

Lecture course:

Introduction to British Cultural Studies

(Einführung in die britische Landeskunde und Kulturwissenschaft)

WED 16-18 // Philosophiegebäude, H 4

"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 culture, society and history more generally. We will discuss key concepts in cultural theory and discuss a selection of exemplary cultural phenomena.

Assessment will be through a written exam.

➔ Please see below for information on the TUTORIAL and on HOW TO PREPARE for this lecture course *before* the beginning of the teaching period.

PROGRAMME:

AR = Assigned reading ➔ These texts constitute the MINIMUM READING REQUIREMENT for the lecture course. Please read & prepare them carefully and on time.

FR = Further reading ➔ These are texts for further study. The category comprises two 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.

! Please note that the first lecture will take place only in the second week of the lecture period. (Tutorials, however, may start earlier.)

Phase 1: The Basics of Cultural Studies

26/04 Introduction

– The resonance of the term 'culture'

AR:

- CATHERINE BELSEY, "General Editor's Preface," Readers in Cultural Criticism Series; qtd. from *The Body*, ed. Tiffany Atkinson (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2005) vii-viii.
- STEPHEN GREENBLATT, "Culture," *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, 2nd ed. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995) 225-232.

03/05 **The goals and frameworks of cultural studies**

– Idealist and materialist paradigms of emancipation

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 book is the first part of the introduction, comprising the following subchapters: "Concerning this Book" / "The Parameters of Cultural Studies" / "Key Concepts in Cultural Studies."

FR:

- SIMON DURING, introduction, *The Cultural Studies Reader*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1999) 1-28 [WueCampus.]
 → This is a fairly advanced but very helpful text. Everybody should read at least the first couple of pages (c. 1-5), where During describes the beginnings of 'British cultural studies' in the post-war period.
- It is also a useful to read the missing sections from Barker's introduction: "The Intellectual Strands of Cultural Studies" (12-25); "Central Problems in Cultural Studies" (25-31); "Questions in Methodology" (31-38).

10/05 **'British' cultural studies**

– The historical contexts of the project & its shifting perspectives on modern culture

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 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.
 → These two subchapters from *The Oxford History of Britain* offer a concise introduction to British history from the late 1930s to the late 1960s, thus sketching 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.

17/05 **Signs & sign systems**

– The semiotic basis of cultural analysis

AR:

- ALEIDA ASSMANN, "Signs," [= ch. 1 of:] *Introduction to Cultural Studies: Topics, Concepts, Issues* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2012) 29-53. [\[See info on the following page!\]](#)

→ 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) 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.' At the same time, Assmann's take on the topic is 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 semiotics but also in relation to many other topics we are going to touch on in the course of the semester.

FR:

- DAVID CHANDLER, *Semiotics for Beginners* (1994-2023), web. [\[LINK\]](#)

Phase 2: Between cultural studies & area studies

24/05 Mapping Britain – 'Real' and imaginary geographies

- [Sections on Britain and the British Isles from:] JODY SKINNER, "The Where (Geography)," *Anglo-American Cultural Studies*, 1st ed. (UTB / Tübingen: Francke, 2009).
 → 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 (18-30). In spite of Skinner's effort to get through to his readers, the chapter will prove useless unless you use maps and other sources to pin down and flesh out the information provided.
 → Skinner's book offers a good but (very) basic introduction to both area studies (i.e. 'Landeskunde') and cultural studies. 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 can be accessed online.

31/05 History (part I):

a) History and the cultural work of narratives

b) From Stonehenge to the Tudors: Key structures and 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)

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. [See info on next page!]

→ Culler's text can be drawn on as an introduction to the 'story' aspect of hiSTORY as well as to narrative as a key cultural activity. Culler's short book is generally very useful for students of 'Anglistik/Amerikanistik.'

07/06 **Discourse, power and subjectivity:**

Masters, servants and slaves in the culture and literature of early modern England

Preparation for the lecture:

- See the HANDOUT provided on WueCampus.
→ The handout features a short but distinctly demanding literary texts. Participants will not be able to follow the lecture without preparing this text beforehand.

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.

14/06 **History (part II):**

Making the British Empire and Making modern Britain

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)
 → These 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 much 'to the point.' – 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 the 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).
- For additional reading see *The Oxford History of Britain* (especially the two samples provided above for week 3!) & the course bibliography.

Phase 3: Towards 'now'**21/06 Popular culture and the media**

AR:

- [From:] CHRIS BARKER, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2008):
 - Opener of the 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)
- The text quotes from or points at many other important texts and mentions a variety of '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' into the field of cultural studies undertaken within that context. Culler's short book 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. It is not so difficult to read, however, and therefore highly recommended.

28/06 (Im)Migration, identity, and the politics of representation

AR:

- ASSMANN, "Identity," [= ch. 7 of] *Topics, Concepts, Issues* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2012) 191-218.

→ Focus on the following sections:

 - [Opener/introduction] (191-192)
 - "Person" (192-194)
 - "Subject" (194-197)
 - "Collective identity – race, nation, culture" (204-207)
- 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.

FR:

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.

05/07 **Cultural studies and popular music**

No assigned reading for this week.

FR:

- SIMON DURING, "Popular Music," *Cultural Studies: A Critical Introduction* (Routledge, 2005) 124-135 [WueCampus].

12/07 **Wrap-up / Conclusion**

25/07, 10-12: **Final test**

! Please note that the final test takes place on a different day and at a different time than the regular meetings of the course.

TUTORIAL:

This Introduction to British Cultural Studies (Einführung in die britische Landeskunde und Kulturwissenschaft) is accompanied by a weekly tutorial (1 SWS / contact hour). Participation in the tutorial is non-mandatory but recommended. The tutorial provides an important opportunity to pose questions and to delve deeper into the topics of the lecture course. Run by advanced students according to the principle of peer-to-peer learning, the tutorial is *not* an additional lecture but a forum of dynamic exchange that depends on the lively interaction of participants. There are several alternative groups and time slots for the tutorial (please see WueStudy).

PREPARING FOR THE COURSE / BACKGROUND READING:

This introduction to cultural studies should not be considered as 'simply' a lecture but rather as a lecture *course* in the full sense of the term. Indeed, to achieve good results in the final test – and, still more importantly, to lay the foundations for their further course of study – participants will need to constantly prepare for lectures (by going back to the last lecture and by doing the reading assigned for upcoming lectures). It is also vital that participants will have done some preparatory work even *before* the beginning of the teaching period.

A SEPARATE BIBLIOGRAPHY (provided in the virtual course room on WueStudy) gives detailed suggestions for reading and research. The following titles are suggested as particularly helpful resources for starting out in the field:

- The most reliable handbook for students is **CHRIS BARKER's *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*** – now available in the 5th edition (Los Angeles: Sage, 2016), but earlier editions may also be consulted.

- The following book is written in German; it offers a quite concise but also intellectually somewhat sophisticated introduction to cultural studies: **OLIVER MARCHART, *Cultural Studies*** (UVK / UTB, 2008).
- Another useful introduction – one that approaches cultural scholarship from a perspective informed by literary studies – is **ALEIDA ASSMANN's, *Introduction to Cultural Studies: Topics, Concepts, Issues*** (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2012).
- For a brief 'graphic' introduction to the topic see: **ZIAUDDIN SARDAR and BORIN VAN LOON, *Introducing Cultural Studies: A Graphic Guide*** (2010; London: Icon Books, 2013).
- For information on British history, institutions and life see especially **JÜRGEN KAMM and BERND LENZ, *Großbritannien verstehen*** (Darmstadt: Primus, 2004), and **JODY SKINNER, *Anglo-American Cultural Studies***, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Francke / UTB, 2016).

! Note that the books by Marchart, Assmann and Skinner can all three be accessed **online** through the university's intranet and the website of the university library.