

Veranstalter .....	Prof. Dr. Stephan Karschay
Thema .....	Scandals in Literature, Culture and the Media [AA-MA4]
Art der Veranstaltung .....	Seminar III
Veranstaltungsnummer .....	53-554
Zeit .....	Di 12-14
Raum .....	Ü35 - 11041
Beginn .....	3. April 2018

### Course Description:

Scandal can be considered a relatively recent phenomenon. Only with the dissemination of print media in the nineteenth century did scandals gain their status as hidden transgressions made visible for public consumption. Therefore it is necessary to trace scandal's cultural history in order to understand and critically question our contemporary obsession with all things scandalous.

Scandals follow an observable rhythm, which is given a distinct narrative shape (both in news reports and fiction): a secret transgression (frequently sexual) which should have remained hidden from public scrutiny is disclosed to be absorbed by the public – whether or not it is true (a feature which scandal shares with ‘gossip’). The agents involved in these stories are inevitably the transgressor (of variable fame and reputation), the whistle-blower (an individual, institution, or the media) and an audience who relishes or condemns the scandalous activities of the accused. In this respect, scandals always occur at least twice: in their clandestine commission and, subsequently, in their public recapitulation.

With regard to literature, culture and the fine arts, public consumers have often been ‘scandalised’ by the perceived violation of artistic rules of decorum. Consequently, charges of obscenity and perversion have been a routine response to daring cultural products – with legal trials, official bans, and extensive media coverage the frequent upshots of an aesthetic transgression. Even though scandals can, in the above sense, be characterised as trans-historical phenomena, they always unfold within the parameters of a historically specific cultural framework. Scandals in twenty-first-century America can certainly be distinguished from their ancestors in Victorian Britain. In this seminar we will investigate a large variety of scandals in British literature, culture and the media within the complex dynamics of popularity, social normativity, transgression, state censorship and communal ostracism. Students will be asked to think about the subject in various contexts: from scandals in literature, the visual arts, theatre and film, to social and political ones.

Analysed case studies may include (but need not be limited to) the following: the art of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (1848), sensation fiction and the Road Hill House Murder (1860), the Boulton and Park scandal (1871), the Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon exposé (1885), the Cleveland Street Case (1889), the fall of Oscar Wilde (1895), Aubrey Beardsley's decadent illustrations in *The Yellow Book* (1894-7), the banning of D. H. Lawrence's novels *The Rainbow* (1915) and *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), the short reign of Edward VIII (1936), the releases of Michael Powell's thriller *Peeping Tom* (1960) and Stanley Kubrick's adaptation of *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), the Profumo Affair (1963), the debates provoked by J. G. Ballard's *Crash* (1973) and David Cronenberg's film version (1996), the political ‘sleaze’ phenomenon of the 1980s and 1990s, and scandals produced on the theatrical stage (Edward Bond's *Saved* [1965], Howard Brenton's *The Romans in Britain* [1980], Sarah Kane's *Blasted* [1995]).

We will read at least one long novel – Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* – which is interesting with regard to our subject in two complementary ways: it tells the story of a scandalous woman, and it caused something of a scandal on its publication in 1862.

**Set Text (please purchase the following edition):**

Braddon, Mary Elizabeth. *Lady Audley's Secret* [<sup>1</sup>1862]. Ed. Lyn Pykett. Oxford: Oxford U P, 2012. Print. [Oxford World's Classics] [ISBN: 978-0199577033]

Further reading material will be made available at the beginning of term.

**Workload:**

Regular contributions to seminar discussions, lively participation in teamwork, an oral group presentation, and written course work (such as reading-response papers). The seminar will conclude with a substantial term paper.

**Introductory Reading:**

Cohen, William A. "Sex, Scandal, and the Novel". *Sex Scandal: The Private Parts of Victorian Fiction*. Durham: Duke U P, 1996. 1-25. Print.

Kipnis, Laura. "Introduction". *How to Become a Scandal: Adventures in Bad Behaviour*. New York: Picador, 2010. 1-22. Print.

**Further Reading:**

Adut, Ari. *On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2008. Print.

Morrison, Jago and Susan Watkins, eds. *Scandalous Fictions: The Twentieth-Century Novel in the Public Sphere*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.

Parkes, Adam. *Modernism and the Theatre of Censorship*. Oxford: Oxford U P, 1996. Print.

Pease, Allison. *Modernism, Mass Culture, and the Aesthetics of Obscenity*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2000. Print.