientalism, Mystic Transcendentalism and Islamic Americanism in American Popular Culture

Mahmoud Arghavan (Independent Scholar), Elena Furlanetto (Duisburg-Essen)

When referencing productive encounters between Islamic literary cultures and American transcendentalists, Wai Chee Dimock argues that “‘American’ literature is quite often a shorthand, a simplified name for a much more complex tangle of relations. Rather than being a discrete entity, it is better seen as a crisscrossing set of pathways, open-ended and ever multiplying, weaving in and out of other geographies, other languages and cultures” (*Through Other Continents* 3); the same argument can be applied to American popular culture, as diversely inspired and globally consumed. Interactions between Islam and American culture have been a recurrent phenomenon, as demonstrated by Emerson’s Hafiz-inspired poetry, Thoreau’s borrowings from Attar, Whitman’s Rumi-esque verses, conversions of African Americans to Islam as a practice of resistance, the emergence of Muslim rappers, and the overwhelming literary success of thirteenth-century poet Rumi.

This panel invites scholars to engage with adaptations, popularizations, remediations, and constructions of Islam in American popular culture, and investigate in what ways Islam has been used to sustain or question hegemonic narratives of Americanness. Popularizations of Islam are routinely celebrated for their hybridizing power, or as a means to further cultural dialogue, as much as critiqued for resulting in appropriations and distortions. We welcome contributions about, but not limited to:

- American Islam(s) in music, television, Hollywood cinema, comics, fashion, art, etc.;
- Americanization and American popular knowledge of Islam;
- Islam in video games and/or digital media;
- Islamophobia and American populism;
- American reception of Sufism as a mystical form of Islam;
- The “Rumi phenomenon”;
- Islam as a site of resistance/subversion;

- Islam and American sub- and countercultures;
- African American conversions to Islam in the context of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements.

Confirmed Speakers

Dr. Verena Laschinger, Erfurt University :“Djinns in America: Queer Fantastic and Muslim Futurism in *Netherland* (2008), *Halal Pork* (2011), and *American Gods* (2017)”

Dr. Des. Mahshid Mayar, Bielefeld University: “Muslim Massacre and Other Titles: Islam and Muslims in the Video Game Industry”

Organizers

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3. Indigenous Popular Culture in North America

Kristina Baudemann (Flensburg) and Svetlana Seibel (Saarbrücken)

Indigenous popular culture might well be called one of the fastest growing fields of cultural production in North America. Throughout the past few years, it has emerged as a distinct and vibrant field of artistic innovation and creative dialogue that harnesses the affective power of popular tropes and narratives. The rise of Indigenous popular culture is accompanied by the growth of cultural hubs—from Indigenous comic book presses to the Indigenous Comic Con—that help Indigenous creators navigate the challenges of the global market. Indigenous authors, artists, and new media practitioners thus assert their participation in North American pop-cultural scenes while expressing a profound suspicion of the commodification of Indigeneity. Their works address the dangers of a recolonization of cultural materials through a turn to mass-marketed forms of creative expression and acknowledge the potentials (and pitfalls) of what Henry Jenkins termed “convergence culture,” the blurring of distinct borderlines between consumers and producers and the ensuing disintegration of centralized—and culturally streamlined—markets. Indigenous scholars moreover formulate distinct terminologies for an informed and culturally-sensitive critical engagement with it: Grace Dillon’s (Anishinaabe) concept of “Indigenous Futurisms” (*Walking the Clouds*, 2012) has come to be understood as an umbrella term for those Indigenous pop-cultural practices that are dedicated to imagining alternative worlds and fantastic futures in different genres (e.g. science fictions and other forms of the fantastic) and media (podcasts, graphic novels, comic books, new media arts, etc.).

This workshop invites participants to engage in a dialogue about the heterogeneous forms of Indigenous popular culture in North America. Papers may include but are not limited to the following:

- Indigenous reflections on, and collages of, US pop-cultural tropes

- Indigenous pop cultural forums and markets
- Indigenous Futurisms, from genre literatures to protest movements
- Native Pop and Post-Pop
- Indigenous digital and social media
- Indigenous consumer goods

Confirmed Speakers

Grace Dillon (Portland State University), “Why Indigenous Futurisms Matter”

Sarah Henzi (Université de Montréal), “Indigenous ‘WonderWorks’: Alternative Genres, Languages, and Resurgence”

To submit a proposal please send an abstract (250-300 words) and a short bio to
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4. The Big City as the Small Screen: Negotiating Popular Culture's Scripts of Urbanity

Barbara Buchenau, Maria Sulimma (Duisburg-Essen)

Beyond representations of urban spaces within popular culture (“the big city on the small screen”), this panel interrogates how cities themselves become cultural phenomena (“the small screen as access to the big city”). As a form of mass-oriented, industrialized popular culture, the small frame of the mass media condenses the largeness of the urban metropolis. The yellow press in the 19th century, television series, music clips, or games played in hand-held devices are examples of such scripted condensations. This functioning of the big city as a small screen arguably follows an architectural definition of a screen as “a facade that masks the form or dimensions of the building behind it by exceeding it in height or width” (OED, “screen”). Screens thus both mask and distort the dimensions and forms of urban interactions.

Examples range from sensationalist city mysteries published cheaply in serialized periodicals in the antebellum period to televisual representations such as *Sex and The City* (HBO, 1998-2004) or *Broad City* (Comedy Central, 2014-). Popular culture serves, as television historian Lynn Spigel argues, to “level class and ethnic differences in order to produce a homogenous publica,” but this leveling has stark limits (*Make Room for TV*, 1992, 6) and it invites constant challenges. This panel encourages papers to draw on urban American studies' notion of the city script as a descriptive as well as prescriptive protocol of and for urban cultural production (Buchenau/Gurr 2018). It will explore how the multiple screens of popular culture negotiate the tensions between the grand city, the everyday life within urban spaces, and the supposed lowness of its own media-specific affordances.

Confirmed Speakers

Stephanie Leigh Batiste (University of California, Santa Barbara): Off Pop: Black Urban Culture and the Possibility of Transformation

Lisanna Wiele (Universität Siegen): Transgression Inscribed – The City Mysteries’ “Queer” Urbanity

Please send a 300-word abstract as well as a short biographical note to

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5. 50 Years of Stonewall: The LGBTIQ* Movement and Popular Culture from 1969 to 2019

Michael Bucher (Independent Scholar), Simon Dickel (Essen)

Our conference marks the fiftieth anniversary of the riots provoked by a police raid at New York City’s *Stonewall Inn* in the early hours of June 28, 1969, and that held sway over Christopher Street for the subsequent days. The Stonewall Riots have since become a foundational mythos for the Gay Liberation Movement, which tends to separate queer history in the United States into an oppressed period before and a liberated one after. Poet Allen Ginsberg, who visited Christopher Street during the riots, expressed this experience that gave rise to the slogan “gay power”: “You know, the guys there were so beautiful – they’ve lost that wounded look that fags all had 10 years ago.” Coming Out of the closet, a political strategy to effectively counter the plea of being blackmailable, emerged at the same time, and its success corroborates the impression of a paradigm shift in the culture. Stonewall and the Gay Liberation Movement are key parts of “the 60s,” the decade that fundamentally shaped popular culture. Hence, the transformative effect of Gay Liberation and the many facets of queer culture throughout these last five decades warrant closer observation, one year after the fifty-year anniversary celebrations of 1968. Stonewall and queer culture had a fundamental influence on all the disciplines that comprise American Studies. We want to chart some of this change and invite papers that range over the entire field of American Studies, papers that analyze how the history of Stonewall has been written, how the riots are remembered both within academia and within the movement, and how the repercussions of this moment of unsettling can still be felt in popular culture.

Possible topics could include but are not limited to

- Stonewall's significance for American Studies
- the politics of memory
- Stonewall’s transnational impact
- Continuities of gay culture from before the 1960s

- Gay Liberation and intersectionalities: Black Power, the Women's Movement, and the Disability Rights Movement
- the frictions between the various fractions, the L, the G, the B, the T, the I, the Q, and the * of the movement
- developments in literature, cinema and television
- the impact of zines, games, blogs, comics, and social media
- the AIDS crisis and AIDS activism
- emancipation and conservative backlash
- temporalities, ageing, and intergenerational dialogue

Confirmed speakers:

Dr. Evangelia Kindinger (Bochum): "We're all really exactly the same" – Queer Healing and Sentimentality in Netflix' *Queer Eye*

Prof. Dr. em. Norbert Finzsch (Köln): "The Gay Movement's Transhistory. On the Myth of Transgender Stonewall"

Organizers:

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6. Temporalities of Popular Culture

Birgit Däwes (Flensburg), Ingrid Gessner (PH Vorarlberg)

According to Fredric Jameson's famous dictum, postmodernity has brought forth a substantial change (if not "the end," as he provocatively claimed in 2003) of temporality, "a volatilization of temporality, a dissolution of past and future alike, a kind of contemporary imprisonment in the present" (2015: 120). This has been particularly manifest in popular culture, and in turn, popular culture also contributes to and constructs collective perceptions of temporality. From the narrative time structures of television series such as *24* or *Westworld* to Douglas Gordon's video installation *24 Hour Psycho*, to time-based media art, such as Ai Weiwei's *258 Fake* (2011), or the MoMA's *Forever Now* exhibition (2014-15), popular culture recreates powerful real and imaginary spaces of past and future.

We invite presentations that examine how temporality and various popular genres are mutually constitutive. The workshop seeks to explore representations of time as constructed in popular North American literary and visual genres as well as digital and material culture, such as serial narratives, graphic novels, memorials, films, video games and other computer-based technologies. How exactly have notions and narrative/visual/digital structures of time changed in a culture of 24/7 availabilities? Do we live in a permanent present, or in serial moments of what Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht has—with regard to sports events—termed "focused intensity"?

Possible topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- the relations between popular culture and dynamic temporal practices across different genres
- the formation of the past, memory, and/or the future in popular culture
- narrative structures of time in contemporary TV series or film
- alternative temporalities in popular culture
- gendered and queer popular pasts and futures
- popular historical spaces and places and/or (imagined) spaces of futurity
- new sites/settings of the past and the future in contemporary literary, visual and digital texts
- utopian and dystopian temporalities

Confirmed Speakers

Brigitte Georgi-Findlay (TU Dresden),

"Visions of the Past, Politics of the Present: The Temporalities of Western Series"

Christina Meyer (Universität Hamburg),

"Time Frames - Framing Time in Comics"

Please send 250-word abstracts and a CV to:

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7. The Popular Culture of U.S. Settler Colonialism

René Dietrich (Mainz), Jens Temmen (Potsdam)

Settler colonialism as a structure of Euro-American invasion and Indigenous dispossession is foundational to the U.S. Likewise, U.S. popular imaginaries constantly (re)produce narratives of settler colonial triumphalism dominated by tropes of settler conquest and passive Indigenous vanishing. Our workshop maintains that any critical engagement with popular culture must be attentive to these dynamics. It is interested in the ways that popular culture serves as an avenue through which U.S. settler colonialism has been affirmed, perpetuated, and re-produced across different North American spaces, Indigenous contexts, and different phases of U.S. imperial expansion. Importantly, this is not limited to the popular constructions of “Indianness” or the staging of settler-Indigenous conflict in the (Neo)Western genre. Instead, it extends to representations that normalize settler structures by eclipsing any reference to Indigenous sovereignty from the popular imaginaries of land, water, mobility, modernization, urbanization, race, ethnicity, multiculturalism, gender, and sexuality. At the same time, this unacknowledged erasure of Indigeneity allows settlers to fill this ostensibly vacant position through the process of “settler indigenization” (Lorenzo Veracini). In this sense, our workshop also asks how settler colonial logics are woven into the fabric of U.S. popular culture in ways that regularly remain unrecognized as such. Finally, we want to ask for the potential of native and non-native popular cultural representations to deconstruct these misrepresentations and to unsettle U.S. popular culture in its foundational colonial premises.

Our workshop invites proposals on topics including but not limited to:

- Settler colonial popular cultures and marketing of essentialized “Indianness”
- The Western as the classic trans/national popular settler genre and its revisions
- Settler tropes and their connection to genres of travel, mobility, and futurity
- Transnational mediations of U.S. settler colonial popular culture
- Popular modes and tropes of “settler indigenization”
- Race, inclusive multicultural liberalism, and settler colonial popular culture
- Gender, sexuality, and settler colonialism in popular culture
- “Alternative” popular cultures and settler colonialism
- Popular culture, resistance to settler colonialism, and co-optation

Confirmed Speakers

Dr. Marianne Kongerslev (Aalborg U, Denmark): The Ozarks as Wild West: Tribal Traces and Settler Myths in U.S. Popular Culture

Dr. Ho'esta Mo'e'hahne (Portland State U, USA): African-Diasporic Hip-Hop and Settler Colonialism in U.S. Pop Culture: "Trap" Music, Indigenous Play, and the Afterlives of the Inter-Imperial "Fur Trades" in North America

Short paper proposals (up to 300 words) and a brief bio should be sent to dietricr@uni-mainz.de and jtemmen@uni-potsdam.de

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8. Insult & Injury: American Comedy as a Platform of Social Critique

Lea Espinoza Garrido (Wuppertal), Linda Heß (Frankfurt)

While comedy as a core element of American popular culture has always served as a mode of critique and political expression, several events in the 21st century have propelled an explosive diversification of this mode. In light of the 2016 presidential election, its function now seems to have changed: transcending mere entertainment (if it ever was just that) and highlighting comedy's corrective moment, Stephen Colbert and others have educated, provided "real" news, and performed moralization and exhortation. However, scholars such as Holm (2018) caution against assuming that "texts that are not only produced and distributed by major media companies, but also celebrated by institutionally powerful taste-makers and gate-keepers are somehow representative of an authentic and profound opposition to the status quo in any straightforward way" (29). Conversely, Krefting (2014) convincingly presents "charged humor" as an effective model to "represent the underrepresented, to empower and affirm marginalized communities, and to edify and mobilize [...] audiences" (21).

In light of such considerations, how should we interpret current forms of comedy, particularly post-2016? If the lines of entertainment and politics have become increasingly blurred, does this provoke resistance or complacency? And how do comedians negotiate their own role in

perpetuating problematic discourses on politics and power?

This workshop seeks contributions that discuss the particular importance of comedy and humor in contemporary American pop culture, as well as the risks of wholesale equations of entertainment with political activism. We are interested in explorations of comedy and humor both as sense-making tools and means of critique in the realms of race, gender, class, disability, age, activism, and more.

Confirmed Speakers

PD Dr. Tom Clark (Frankfurt) | “The Stand-Up Comedian as Public Intellectual. A Case Study of Doug Stanhope”

Dr. Nele Sawallisch (Mainz) | “National (Dis)Union, Civil Religion, and *The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*”

Please send a 250-word abstract and a short biographical statement to:

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9. Images of War: U.S. Popular Culture as Militainment

Katharina Gerund (Erlangen-Nürnberg), Mareike Spychala (Bamberg)

U.S.-American popular culture can be a powerful means of war propaganda, but it can also be a vehicle for protest and dissent. Hollywood films like *The Green Berets* (1968) and TV shows like *Army Wives* (2007-2013) have been supported by the Department of Defense to bolster U.S. war efforts and generate public support for the troops. Beyond such obvious connections, the entertainment industry is often complicit with neo-imperial military agendas and even so-called anti-war films like *Apocalypse Now* (1979) or *Black Hawk Down* (2001) run the risk of glorifying war. War is staged as entertainment across genres but, as Roger Stahl argues, new and interactive media formats (video games, blogs, etc.) especially facilitate the rise of “militainment” and construct “virtual citizen-soldiers.” U.S. popular culture is thus enmeshed in processes of militarization and it shapes dominant narratives, public opinion, and public feelings on U.S. wars and military interventions.

This panel scrutinizes images of war in U.S. popular culture, their political ramifications, cultural work, and transnational resonances. We invite contributions that interrogate representations of war in various genres and media (films, video games, music, blogs, etc.). These may address war propaganda, analyze the (gendered and racialized) constructions of patriotism, heroism, and citizenship in narratives of war, and/or probe the possibilities and limits of anti-war activism and protest within popular culture.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Changing representations of war and the U.S. Military in visual media
- Militainment and/or anti-war criticism in the age of social media
- Video games and the “virtual citizen-soldier”
- Gender/sexuality/race/class and the image of the soldier
- Depictions of the home front and the front line
- Representations of war in life writing
- (Anti-)war films and the “military-industrial-entertainment complex”
- Posters, pamphlets, popular songs: forms and genres of war propaganda

Confirmed Speakers

Dr. Tatiana Prorokova (Universität Wien): “Child Soldiers in Transatlantic Graphic Narratives of War”

Dr. Frank Usbeck (Staatliche Ethnographische Sammlungen Sachsen): “*Warrior or Soldier?* Re-Imagining Native American Traditions in Discourses on War and Citizenship”

Please send paper proposals (max. 500 words) along with a short CV to both Katharina Gerund (katharina.gerund@fau.de) and Mareike Spychala (mareike.spychala@uni-bamberg.de).

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10. Pop Culture Goes Business: Self-Help, Advice, the Motivational Industry, and Positive Psychology

Kristina Graaff, Martin Klepper, Simon Rienäcker (Berlin)

This workshop investigates self-help as a form of popular culture. First circulated via mass media during the interwar years it remains an influential and lucrative cultural form to this day. Self-help was able to sustain itself by adjusting its content and form to each era's respective

media outlets: books, lectures, newspaper columns, call-in radio shows, TV church channels, YouTube videos, and smartphone apps, etc. Self-help has produced its own classics such as Dale Carnegie, Napoleon Hill, or Norman Vincent Peale (who influenced Richard Nixon and Donald Trump), and also pop stars like Dr. Phil and Oprah Winfrey.

Self-help's beginnings can be traced to eighteenth-century Puritanism and Scottish Common Sense philosophy. Since then it has transformed from ascetic and production-oriented paradigm, via New Thought and Christian Science, into a consumption-oriented, motivational gospel of self-improvement. It operates with promises of happiness and positive thinking. The market for self-help targets both leisure and work. It merges work and life, popular practices, and business through eventization, branding, and marketing. Its ideologies of individuality, self-reliance, and self-improvement bridge professional and private life. At the same time, self-help embeds the individual safely in a shared culture and larger community of achievers.

Self-help seemingly enhances lifestyles, products, and brands by merging popular and corporate culture—in the words of Apple: “We are here to enrich lives, to help dreamers become doers.” Products are sold as gifts for one's life. Self-help is mass-mediated and practice-oriented, ready to be mass-consumed, and vested with the potential to streamline individual behavior. Self-help's alleged function is mobilizing and future-oriented. As psychological advice, it promises to help the individual adapt to increasingly complex social and economic demands. Simultaneously, self-help offers to navigate changing cultural economies and to keep pace with technological innovations.

Further possible topics for papers:

- Negotiations of self-help in literature (Shteyngart, Coupland, etc.)
- The creative writing industry
- The history of self-help
- Religion and self-help as gospel (televangelists, megachurches, Positive Christianity)
- Self-therapy (self-care, coaching, personal healing, nutrition, etc.)
- Multilevel marketing (MLM): the tupperware marketing system
- Dis/ability studies and self-help
- Self-help, populism, and the alt-right
- Merging figures of producer and consumer (prosumers, influencers)
- Do-It-Yourself cultures (YouTube videos, Dummies series, life hacks, etc.)
- Gendered and racialized forms self-help (pickup artists, target audiences)
- Critical happiness studies (Sara Ahmed) and positive psychology (Barbara Ehrenreich)

Confirmed Speakers

Nina Mackert (Erfurt): “My weight is 110 pounds; do you think I am too fat? Calorie Counting, Ability, and the Democratization of Expertise in the Interwar Years”

Juliane Strätz (Mannheim): “Helping the ‘Underutilized’ Workforce? Self-Help and the Integration of Neurodivergent People”

Organizers

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11. "This Is America": Music, Video, and Medial Entanglement in the Popular

Julius Greve (Oldenburg), Martin Lütke (FU Berlin)

This panel sheds light on the intersecting histories and practices of popular music and visual culture in U.S. cultural production. In what we would refer to as "popular music" stars, performances, albums, and songs have – at least since the 1960s – been heavily dependent on their respective visualization. Even in our "post-MTV era," the music video clip still serves as the quintessential media unit for the marketing of specific songs, artists, or albums. In 2016, Beyoncé's *Lemonade*, simultaneously released as album and film, has powerfully reminded audiences and critics of the intertwined trajectories of film history and music history. Moreover, the recent shifts in music distribution have led to a new imbrication of the individual consumer's communicational media devices and the habits of listening to music. Streaming has re-popularized the manufacture of vinyl records, now that the CD's advantages have been made redundant. Thus, the reciprocity between processes of digitalization and a reappraised analog culture of tactility and visual intricacy seems to parallel the developments of our visual and auditory cultures in the popular.

Typically, scholars foreground the intersections of aesthetics and politics in music videos from *Philadelphia* (1994, B. Springsteen/J.&T. Demme) to *This Is America* (2018, Childish Gambino/H. Murai). Here, we would emphasize the specific media ecologies in which pop music and politics unfold. We are interested in the medial entanglement of popular culture – that is, the reciprocal determination of auditory and visual culture, or music and video. In addition, we would encourage contributions on the "prehistory" of the music video in the first half of the twentieth century; the impact of video art on American film; the resonances between audiovisual culture and literary genres like autobiography/life writing; popular culture, audiovisual culture, and poetics/lyrics; popular culture as subculture; and what one could term "popular culture 2.0."

Confirmed Speakers

Nassim Balestrini (Graz): "Visual Archives and Sonic Repertoires in Popular Music Videos; or, How the Carters Framed Mona Lisa"

Martin Butler (Oldenburg): "Of Shreds, Spoofs, and Musicless Music: Virtuosity 2.0 and the Ethics of Amateurism in Online Parodies of Music Video Clips"

Organizers

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12. Lyric Poetry as Popular Culture

Marcel Hartwig (Siegen), Hannah Schoch (Zürich)

From convergence culture (David Shield, Claudia Rankine) to participatory culture (e.g. instapoetry), the lyric proves to be highly adaptable, moving with ease into new medial, cultural, and social contexts. *Mad Men*'s Don Draper reads Frank O'Hara and causes a run on *Meditations in an Emergency* on Amazon; Warsan Shire's poems bring Beyoncé's visual album *Lemonade* to life; and Kendrick Lamar's Pulitzer Prize triggers a new debate on the literary value of lyric poetry: It thrives in and intersects with many phenomena of contemporary popular culture. Nonetheless, academic interest has often framed lyric poetry as primarily falling into the domain of elite culture, and hence neglected that the genre's low thresholds in terms of production and distribution make it significantly more accessible than many other forms of cultural production (cf. Fiske's notion of producerly texts).

The concept of lyricism not only draws into focus the aesthetic form of the poem (its rhythm, flow, or diction); it also marks its interrelationship with song and popular music. Lyricism thus offers the analytic tools to grasp the *effective* and *affective* dynamics of textual production and reception, and marks the level on which the poem can resist (pop) culture's commodification. Indeed, the lyric's suspension between fictionality and factuality (Hühn 2014) and its capacity for equivocation and complex rhetorics allow for radical interventions and hence contribute in complex ways to popular culture's political work.

As a markedly transnational and transhistorical genre (Culler 2015; Ramazani 2001, 2009, 2017), the lyric allows for an analysis of the link between the specificity of an individual's, subculture's, or nation's aesthetic production and the historical dimensions of meaning-making practices and formations. This workshop, therefore, calls for investigations of the work, impact,

and rhetoric of the contemporary lyric and of lyricism in popular culture and propose a reconsideration of lyrical forms as part of popular, rather than elite, culture.

Confirmed Speakers

Marleen Knipping, MA (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen): “The Poem’s Voice Returns in this one: Translocal Instapoetics in the Digital Public Sphere”

PD Dr. Timo Müller (Universität Konstanz): “Methamphetamine Lyrics: Lyricism as Substance and the Aesthetics of Hip Hop”

Please send paper proposals (250 words) to the organizers: Hannah Schoch, MA (Universität Zürich; hannah.schoch@es.uzh.ch) and Dr. Marcel Hartwig (Universität Siegen; hartwig@anglistik.uni-siegen.de)

13. Forms, Features, Facets: Genre in American Popular Culture

Alexandra Hauke (Passau), Jiann-Chyng Tu (HU Berlin)

In his seminal study *The Political Unconscious*, Frederic Jameson argues that genre criticism has been “thoroughly discredited by modern literary theory and practice” (91) despite the fact that, in the United States, the “great narrative events of repression and revolt” (53) continuously testify to the connections between aesthetic form, cultural imperialism, national identity, and political ideology. During the last decade, a number of scholars have observed an imminent return of formalism and aesthetics, a reemerging interest in the significance and limitations of structuring classifications, and thus a revived popularity of genre and genre theory, which speak to the necessity of new discussions about form as a mode of American identity construction, political resistance, and cultural practice.

In this workshop, we want to look at the roles genre plays both historically and in contemporary American popular culture, taking into account that genre has always been inextricably tied up with processes of U.S. nation-building, the patterns of Euro-American master narratives, and the subversive counter-narratives to such dominant cultural and political discourses. Conceived of as a *modus operandi*, genre collectively shapes and determines cultural production, consumption, and reception, allowing us to examine its mechanics as a mode that invests in the relation of American texts to American cultures that continue to be at the heart of American (hi)storytelling.

We invite papers that focus on genre as a mode of thought, analysis, and interpretation of popular culture, as a helpful tool whose functionality enables us to assess the respective texts’ embeddedness in the cultural contexts, political practices, and social movements of their times and (re)consider their forms as mediators of history, identity, performance, resistance, subversion, and social change, among others.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Genre, form, and (national) identities
- Intersectional approaches to genre
- Genre as mode, process, and system
- Genre mixing and practices of hybridization
- Genre theory, its history, and related concepts
- Genre, myth, and/or folklore
- Genre as political resistance and/or in social movements
- Textual aesthetics in American popular culture
- Sub-genres, storytelling, and serialization

Confirmed Speakers

Maxi Albrecht (FU Berlin): “AMC’s *The Walking Dead* as Neo-Western and the Perennial Survival Aesthetics of the Frontier”

Paula von Gleich (Bremen): “Fugitive Narration Held Captive and the Genres of the (Non-)Human”

Please send your abstract (approx. 250-300 words) and a short narrative biographical note to both alexandra.hauke@uni-passau.de and tujiannk@hu-berlin.de.

14. Pop Academics: The Public Intellectual in the American Imagination

Rieke Jordan (Frankfurt), Cord-Heinrich Plinke (University of Southern California)

From Emerson’s Lyceum to critical theory on Tumblr, public media spaces necessitate intellectual debate. This panel encourages critical work on historical and cultural constructions of public intellectualism in the United States. The public intellectual has long inhabited the liminal spaces between the channels of mass entertainment and the margins of cultural criticism – where the triad of American popular culture, populism, and politics unfolds. Public intellectuals are branded as remote from everyday life, but come to assume a place in popular culture. Their “public” role is paradoxical insofar as they are accessible to a select few, but broadcast onto the screens and pages of many.

Is the public intellectual *popular* in the literal sense of the word? Populism, per definition, generously means “for the people.” Yet the contemporary populist movement in the United States carries deeper (and darker) implications which include nourishing distrust in education, facts, and intellectualism, replacing progressive politics with alternative facts and hostility toward the left. A critical examination of public intellectualism and popular culture encourages conversations about privilege, access, and gender dynamics negotiated in the public sphere. Is the public intellectual necessarily political? Do markers such as right-wing or left-wing, conservative and progressive, apply? Are they subject to, or do they fuel, partisan politics?

One question this panel aims to answer is how intellectuals use the tools of twenty-first century mass communication and popular culture to negotiate rifts in American culture. We seek submissions, possibly on, but not limited to:

- History of Public Intellectualism
- Gender and Public Intellectualism
- The Public Intellectual as Media Figure (e.g. Hannah Arendt Feature Film; Documentary on James Baldwin)
- Cities as “Intellectual Havens”
- Role of the University and Representations of Higher Education in Popular Culture
- The History of “Wokeness”
- Academic Twitter and Digital Intellectualism (e.g., Tumblr Queer Theorists)

Confirmed Speakers

Sarah Wasserman (University of Delaware): “How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Academia Twitter”

Laura Bieger (Rijksuniversiteit Groningen): “The Photogenic Intellectual. An American Icon”

Organizers

Rieke Jordan (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt): Jordan@em.uni-frankfurt.de

Cord-Heinrich Plinke (University of Southern California): cplinke@usc.edu

15. Popular Culture(s) in the Classroom

Uwe Küchler (Tübingen), Laurenz Volkmann (Jena)

The field of teaching English (TEFL/ TESOL) basically shares a semiotic understanding of culture. With Hall (1997, 1), culture is understood as “shared meanings.” This broader concept allows for working with theories and insights of Cultural Studies and for utilizing all sorts of cultural text and artifacts, social institutions or even ideas and conventions (Posner 2003, 44ff.). When it comes to teaching contexts, the traditional dichotomy of ‘high brow’ versus ‘low brow’ culture or the question of how to deal with popular culture(s) is particularly relevant. Indeed, the question of the locus and relevance of popular culture in teaching contexts and the issue of whether popular culture needs to be approached from a culture-critical angle are still disputed (Volkmann 2010; Linke 2006). Specifically with regard to issues of globalization and the “soft power” of US-media phenomena, pertinent questions need to be addressed in this workshop, such as:

- How can products of popular culture (TV series, commercials, pop music, Hollywood movies etc.) be used to teach US culture? And do culture-critical teaching goals still need to be considered?

- How do German or European audiences / students appropriate US pop cultural products and what insights can be gleaned from different ways of creating (possibly opposite or differing) meanings?
- On a more general level, how can pop culture products be used in the EFL classroom and what (critical) objectives can be considered when using them?

We invite papers, projects and case studies on Foreign Language Education and the teaching of American literature, culture and media with a focus on popular culture(s) and especially US-American popular culture in EFL-/ TESOL-teaching context. Proposed papers for this workshop may focus on, but are not restricted to, exemplary keywords such as: North American popular culture(s), Cultural Studies, Intercultural Pedagogy, Foreign Language Education. Presentations could focus on the following concrete issues:

- The implications of popular culture on the discourse on curricula, content and knowledge production, on material development and the methodology of foreign language education, the ‘inclusive classroom’ or the teaching of ‘Landeskunde’ and American Studies.
- The value products of (popular) cultures add to the knowledge of and interaction within foreign language classrooms and the teaching of American Studies.
- The ways different (popular culture) media, texts, genres or other means of expression contribute to ways of knowing, learning, and experiencing languages, literature, and cultures. This includes the question of which learning opportunities they provide for learners of English or American Studies.
- The question of how materials from popular cultures can meet the requirements of current curricular and teaching principles.

Confirmed Speakers

Christian Ludwig (Karlsruhe): “Race and Gender Perspectives on Environmental (In-)Justice: Sherri Smith’s *Orleans*”

Gabriele Linke (Rostock): “Popular music and the Alt-Right: Investigating right-wing appropriations of popular culture in the German EFL classroom”

A proposal should include information about your affiliation, the title of your paper, an abstract of about 300 words, a brief biographical statement, and a note on any audio/visual requirements. Please submit your abstracts and supporting information to both:

Uwe Kuchler (Tübingen): uwe.kuechler@uni-tuebingen.de

Laurenz Volkmann (Jena): l.volk@uni-jena.de

16. Religion and American Popular Culture

Sabrina Mittermeier (Independent Scholar), Michael Hochgeschwender (Munich)

American popular culture interacts with religion in a myriad of ways. Film, television, literature, theater; they all offer fictional depictions of the religious landscape of the U.S., often personalized through protagonists, such as Catholic President Josia Bartlett on *The West Wing* (1999-2006). Other works take on more uniquely American religions, such as the Amish communities (*Witness*, 1985) or Mormonism – whether in serious treatment (*Big Love*, 2006-2011) or parody (stage musical *The Book of Mormon*). Media scholar Bruce David Forbes has termed such representations as “religion in popular culture,” whether they are explicit or implicit depictions. Yet popular culture can also turn into a quasi-religious experience itself: *Walt Disney World* and other tourist destinations have been analyzed as pilgrimage sites, the devotion of fans to musicians or film stars can take on cult-like tendencies; here, popular culture functions as religion. It is thus unsurprising that religious groups, particularly evangelical Christians, have recognized its power and use it to spread their own beliefs (e.g. via the Christian Rock genre) – a phenomenon Forbes simply calls “popular culture in religion.”

This panel wants to build on existing scholarship, welcoming panelists from a variety of fields, such as cultural history, cultural studies, theatre studies, religious studies and history, media and literary studies.

Confirmed Speakers

Lisa Meinecke (LMU Munich): “I Am Always Watching” – Science Fiction, the Singularity, and A.I. Apotheosis

Jennifer Volkmer (LMU Munich): “A Man Went Looking for America and Couldn’t Find It Anywhere – Motorcycle Riding as Modern-Day Pilgrimage”

Please send abstracts to Michael Hochgeschwender (michael.hochgeschwender@lrz.uni-muenchen.de) and Sabrina Mittermeier (Sabrina.Mittermeier@pecess.de).

17. Popular Culture and ‘Knowledge from Below’

Katharina Motyl (Mannheim), Katrin Horn (Bayreuth)

When it comes to television, Hartley claims, we are all “experts” through the absorption of “[c]ollective wisdom.” Such expertise, however, is “intellectually suspect,” even as it demands increasingly complex forms of understanding (Mittel). Similar claims can be made about popular culture at large – one of the foremost fields of cultural production today as well as one of the most influential sources of knowledge. Halberstam, e.g., argues for a reevaluation of the “knowledge from below” pop culture engenders. This panel seeks to investigate processes of

production, types of content and modes of transmission of knowledge generated in and via popular culture

If in popular culture, “what is socially peripheral is so frequently symbolically central” (Stallybrass/White), its productions are crucial to articulating knowledges on power relations, norms, and transgressions. Hence, they are central to knowing ourselves and others (Benshoff/Griffin: e.g. through camp or cult discourses), especially for those not represented in high culture or politics. Simultaneously, corporate media circulate insidious stereotypes about Other communities or nations, which results in knowledge vastly different from intersubjectively agreed-upon facts. Conversely, indie productions such as zines have emerged as crucial platforms in which subaltern groups assert their subjectivity and question the status quo.

These opportunities for self-representation flourish in the digital age. Via their participation in transmedial storytelling, consumers increasingly become contributors by combining technical and ‘fanon’ expertise. The proliferation of new media, however, has also coincided with the rise of right-wing populism; today’s most widely used – i.e. social – media attests to a segment of white America which *knows* itself to be persecuted.

Considering these complex developments, this panel asks:

- Which parameters determine knowledge production (e.g. indie vs. corporate) and how does mediality influence knowledge?
- What is the relation between affect and knowledge in popular culture?
- Can knowledge run counter to the exclusionary (e.g. heteropatriarchal) culture industry producing it?
- How are hierarchies of knowledge produced and policed (e.g. celebrity gossip vs. sport statistics; “fake” geek girls)?
- How does popular culture’s ‘low theory’ contrast with scholarly knowledge?

Confirmed Speakers

Astrid M. Fellner (Saarland University): “Modes of Low Theory: Queer Indigenous Performances and the Transmission of Border Knowledges”

Bettina Soller (University of Hannover): “Fan Communities as Archives of Knowledge: Critique, Interpretation and Transformation through Fan Writing”

Please send your abstracts (~ 250 words) and short bios to

Katharina Motyl (University of Mannheim)

kmotyl@mail.uni-mannheim.de

Katrin Horn (University of Bayreuth)

katrin.horn@uni-bayreuth.de

18. #Feminism: The Fourth Wave

Maria Verena Peters (FernUniversität Hagen)

Feminist online discourses such as #metoo have recently grabbed the attention of a broad Western, potentially even global, audience. They have sparked discussions about a new era of feminism, often labelled the fourth wave. While building upon key political and strategic agendas of previous feminist ‘waves’, contemporary feminism has also been characterized as markedly different due to its entanglement with social media and pop culture. Pop culture icons such as Beyoncé Knowles, Taylor Swift, Miley Cyrus, Emma Watson, Meryl Streep, Madonna and many others have been key players in the dynamics of the fourth wave as they use their platforms to promote feminist discourses, be it in active participation in protests (e.g., Women’s March on Washington 2017, Time’s Up), in the form of online activism (#metoo, #freethenipple), lawsuits against sexual harassment (Swift against Mueller), online education on feminism (“Our Shared Self” book club) or empowering pop anthems (e.g., “Run the World (Girls)” (2011)). While this reanimation of a feminist consciousness in Northern America has been greeted by many, it has also been criticized as a commodification of feminism with very limited appeal in terms of identity politics.

These developments raise a number of questions:

- What is the nature of (cyber)feminist activism and how can we assess the social and political relevance of hashtags?
- What are the identity politics of and differences within contemporary feminism (e.g., the terf wars, the predominance of white privileged celebrity women in the economy of social media networks), particularly in comparison to previous forms of feminism?
- What are the (im)possibilities of feminist activism in a post-feminist mediascape and how can we address the quandaries of feminism as pop culture commodity?
- What are the (representational/cultural) politics of contemporary feminist campaigns and discourses as expressed on- and offline, including ‘other’ media such as film, TV and literature?

The panel invites scholars to reflect on these and related topics in paper presentations of 20 minutes. Speakers must be members of the DGfA conference by the time of the conference.

Confirmed Speakers

Prof. Dr. Greta Olson (Justus-Liebig-University Gießen): The Affective Politics of Debates about Online Feminism

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Heike Steinhoff (Ruhr-University Bochum): Hashtags, Bodies, Politics: Defining Fourth Wave Feminism

Organizer

Dr. Maria Verena Peters, FernUniversität in Hagen; E-Mail: maria-verena.peters@fernuni-hagen.de

19. Black Womanhood in Popular Culture

Stefanie Schäfer (Erlangen-Nürnberg)

In contemporary popular culture, black womanhood frequently takes center stage. It prompts questions about the status of black women in the US cultural imaginary, the controlling images associated with black women, the ability of public figures to create new images and anchor them in the cultural imaginary, and about the subject positions that express and shape constructions of black womanhood. Examples include Michelle Obama or pop singer Beyoncé, who have negotiated feminist discourses and black motherhood, popular TV shows like *Scandal* or *How to Get Away with Murder*, which feature black female protagonists, or literary works and feminist manifestos by writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie or Roxanne Gay.

This workshop examines the proliferation of black womanhood in popular culture as a marketplace governed primarily by economic interests, but also trading in symbolic capital, identities, and collective fantasies. Popular culture thus may model new subject positions, unsettle cultural authorities, and question cultural ideals – intentionally or inadvertently so. Representations and performances of black womanhood test the genealogies of these images and their empowering and limiting qualities, the subjecthood that black women claim and/or are assigned, and the signifying functions of the black female body in visual economies. They ask questions such as: How does contemporary popular culture negotiate, revise, or recalibrate stereotypical depictions of black women? How are representations of black womanhood discussed from different theoretical vantage points, such as Afro-Pessimism, Critical Race Studies, Black Feminism? And how can they be positioned within new formations of the Black Atlantic, within (trans)national “affective economies” (Sara Ahmed) and contemporary discourses on race, class, gender, and age?

Contributions may focus on visual culture (comics, films, TV shows, etc.), material culture and bodily practices, performances, or the arts and discuss the following issues:

- Black women as cultural agents
- Feminist agendas and their representation in cultural discourses
- Epistemologies of black womanhood and systems of knowledge production
- Afropessimisms and ontologies of black subjecthood
- Histories and genealogies of representing black womanhood

Confirmed Speakers

Luvena Kopp (Dr. des.), Tübingen: “Cinematic Black Femininities”

Marius Henderson (Dr. des.), Hamburg: “‘Afrarealism,’ the ‘Black Matrix,’ and Dismantlings of Anti-Black Gendered Violence: Perspectives from the Black Took and BQF Collectives”

Please send proposals of 300 words and a short bio statement by January 11, 2019 to Stefanie.ste.schaefer@fau.de

20. Rightwing POPulism: Remapping Popular Culture in the Age of Trump and the Alt-Right

Simon Schleusener, Simon Strick (FU Berlin)

This panel's premise is that the current 'populist moment,' signaling a crisis of neoliberal globalization and the Western model of liberal democracy, manifests itself not merely in the realm of American politics, but crucially in popular culture as well. Since the rise of Trump™, American Studies has to grapple with the realization that beneath the mainstream of acceptable political and popular cultures, a second America blooms, ranging from the reactionary and ultraconservative to the protofascist. This other, "deplorable" (Hillary Clinton) US has materialized as decidedly popular, populist, and rooted in American vernacular styles.

Trump's populism, maintaining itself through popular media (Twitter) and vernacular settings (rallies), is matched by a deluge of 'countercultural' production, parts of it emerging from the so-called Alt-Right. This network of actors works within the popular to establish a right-wing 'cultural hegemony' (Gramsci): street artist SABO, provocateurs like Milo Yiannopoulos, and online-based meme activists use subversive techniques of culture jamming and resignification to popularize extremist agendas; reactionary media figures like Alex Jones or Tomi Lahren update talk radio formulas on various social media platforms.

The mapping and discussion of these rightwing cultural practices is one perspective of the panel; the assessment of their genealogies is another. As the right appropriates popcultural aesthetics, cultural archives traditionally deemed 'left' become contested. Trump plays the Rolling Stones at rallies to claim anti-establishment sensibilities; Sci-Fi thriller *The Matrix* (1999) is referenced in white identitarian narrations of 'racial awakening.' In light of such discursive rebrandings, the panel specifically addresses scholars and historians of popular culture, asking: Which countercultural archives serve the new right to present itself as 'anti-establishment' or 'alternative'? What affective, aesthetic and performative modes of the popular make it susceptible to reactionary strategies?

Suggested topics include, but are not limited to:

- Internet vernacular and rightwing talking points.
- The online culture wars.
- Popcultural manifestations of rightwing agendas.
- The Alt-Right's reappropriations of popcultural archives and countercultural strategies.
- Fan cultures and social media activism.
- Popular culture and the struggle for hegemony.

Confirmed Speakers

Prof. Dr. Frank Mehring (Radboud University, Nijmegen): "Sonic State Fantasies: Mapping the Soundtrack of Trump and the Alt-Right"

PD Dr. Gabriele Dietze (Humboldt University, Berlin): “Ethnomasochism: Notes on an Affective Theory of the New Right”

Organizers

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Simon Strick (Freie Universität Berlin): strick@gsnas.fu-berlin.de