

Dr. Steffen Wöll

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Ethnicity and Diversity in US Culture (04-001-1018)

Winter Term 2022/23 | Thu 1–3pm, NSG 122

<https://moodle2.uni-leipzig.de/course/view.php?id=38874>

Youth Cultures, Ethnicity, and Protest in the United States

For many, teenage angst and rebellion against mainstream culture remain personified in J.D. Salinger's depiction of Holden Caulfield and his cynical disdain for the philistine hypocrisy of American postwar society. As the new phenomenon of youth culture emerged in subsequent decades, Bennett and Roberts note that it was generally "regarded as something bound by geographical proximity and a collective affinity confirmed by collective visual displays of taste." Today's digital age continues to witness the rise of community-driven platforms such as Twitter, Reddit, and Discord that have transformed into both laboratories and sanctuaries for almost any imaginable community of likeminded individuals, including many youthful voices that call for change in the face of various social ills. Interfacing the dynamics of these ongoing developments with the legacies of past and resurgent youth cultures, the seminar explores the diverse and intersecting histories of anti-establishment groups, minority protest, nonconformity, and social deviance in the United States. While taking into account instances of individual dissent such as Caulfield's, we will work towards diversifying the spectrum to include, among others, Black, LatinX, feminist, queer, and environmental countercultures together with their diverse identities, sociopolitical messages, visual styles, and artistic modes of expressions.

Course Objectives

This seminar aims to familiarize students with crucial aspects of ethnicity and diversity in US literature and culture with the goal

- to appreciate and debate various dimensions and intersections of youth culture, ethnicity, and protest movements
- to familiarize participants with analytical approaches and perspectives as part of the methodological plurality of American Studies
- to develop research interests and pursue them in academic research, writing, and presenting

Requirements & Grading

The seminar consists of a topical phase and a subsequent project phase during which I offer (optional) online consultations to assist with your final presentation. Generally, to earn credits in this seminar, you are expected to:

- **attend** class on a regular basis
- **prepare** the readings for each session and bring the assigned texts to class
- **participate** in discussions and group work
- **pass** the *Prüfungsvorleistungen* (PVL)
- **pass** the *Prüfungsleistung*

Prüfungsvorleistungen

Reading responses to the upcoming session's materials:

- Out of 10 sessions, chose 5 for which to write a reading response.
- Responses of 1–2 paragraphs should discuss aspects you find interesting, (dis)agree with, and questions you feel should be discussed in class.
- Responses are due **Wednesday at 1pm**, i.e. 24 hours before class to be posted on Moodle where they will be available for your peers to read and comment.
- Responses should only contain your own ideas.
- Summarizing readings will lead to failing the PVL.
- Make sure to keep track of your completion rate during the semester to ensure you have submitted 5 responses by the end.

PVL are graded on a pass/fail basis and must be passed to be eligible for the *Prüfungsleistung*. Late submissions can only be accepted in cases of sickness verified by a doctor's certificate.

Prüfungsleistung

The final exam (*Prüfungsleistung*) evaluates your academic progress throughout the seminar. It is mandatory for passing not only this course but the entire E&D module (except for Erasmus students). The *Prüfungsleistung* consists of an oral presentation based on one or more topics covered in the seminar. It will be graded 50/50 by Dr. McCafferty and me, resulting in a combined grade. Your presentation should have a clear thesis and be argumentative instead of descriptive. It must be based on your own research of one or more primary and at least three secondary sources. More detailed instructions are available on Moodle.

Course Materials

Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar* (1948) and Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975) must be bought. All other readings are available on Moodle. Be sure to check the availability of films on Netflix et al. if you plan to watch them on your own time. All films will also be screened via Zoom at the times specified below.

Code of Conduct & Trigger Warning

This seminar enforces the American Studies Leipzig code of conduct (see https://americanstudies.uni-leipzig.de/curriculum/code_of_conduct). Academic practice in American Studies and the wider humanities thrives in a culture of open discourse among diverse perspectives and opinions. We will therefore engage with a variety of concepts and ideas that some might view as controversial or extreme. Checking for upsetting content ahead of time (e.g. on services like Does the Dog Die?) is your own responsibility.

Schedule

1	Oct 13	<i>Introduction</i>	<i>Overview, requirements, personal introductions, Q&A</i> <i>Be prepared to introduce yourself and your research interests. Briefly state what you expect from the seminar and what topics should be discussed during the semester</i>
2	Oct 20	<i>Subcultures, Youth & Protest</i>	Gelder, "Subcultures: A Vagabond History" (2007) Osgerby, "Young people and media consumption" (2021)
3	Oct 27	<i>Pachuco/a</i>	Ramírez, "Crimes of Fashion: The Pachuca and Chicana Style Politics" (2002) Tovares, "American Experience: Zoot Suit Riots" (2002), https://youtu.be/pWyviiYaMjg
	Nov 3		<i>No class, I'm at the ASA in New Orleans</i>
4	Nov 10	<i>Queer America</i>	Vidal, <i>The City and the Pillar</i> (1948) Newton, "Just One of the Boys: Lesbians in Cherry Grove, 1960–1988" (1993)

5	Nov 17	<i>Black Culture</i>	Jenkins, <i>Moonlight</i> (2016) [Screening Nov 16, 8.15pm] Franklin, “Black Youth Activism and the Reconstruction of America” (2016)
With 5 topical sessions left, check your PVL completion rate			
6	Nov 24	<i>The Native Experience</i> (I'm not in Leipzig; either via Zoom or new time tbd)	Highway, <i>Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing</i> (1989) Starr, “The Theatre of Orphans / Native Languages on Stage” (2005)
7	Dec 1	<i>Student Protest</i>	Broadhurst, “The University of North Carolina and the Student Strike of May 1970” (2015) Hartocollis, “Long After Protests, Students Shun the University of Missouri” (2017)
8	Dec 8	<i>Urban Youth</i>	Hill, <i>The Warriors</i> (1979) [Screening Dec 7, 8.15pm] McIntyre, “Constructing Meaning about Violence” (2000)
9	Dec 15	<i>Utopian Visions</i>	Callenbach, <i>Ecotopia</i> (1975) O'Brien et al., “Exploring Youth Activism on Climate Change” (2018)
10	Jan 5	<i>Memes, Trolls & Rabbit Holes</i>	Askonas, “Life in an Alternate Reality Game” (2022) Phillips, <i>This Is Why We Can't Have Nice Things</i> [excerpts] (2015)
Please review the presentation guidelines on Moodle			
	tbd	<i>Presentations I</i>	
	tbd	<i>Presentations II</i>	
	tbd	<i>Presentations III</i>	
	tbd	<i>Presentations IV</i>	