

Introduction to British Cultural Studies

(Einführungsvorlesung britische Landeskunde und Kulturwissenschaft)

[Time: WED, 16-18 // Room: Philosophie-Gebäude, Hörsaal 2]

! Please study this syllabus closely before registering for the course – and then again in preparation for the first week of the course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

"Culture is the software that determines our lives" (Rainer Winter). British cultural studies want to understand how this 'software' shapes us and our social environment.

However, cultural studies are just as interested in how we – as cultural, social and political *agents* – shape the 'software'. The goal is to throw fresh light on ways of representing, feeling and acting that are usually taken for granted. In consequence, cultural studies are practical and theoretical at the same time.

The lecture will provide an introduction to both the specific 'project' of British cultural studies *and* to the study of British history, society and culture more generally. On the one hand, we will discuss key concepts in cultural theory and discuss a selection of exemplary cultural phenomena. On the other hand, we will not fail to address the geographic, historical, political and institutional 'basics' of life in Britain and some of its former colonies.

COURSE CATEGORY

Please take note of the organizational framework for the lecture, as defined in the general description for this course category (SUV-Beschreibung):

Diese Veranstaltung richtet sich an alle Studierenden der Anglistik aus den unteren Semestern (1.-4. Fachsemester). Sie führt in zentrale Gegenstandsbereiche, Begrifflichkeiten und Herangehensweisen der anglistischen Kulturwissenschaft ein. Darüber hinaus vermittelt sie Basiswissen zu Geschichte und Gegenwart Großbritanniens und seiner ehemaligen Kolonien. Damit legt sie entscheidende Grundlagen für das weitere Studium der Anglistik.

RESPONDING TO THE 'CORONA LOCK-DOWN' ...

a) 'Distant' lecturing/teaching & learning

This will be an unusual semester, but (for as long as necessary) we will seriously undertake the experiment of conducting the lecture in the 'virtual realm.'

In consequence, WueCampus will become yet more important than usually. → **Please visit the virtual course room immediately after registering for the lecture – and then at least once a week.**

To a still larger extent than in a normal semester, the learning progress of students will depend on their willingness and capacity for **organizing themselves**, making use of the **materials provided on WueCampus**, doing **assigned readings**, and also following suggestions for **further reading** or research.

I am still toying with the options, but for as long as normal lecturing will not be possible the plan is to present the lecture as a series of **'recorded slide shows with narration.'** These will be uploaded to WueCampus on a weekly basis: each new instalment should be available (as a file) at the time for which the regular lecture is scheduled. → Please **download the 'slide show'/lecture and play it within the same week.**

Should it become possible to return to normal lecturing, I will of course do so. In any case, however, we will stick to the adapted assessment format laid out below.

b) 'Distant' assessment

Because of the special conditions created by the Corona crisis, this semester the form of assessment will deviate from the original course description. Thus, instead of a final test, assessment will be according to the **portfolio principle**:

→ There will be **three portfolio assignments**: one after the first third of the semester, one after the second third, and one set for the two examination weeks. These assignments will consist in a **mixture of tasks** – such as for example:

- reporting on your reading and learning progress,
- answering factual questions,
- researching specific issues,
- writing short analyses of texts dealt with in the lecture, etc.

Successful completion of the portfolio-assignments will depend on **regular passive and active involvement** in the course (i.e. listening to / watching the slide shows every week; doing assigned reading; embarking on further reading).

Students will be asked to hand in their responses to the portfolio-assignments **electronically** (uploading their files to WueCampus) and **at a specific date** (please see below!). In order to successfully pass the course, it will be necessary to gain at least 60 out of a total of 100 pts.

READING (before the beginning of the lecture period):

In preparation for the lecture, students have been asked to **obtain and read Aleida Assmann's *Introduction to Cultural Studies: Topics, Concepts, Issues*** (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2012) [c. € 20,-] already during the semester break.

Towards the beginning of the lecture period, students should **now make the transition to the assigned readings and further reading materials listed in the course programme** below.

More suggestions for essential or further reading can be found in the **bibliography for the lecture** (which can be downloaded from WueCampus).

PROGRAMME

AR = assigned reading → This may be texts or other materials. Please read/view & prepare these texts/materials carefully and on time.

FR = further reading → Texts and materials for further study. This category comprises two very different kinds of materials: (1) BASIC STUFF and study aids intended to help students make sense of the assigned readings and contents of the course // (2) MORE ADVANCED TEXTS intended to assist students in the process of deepening their knowledge and widening their horizon. → Reading/studying further reading texts is not directly obligatory. It probably goes without saying, however, that the progress of students depends on their developing an agenda of always looking beyond what is explicitly/merely mandatory ...

Especially for the purposes of 'online' teaching & studying, we will think in terms of '**course weeks**'. Because of the delayed registration process for basic courses (i.e. courses open for students in their first semester), the *first* week of this course is already the *second* week of the teaching period.

DISCUSSION FORUM: For each course week/topic, there will be an open discussion forum on WueCampus. This is where you can and should post your comments and queries on the topics and concepts dealt with in the readings and lectures. Regular contributions will be appreciated. Please make sure to *always read* (and respond to) the posts provided by other members of the group. The tutors for this lecture (see names below) will moderate the discussion forum under my supervision.

The programme may be adjusted in the course of the semester. Always see WueStudy, please!

Week 1 – 29/04

Introduction:

The resonance of (the term) 'culture'

AR:

- Stephen Greenblatt, "Culture," *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, 2nd ed. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995) 225-232. [WueCampus.]

Week 2 – 06/05

Cultural studies (I):

A first outline of the objectives and objects of cultural studies

AR:

- [From:] Chris Barker, "An Introduction to Cultural Studies", *Cultural Studies: Theory & Practice*, 3rd ed. (London: Sage, 2008) 1-12. [WueCampus.]

→ The section selected from this seminal and helpful book is only the first part of the introduction, comprising the following subchapters: "Concerning this Book" / "The Parameters of Cultural Studies" / "Key Concepts in Cultural Studies." Please read & prepare all the material carefully.

FR:

- Simon During, introduction, *The Cultural Studies Reader*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1999) 1-28 [WueCampus.]
 - This is a fairly advanced but fundamental and very helpful text. Everybody should read at least the first couple of pages (c. 1-5), where During describes and contextualizes the beginnings of 'British cultural studies' in the post-war period. // If you want to seriously engage with cultural studies, it is highly recommended to read on. I would put the emphasis on the first part of the introduction, which is headed "A Brief History of Cultural Studies" (2-17). Those who would like to learn more and to progress towards the present might then read also the second part of the introduction, headed "Cultural Studies Now: Some Directions and Problems" (17-28)
- It is also a useful to read the missing sections from Barker's introduction:
 - [From:] Barker, "An Introduction to Cultural Studies", *Cultural Studies*, 3rd ed. (London: Sage, 2008):
 - "The Intellectual Strands of Cultural Studies" (12-25) [WueCampus]
 - "Central Problems in Cultural Studies" (25-31) & "Questions in Methodology" (31-38) [WueCampus]

Week 3 – 13/05

Cultural studies (II):

A first outline of the history of (British) cultural studies

Preparation for the lecture:

- Go back to the readings for last week; pay particular attention to the beginning of During's introduction (see above).
- Do further research & reading on the history of (British) cultural studies. → All participants should be knowledgeable at least in relation to the following topics, terms and names:

Britain in and after the Second World War / Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies / Richard Hoggart / Raymond Williams / Stuart Hall / *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) / *The Popular Arts* (1964).

FR:

- Kenneth O. Morgan, "The Second World War" & "The Post-War World," *The Oxford History of Britain*, rev. ed., ed. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001) 621-634 & 634-649. [WueCampus.]
 - These two subchapters from *The Oxford History of Britain* offer a concise (i.e. short but useful) introduction to British history from the late 1930s to the late 1960s. The two texts thus sketch the political and social context from which British cultural studies emerged. This is also a good introduction to our history sessions, later in the course of the lecture. Reading is not obligatory but highly recommended. If you can read only one of the two chapters, choosing the subchapter on "The Post-War World" may be the best option.

Week 4 – 20/05

Cultural sign systems and cultural spaces

AR:

- Aleida Assmann, "Signs," [= ch. 1 of:] *Introduction to Cultural Studies: Topics, Concepts, Issues* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2012) 29-53. [See your private copy of the book OR WueCampus.]

→ Focus on the following sections:

- "1.1 The Use of Signs as an Anthropological Basis" (29-38)
- "1.3 Types of Signs" (42-48)
- "Summary" (53)

→ Assmann's book (which was originally published in German before being translated into English) offers a somewhat 'conservative' introduction to cultural studies – one that is grounded less in the politicized ethos of British cultural studies than in a German tradition of 'Kulturwissenschaft' and 'Kulturphilosophie'. Moreover, Assmann's take on the topic is strongly informed by the concerns of literary studies. Exactly for these reasons, however, the book is a helpful resource for most students of English philology. It will prove useful not only in relation to 'signs' or semiotics but also in relation to many other topics we are going to touch on or to discuss in the course of the semester.

FR:

- David Chandler, *Semiotics for Beginners* (1994-2020), web. [\[LINK\]](#)

Week 5 – 27/05

Reflection & production

First portfolio-assignment set on Mon. 25/05 (value: 40 pts).

→ Please hand in your response (on WueCampus) by Fri. 29/05, 12 a.m.

Week 6 – 03/06

Mapping Britain:

'Real' and 'imaginary' geographies

AR:

- [Sections on Britain and the British Isles from:] Jody Skinner, "The Where (Geography)," *Anglo-American Cultural Studies*, 1st ed. (UTB / Tübingen: Francke, 2009). [WueCampus.]

→ The scan provided on WueCampus contains the entire chapter (the first half of which deals with the geography of the USA). Please focus on the second half of the chapter, i.e. pages 18-30. In spite of Skinner's effort to get through to his readers, the chapter will prove tedious & useless unless you use maps and other sources to pin down and flesh out the information provided. So please get out an atlas and/or look for maps and images on the net!

→ Skinner's book offers a good but (very) basic introduction to both area studies (i.e. 'Landeskunde') and cultural studies. It stands out from similar books by dealing with the USA as well as Britain all at once. Other chapters from the book may also be useful for participants of our lecture course. If you are logged on to the university's

intranet the entire book (in both the first and the second editions) can be accessed online.

FR:

- Atlases, online maps, etc.

Week 7 – 10/06

History (part I):

a) 'History' and the cultural work of narratives

b) From 'Stonehenge' to 'the Tudors': Key structures and key constructions of pre-modern history

AR:

- [From:] Jürgen Kamm and Bernd Lenz, "Grundzüge britischer Geschichte," *Großbritannien verstehen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2004):
 - "Das Römische Britannien" (11-13)
 - "Die Angelsächsische Zeit" (14-15)
 - "Das Normannische Reich" (15-17)
 - "Die Tudor-Herrschaft" (17-21)

[WueCampus]

→ Read in combination, the selected sections from this useful book offer a *very* brief (and still pretty good) account of British/English premodern history. Please read and prepare carefully.

FR:

- See titles in the course bibliography (section on Culture, history, and life).
- Jonathan Culler, "Narrative," *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) 82-93. [WueCampus.]
 - This text can (and perhaps *should*) be drawn on as an introduction to the 'story' aspect of hiSTORY as well as to narrative as a key cultural activity. It is substantial but relatively easy to read.
 - Culler's short book (all of it) is generally very useful for students of 'Anglistik/Amerikanistik.'

Week 8 – 17/06

Discourse, power and subjectivity:

Masters, servants and slaves in early-modern culture and literature

Preparation for the lecture:

- See the handout provided on WueCampus. Please read and prepare the *handout before* you play/attend the lecture.

FR:

- Sara Mills, introduction, *Discourse*, The New Critical Idiom, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2004) 1-25.
 - Highly recommended (as most of the books in the New Critical Idiom series). If you are logged on to the university's intranet, the entire book can be accessed online.

- Zeno Ackermann, "'Being your slave': Shakespeares Sonette und die Artikulation der Sklaverei." *Zeitsprünge: Forschungen zur Frühen Neuzeit* 18.3/4 (2014): 369-396. [WueCampus.]

Week 9 – 24/06

History (part II):

Making modern Britain and making the British Empire

AR:

- [Sections on modern British history from:] Jody Skinner, "The When (History)," *Anglo-American Cultural Studies*, 1st ed. (UTB / Tübingen: Francke, 2009).
 - "2.8 // From King Henry to Cromwell" (53-57)
 - "2.9 // From Restoration to the Hanovers" (57-62)
 - "2.10 // From Victoria to Churchill" (62-66)

[WueCampus.]

→ The selected sections from Skinner's book offer a very basic account of English/British history from the Tudors and the English revolutions of the 17th century to the end of the Second World War. The text certainly cannot count as scholarly historiography, but it has the advantage of being very brief and very much 'to the point.'

→ Please use the text as a jumping board for your own explorations of the history of England, Britain and the British empire!

FR:

- James Vernon, *Modern Britain: 1750 to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2017. Vol. 4 of *The Cambridge History of Britain*.
 - Vernon offers a comprehensive survey of modern 'British' history that puts a particular emphasis on social history and social politics. Designed for (slightly advanced) students, this is certainly the best book of its kind. Sadly, the book cannot be accessed online (but there are copies both in the departmental and in the central library, which might perhaps already be open at this point in the semester.
- For additional reading suggestions see *The Oxford History of Britain* (especially the two samples provided above for week 3!) & the course bibliography.

Week 10 – 01/07

Reflection & production

Second portfolio-assignment set on Mon. 29/06 (value: 30 pts).

→ Please hand in your response (on WueCampus) by Fri. 03/07, 12 a.m.

[If normal on-site lecturing should already be possible at this point in time, the regular lecture (Wed, 4-6 p.m.) will deal with THE POLITICAL SYSTEM AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY BRITAIN, probably with notes on 'Brexit' and the effects of the 'Corona crisis'. If the university should still be closed, we will skip these topics.]

Week 11 – 08/07

Popular culture and the media:

Practices and theories in Britain after the Second World War

AR:

- [From:] Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2008):
 - Opener of the main chapter "Questions of Culture and Ideology" (39)
 - "Culture with a Capital C: The Great and the Good in the Literary Tradition" (40-41)
 - "Culture Is Ordinary" (41-46)
 - "High Culture / Low Culture: Aesthetics and the Collapse of Boundaries" (46-54)

[WueCampus.]

→ This is an essential topic & strictly required reading in cultural studies. The text quotes from and points at many other important texts and mentions many big names. Please do further reading/research in order to be in the know about the respective names, books and concepts.

FR:

- Jonathan Culler, "Literature and Cultural Studies," *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) 42-54. [WueCampus.]
 - This text is relatively easy to read but still substantial. If required, use it as an introduction to the assigned text by Barker. Note that Culler's text is a chapter from an introduction to *literary* studies and should be read as an 'excursion' onto the field of cultural studies undertaken within that context. The author is an important authority in the field of literary theory.
 - Culler's short book (all of it) is generally very useful for students of 'Anglistik/Amerikanistik.'
- Theodor W. Adorno, "Résumé über Kulturindustrie" (1963); rpt. in *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2003) 337-345. // English translation: "Culture Industry Reconsidered." *New German Critique* 6 (1975): 12-19. [WueCampus.]
 - A very important 'real' (i.e. not explicitly student-oriented) text. This is not so difficult to read, however – and highly recommended.

Week 12 – 15/07

(Im)Migration, identity, and the politics of representation

Discourses of nationality and ethnicity

AR:

- Assmann, "Identity", [ch. 7 of] *Topics, Concepts, Issues* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2012) 191-218. [See your private copy of the book OR WueCampus.]
 - Focus on the following sections:
 - [Opener/introduction] (191-192)
 - "Person" (192-194)

- "Subject" (194-197)
- "Collective identity – race, nation, culture" (204-207)

[WueCampus.]

- Tony Kushner, "Immigration and Race Relations in Postwar British Society," *Twentieth-Century Britain: Economic, Social and Cultural Change*, ed. Paul Johnson (London: Longman, 1994) 411-426. [WueCampus]

FR:

This is a key topic and there is lots of further reading. In terms of historical information, I would recommend the relevant chapters in Vernon's *Modern Britain* (see week 9 above). In terms of cultural scholarship more narrowly speaking, one of the most important 'classics' is Paul Gilroy's *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (originally published in 1987). See the course bibliography for additional titles.

Prüfungswochen (Examination weeks)

Reflection & production

Third portfolio-assignment set on Mon. 20/07 (value: 30 pts).

→ Please hand in your response (on WueCampus) by Fri. 31/07, 12 a.m.

TUTORS

TUTORS are more advanced students who provide help and counselling to less advanced ones. The idea is peer-to-peer assistance and collaboration.

Under the conditions of 'distant' or 'online' teaching, tutors are particularly important to coordinate and personalize the flow of information.

The tutors will moderate the **DISCUSSION FORUM** (or, in fact, 'forums') on WUECAMPUS. For each course week/topic there will be a separate discussion forum.

There are four tutors for this lecture:

Julian Fisch

David Janocha

Anna Köhler

Dina Youssef

→ How to CONTACT the tutors:

For participants in the lecture, the primary way of linking up to the tutors and their counsel or expertise is to enter a post in the relevant WueCampus discussion forum. However, you can also send an e-mail to the tutor to whom you have been allocated. Find out more on WueCampus!

*Looking forward to the course & the semester
– and perhaps to meeting you in person once the 'ban' will have been lifted ...*

Zeno Ackermann