

Veranstalter	Prof. Dr. Astrid Böger
Thema	Speculative Fictions of Slavery [ENG-7, ENG-7a, ENG-13, AA7, AA11, LAA10, LAA13, AA-MA01, AA-MA02, AA-MA03, AA-MA04]
Art der Veranstaltung	Seminar II
Veranstaltungsnummer	53-560
Zeit	Mo, 14-16
Raum	Ü35-01047
Beginn	06.04.2020

Course Description:

Slavery was a traumatic historical reality, which has frequently been addressed in U.S. American literature and culture even before it was officially abolished in 1863. Thus, slave narratives of the 1840s-1860s have made use of a powerful genre mix borrowing from sentimental and realist fiction but also including autobiography in order to represent the formerly unspeakable horrors of slavery from the first-hand perspective of its victims. Literary works from the 20th century such as Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) have explored non-realistic genres in order to create an *ersatz* memory of racial trauma haunting, Morrison claimed, not only African Americans into the present. Other authors including Octavia Butler have treated slavery in the form of science fiction. In this seminar we will mainly read and discuss three recent novels, Colson Whitehead's much-noted *Underground Railroad* from 2016, Ben Winter's *Underground Airlines* (also 2016), and Esi Edugyan's *Washington Black* from 2018. All three works have in common that they move beyond the realistic representation of historical reality as we thought we knew it, by re-imagining slavery with a clear bent toward the speculative and the fantastic despite their rootedness in a world that is recognizably ours. Thus, all three novels share a thematic focus on the lingering legacy of slavery in U.S. American culture even as they imagine ways out of it by thoroughly fantastic means. Different modes of transport, be it via the railroad system or air travel, serve as allegories of liberation from bondage whose effects are potentially transformative.

All students are required to purchase the following three books:

Colson Whitehead, *Underground Railroad*, ISBN-13: 978-0708898406

Ben H. Winters, *Underground Airlines*, ISBN-13: 978-1784757007

Esi Edugyan, *Washington Black*, ISBN-13: 978-1781258972

Requirements for receiving full course credit: regular attendance and active participation, excellent knowledge of the texts, via careful reading/preparation, completion of short assignments and/or in-class presentations, as well as a term paper of ca. 15 pages to be completed by the end of the semester (September 30, 2020).

Sprechstunde während der Vorlesungszeit:	Mo 16-17 Uhr u. nach Vereinbarung per E-Mail
Sprechstunde in der vorlesungsfreien Zeit:	Genaue Termine werden noch bekannt gegeben