

Veranstalter	Julia Lange
Thema	American "Wanderlust": Travelers, Exiles, and Expats [ENG-7, ENG-7a, ENG-13, AA7, AA11, LAA10, LAA13, AA-MA3, AA-MA4, AA-WB]
Art der Veranstaltung	Seminar II
Veranstaltungsnummer	53-565
Zeit	Blockseminar 13./14.4. und 4./5.5.18
Raum	
Beginn	13.04.18

Course description

This seminar will take you on a literary journey across Europe as filtered through the prism of American writers. Based on novels, short stories, poems, travelogues, and essays, we will explore how American writers living and traveling in Europe between the late 19th to the 21st century reflected on their expatriate experience – an experience that invariably yielded new insights and impressions into European forms of life and often led to a defamiliarized perspective on the American homeland left behind. Taking the so-called “international theme” of Henry James’ novels with its juxtaposition of The New World and The Old as a starting point, we will investigate how successive generations of American writers pursued the quest for aesthetic innovation and critically examined issues like cultural difference (and its shifting perceptions), cosmopolitanism and intensifying nationalisms against the backdrop of the horrors of two world wars that lastingly shifted power relations between Europe and America and led to the emergence of the United States as the dominant political, economic, and cultural power on the world stage in the second half of the 20th century.

Succinctly put, our seminar’s itinerary will look as follows:

Beginning our trip with a brief excursion to Mark Twain’s *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), we will proceed with Henry James’ *The Aspern Papers* (1888) before moving on to Gertrude Stein’s short book *Tender Buttons* (1914) and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933, excerpts), T.S. Elliot’s long poem "The Waste Land" (1922), Ernest Hemingway’s iconic novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), a selection from F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *Expatriate Stories*, James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room* (1956) and *Notes of a Native Son* (1955, Part III only), selections from Joseph Brodsky’s *Watermark: An Essay on Venice* (1989), before ending with Ben Lerner’s 21st-century novel *Leaving the Atocha Station* (2011).

En passant, we will equally address the fascinating pilgrimage of African American artists and intellectuals to European capitals like Paris, Berlin, and Moscow during the 1920 and 1930s. In this context, we will specifically examine how African American writers like Langston Hughes and Claude McKay conceived of the Soviet Union as a counter-image to the United States in their memoirs, i.e. as a Soviet state on which they could project their utopian ideas of a new social order marked by a lack of class conflict and racial discrimination against people of color.

Important information:

Since this is a block seminar stretching over roughly three weeks, you will need to prepare some of the assigned material in advance. I expect you to have read two novels of moderate length, namely Henry James’ *The Aspern Papers* (1888) and Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) by the beginning of our first seminar session on April 13 and 14. On May 4 and 5, two other novels will form the basis of our analysis, namely James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room* (1956) and Ben Lerner’s *Leaving the Atocha Station* (2011). Please make sure that you get copies / access to these texts and have them prepared by the dates mentioned above.

In addition, a reader with supplementary texts, including a complete course syllabus, will be made available via AGORA. If accepted to the course, you will be sent an email with the relevant login information that will grant you access to the AGORA site. Please note that most of the texts in the reader are obligatory so it is of vital importance that you register on the AGORA site once you are notified of your acceptance to the course and receive an email with the relevant login information.

Course requirements:

1. Regular participation.
2. You will need to sign up for an expert group on the first day of the seminar. This means that you will commit yourself to thoroughly prepare one text from the syllabus (incl. secondary reading, familiarity with the historical and cultural context of the decade / era in which the text is set). In the group discussion, you will play an active role and enrich the conversation with your extra knowledge.
3. Depending on your module and the credit points you would like to gain for this course, you may also have to write a term paper (length depending on your module).