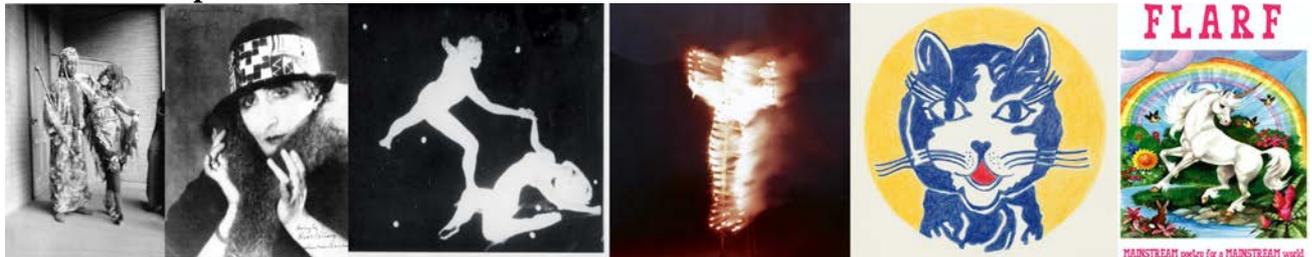


<b>Veranstalter</b> .....	<b>Marius Henderson</b>
<b>Thema</b> .....	<b>What Was and/or Is the Avant-Garde?</b> [AA-V4a/b, ENG-13, AA-MA3, AA-MA4, AA11, LAA10, LAA13, AA-W, AA-WB]
<b>Art der Veranstaltung</b> .....	<b>Seminar II</b>
<b>Veranstaltungsnummer</b> .....	<b>53-563</b>
<b>Zeit</b> .....	<b>Di 14-16</b>
<b>Raum</b> .....	<b>Phil 1219</b>
<b>Beginn</b> .....	<b>7. April 2015</b>

### Course description:



From left to right: Photo of Claude McKay & Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, 1922; *Rose Sélavy* by Marcel Duchamp & Man Ray, 1921; Film still from *The Very Eye of Night* by Maya Deren, 1958; Still from *Anima, Silueta de Cohetes (Firework Piece)* by Ana Mendieta, 1976; *Lichtenstein Laughing Cat* by Sturtevant, 1987; “FLARF: Mainstream Poetry for a Mainstream World” from [www.mainstreampoetry.blogspot.com](http://www.mainstreampoetry.blogspot.com) blog, 2007-2013.

This seminar invites you to a discussion of the notion of the avant-garde. According to several critics, notions of the avant-garde seem to be wavering between two extreme poles. On the one hand, we find renditions of the avant-garde that emphasize the ‘autonomy’ of art, and are committed to aestheticist ideals, which position art in a separated realm, isolated from ‘worldly’ concerns; e.g. social, political, economic, or other ‘use values.’ On the other hand, there are conceptualizations of the avant-garde as an attempt to tear down distinctions between ‘art’ and ‘life,’ of turning artistic practice into alternative practices of living. Where both of these positions converge is in the idea of the avant-garde as a ‘vanguard,’ a term derived from military jargon, meaning those standing at the forefront. In the context of aesthetics, avant-gardists could then be conceived of as ‘forerunners,’ who are breaking with tradition and challenging established norms.

We will start our seminar by investigating the historical development of the notion of the avant-garde. We will take a look at ‘classical’ avant-gardist positions across literary genres, but we will take other arts (e.g. film, painting, performance art, and others) into consideration as well. Thus, we will pay close attention to the vibrant cross-pollination between literature and other art forms, especially in the context of avant-garde positions.

In today’s ‘post-postmodern’ cultural climate the question remains whether ‘avant-gardism’ has become obsolete. Which artistic positions in today’s ostensibly over-saturated literary landscape can still cause an avant-garde-inflected shock and awe? Has the avant-garde been completely swallowed by the mass-market economy of a ‘culture industry’? Has the notion of the avant-garde been substituted by new terminologies? All of these questions will concern us in our seminar discussions. And we will tackle the question whether ‘avant-gardism’ necessarily implies conceptualizations of history as linearly progressive.

Yet, besides pervasive retro-phenomena, which attempt to recycle avant-garde aesthetics, what one can notice in the context of contemporary North American literature are attempts at the reinvention and re-employment of avant-garde strategies, as can be seen in phenomena like Conceptualist writing, and Metamodernism, for instance.

As the concept of the avant-garde seems to be intimately entangled with theorizations of the avant-garde, a survey of key theoretical texts on notions and aspects of the avant-garde will be crucial. Among these theoretical approaches will be positions by: Peter Bürger, Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, William James, Jacques Rancière, Clement Greenberg, Michael Fried, Susan Sontag, Guy

Debord, Douglas Crimp, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Sianne Ngai, Alain Badiou, Marjorie Perloff, Christopher Nealon, Daniel Tiffany, José Esteban Muñoz. Taking on an intersectional analytical stance, we will also scrutinize in how far notions of the avant-garde are racialized and gendered, for instance. In terms of primary texts, among others, we will look at texts by Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, Mina Loy, Jean Toomer, Maya Deren, Charles Olson, Joseph Cornell, Frank O'Hara, William S. Burroughs, Kathy Acker, Susan Howe, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Lisa Robertson, Nathaniel Mackey, Kevin Young, Chris Kraus, Harryette Mullen, The Bernadette Corporation. Of course we will also try to come to terms with many '-isms': like Dadaism, Futurism, Cubism, Imagism, Surrealism, Situationism, Conceptualism, Flarfism, Metamodernism, and several more. In addition, new avant-gardist tendencies in the field of contemporary critical cultural theory, like Accelerationism will be discussed. However, what this course will also invite you to analyze is the depiction of supposed avant-garde artists in popular culture and 'mainstream' media, for instance in the context of contemporary TV series.

An openness towards intense intellectual engagement in and out of class is crucial for this course. Moreover, a trip to the exhibition *Feministische Avantgarde der 1970er Jahre* ('The Feminist Avant-Garde of the 1970s') at the Hamburger Kunsthalle will also be an integral part of this seminar.

**Credit requirements:**

Thorough preparation of all reading material, active participation, 1 academic essay, 1 creative and analytical task, and a research paper.