



## **The Biopolitics of America: Bodies, Environments, and the Liberal Imagination**

**International Conference, Würzburg, July 28-30, 2016**

Sandow Birk. *Salinas Valley State Prison (SVSP) - Soledad, CA*. Image courtesy of the artist and Catharine Clark Gallery.

**René Dietrich (Mainz)**

### **Humanness, Forms of Life, and the Land: The Biopolitical Logics of Settler Colonialism and Literary Sites of Disruptive Relationality**

This talk seeks to investigate the biopolitical logics of “humanness” operative in the social structures and cultural imaginaries of the settler colonial formation of the U.S. nation state, and to ask how contemporary Native writing can productively be read as literary sites of disruptive relationality to these logics. Such logics do not only absolutize a certain form of human life as defining all of humanity so as to de-humanize the diverse ways of being human that do not adhere to settler norms. They also position the “human” as the category of privilege in a politics of naturalized hierarchies so as to delegitimize any political thought and formation of a place-based relationality of all life forms on (and including) the land. Against this framework of biopolitical normativities, I will read Deborah Miranda’s and Alison Hedge Coke’s most recent poetry volumes *Raised by Humans* (2015) and *Streaming* (2015) as literary sites of intervention and political knowledge production. Through their reframing and decentering of the human, as well as repositioning it in a complex network of life forms in (political) relation across multiple spaces, both authors work to reconfigure the sphere of politics as being constituted through the relationality of all life forms and the land, and thus indicate the potential of Native writing in developing decolonial thought and Indigenous futurities lived beyond settler logics.