

Syllabus

ETHNICITY AND DIVERSITY IN US CULTURE (04-001-1018)

Seminar

Winter Semester 2017/18

Tuesday, 11:15-12:45 pm

NSG 101

<http://www.ul.as.lehrbox.de/710>

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Mapping Diversity: Imaginations of Race and Space in Historical and Contemporary US Literature

In this seminar, we will explore how the concepts of race/ethnicity and space/geography are imagined, connected, and represented throughout the history of American literature. In the early 1990, the 'spatial turn' in the humanities expanded and theorized the idea of space as a productive signifier, providing scholars with new analytical tools to tackle long-standing issues of American politics, gender roles, class relations, as well as ideas of ethnicity and race. Over the centuries, the interactions of different peoples with the American landscape and with each other have produced a multitude of ways in which places and spaces are imagined and used to create meaning and identity, resulting in concepts like wilderness, frontier, manifest destiny, separatism, borderlands, or thirdspaces. Discussing these and other concepts, we will engage texts from the nineteenth century to the present day that take into account a variety of ethno-spatial perspectives, including those of Native Americans and African Americans, as well as American imaginations of the Orient.

Course Materials

All book chapters and essays can be accessed online via Lehrbox. The novel *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi must be purchased.

Course Requirements

Participants of the seminar will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

Prüfungsvorleistungen

PVLs are essential to ensure quality standards in teaching and help students to develop their academic skills. Moreover, they are a central part of a student's performance in class and a mandatory prerequisite for passing the seminar as well as the overall module. **All PVLs must be passed.** Students who fail a PVL must appear in front of a panel of instructors and convince said panel that they are able to produce a successful result in an assignment of PVL-equivalence. If such a replacement is granted by the panel, students must immediately approach their instructors in order to arrange for an assignment of PVL-equivalence.

Students are expected to complete the following assignments:

PVL 1: Response paper (around 500 words) to be handed in via Lehrbox, **due on November 6 by 6 pm** at the latest.

PVL 2: Research proposal (300-400 words) including thesis statement and outline for a final presentation to be handed in via Lehrbox, **due on December 4 by 6 pm** at the latest.

Assignments will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Late submissions will not be accepted. Extensions will be granted only in cases of illness as confirmed by a doctor's certificate.

Prüfungsleistung

The Prüfungsleistung evaluates the knowledge and skills achieved in this seminar. It is mandatory for passing not only the course but the overall Ethnicity and Diversity module.

The Prüfungsleistung in this seminar will be an **oral presentation** about a topic of your choice that is related to the subjects covered in the seminar. Your presentation must have a thesis and be argumentative—not merely descriptive. It must be based on your research on and analysis of a concrete item (text, film, image etc.). **Presentations should be around 10-12 minutes.** Further information will be given in class.

Code of Conduct

Basic Courtesy

The student-instructor relationship at the department of American Studies is based on mutual respect. This includes turning off all cell phones, organizers, etc. before entering the classroom. You are welcome to take notes on your laptop but please refrain from checking your emails, messaging, or updating your Facebook profile.

You are expected to be on time and not leave early as this will disturb the class session and is disrespectful to both the instructor and your fellow students. If you already know that you will have to leave early, please notify me beforehand.

Regular attendance and active participation in discussions are crucial to the success of the seminar. Therefore, you are expected to come to class not only having read the assigned material but also prepared to fully engage in the topic, ask questions about it, offer perceptive interpretations, and argue for your particular understanding of the text at hand.

In this seminar, I invite you to express and share your opinions, ideas, and questions openly and without worrying about saying the ‘wrong thing.’ Academic discourse in the humanities thrives in a climate of open discussion of ideas among peers and is aimed at creating a culture of diverse and critical perspectives. As is the case for the divergent ideas and concepts we will engage in our readings, there are often no predetermined, ‘correct’ answers to the issues we will discuss in class.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct in which an individual submits or presents the work of another person as his or her own. While scholarship often builds upon examining and referring to thoughts and writings of others, doing so without proper acknowledgment is intellectually dishonest and a form of fraud.

Therefore, whenever you use any idea that is derived substantially or directly from a published work, a fellow student, or any other source, you must explicitly acknowledge the nature and extent of your indebtedness. When you borrow three or more consecutive words, an original term, or a distinctive turn of phrase from a published work, a fellow student, or any other source, you must enclose the borrowed element in quotation marks and explicitly acknowledge your indebtedness. Any instance of plagiarism may have serious professional and legal consequences, including expulsion from the course and subsequent annulment of an academic degree.

	Date	Session	Reading Assignments	Notes
	October 10	Taking Stock	Organization, seminar overview and requirements	
1	October 17	Imagining Place and Space in American Studies	<p>James Howard Kunstler, “Scary Places” (in <i>The Geography of Nowhere</i>) (1993)</p> <p>S.G. Goodrich, <i>Peter Parley’s Universal History on the Basis of Geography</i> Vol. 2 (1876) (Introduction)</p> <p>Tim Cresswell, “Defining Place” (in <i>Place: a short introduction</i>) (2004)</p> <p><i>Optional:</i> Gill Valentine, “Imagined Geographies: Geographical Knowledges of Self and Other in Everyday Life” (in Massey et al., <i>Human Geography Today</i>) (1999)</p>	
2	October 24	Native American and Colonial Spaces I	<p>James Howard Kunstler, “American Space” (in <i>The Geography of Nowhere</i>) (1993)</p> <p>Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1894) & “The Problem of the West” (1896) (in Milner et al., <i>Major Problems in the History of the American West</i>) (1989) (excerpts)</p> <p>Susan Schulten, “Maps for the Masses, 1880-1900” (2002)</p> <p><i>Optional:</i> Henry Louis Gates, “Writing ‘Race’ and the Difference It Makes” (1985)</p>	
	October 31	No Class (Reformationstag)		

3	November 7	Native American and Colonial Spaces II	<p>James Hall, “The Pioneer” & “The French Village” (in <i>Tales of the Border</i>) (1835)</p> <p>Patricia Nelson Limerick, “The Legacy of Conquest” (1987) & “What on Earth Is the New Western History?” (1991) (in Milner et al., <i>Major Problems in the History of the American West</i>) (1989) (excerpts)</p> <p><i>Optional:</i> Maria Rose Sledmere, “The Subversive Spatiality of Pokémon Go” (2016)</p>	PVL 1 Due
4	November 14	African American Spaces I	<p>Yaa Gyasi, <i>Homegoing</i> (2016)</p> <p>Tim Cresswell, “Black Moves” (2016)</p> <p><i>Optional:</i> Vera Kutzinski, “Borders and Bodies: The United States, America, and the Caribbean” (2003)</p>	
5	November 21	African American Spaces II	<p>Yaa Gyasi, <i>Homegoing</i> (2016)</p> <p>bell hooks, “Choosing the Margin as a Radical Space of Openness” (in <i>Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics</i>) (1990)</p> <p><i>Optional:</i> Nirmal Puwar, “Of Men and Empire” (in <i>Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place</i>) (2004)</p>	
6	November 28	Oriental Spaces I	<p>James Howard Kunstler, “Eden Updated” (in <i>The Geography of Nowhere</i>) (1993)</p> <p>Anonymous, “The Paradise of Schedad: An Arabian Tale” (1796)</p> <p>Malini Johar Schueller, “Race(ing) to the Orient” (in <i>U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890</i>) (1998)</p>	

7	December 5	Oriental Spaces II	H.P. Lovecraft, <i>The Shadow Over Innsmouth</i> (1936) James Kneale, "From beyond: H.P. Lovecraft and the place of horror" (2006)	PVL 2 Due
8	December 11	Presentations	Presentation sessions will take place during the tutorial time slot, i.e. Monday 3.15-4.45 pm	NSG 305
9	December 18	Presentations		NSG 305
	December 26	No Class (Christmas)		
	January 2	No Class (New Year)		
10	January 8	Presentations		NSG 305
11	January 15	Presentations		NSG 305
12	January 22	Presentations		NSG 305
13	January 29	Presentations		NSG 305