

<b>Veranstalter</b>	<b>Prof. Dr. Jan D. Kucharzewski</b>
<b>Thema</b>	<b>"I know this story, like I wrote it myself": Metafiction in Postmodern and Contemporary American Literature [MA3]</b>
<b>Art der Veranstaltung</b>	<b>Seminar III</b>
<b>Veranstaltungsnummer</b>	<b>53-572</b>
<b>Zeit</b>	<b>12-14 Uhr</b>
<b>Raum</b>	<b>1250</b>
<b>Beginn</b>	<b>04.04.2016</b>

Metafiction. i.e. a form of writing that self-consciously examines its own modes of construction, has been associated with Western literature from its very beginnings. In fact, Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, which is commonly regarded to be the first novel ever written, is already a metafictional text, containing multiple narrators and a playful engagement with the question of what constitutes fiction in the first place. The same claims can be made about Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* or Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. To study metafiction is therefore to study the very foundations of the Western literary canon. In American literature, metafiction became widely associated with postmodern and neo-realist literature since the 1960s as these texts were responding to the increasingly sceptical attitudes towards concepts like truth, facts, history, reliability, certainty, and linearity. These concerns were emerging in the United States in the wake of the assassination of JFK, the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal as well as the increasing impact of media and consumerism on the public consciousness. Thus despite the accusation of being nothing but narcissistic naval-gazing by neurotic writers, metafiction is actually an artistic response to what Lyotard calls the "postmodern condition" of the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This master's seminar will discuss a variety of metafictional narratives in literature (and some films) from the late 1960s to the present day, covering the works of writers such as John Barth, Richard Brautigan, Kathy Acker, Paul Auster, Tim O'Brien, Richard Powers, David Foster Wallace, Siri Hustvedt, and Mark Z. Danielewski. We will investigate these texts not only as examinations of the very nature of writing and text but also as confrontations with an extra-textual world that ultimately resists conventional or mimetic modes of representation. Or to quote from Tim O'Brien's short story "How to Tell a True War Story" (1992): In this course we will discuss how literature can adequately deal with a postmodern world in which "truths are contradictory."

### **Course Requirements**

Students are expected to purchase the required reading (approx. 4 novels and a reader) at the beginning of the semester. The reading progress will be checked on a regular basis. Not meeting the reading requirements will result in failing the class. Students will have to write short reading responses (a single paragraph) for each session as a basis for the discussion. As this is a master's class, students are expected to engage in active, lively, opinionated, and informed discussions. The grade for the class will factor in oral participation with 25%. The "Prüfungsleistung" for this class consists of three short academic papers (5-7 pages) that will have to be written in the course of semester in connection with the mandatory "Composition II" seminar.

<b>Sprechstunde während der Vorlesungszeit:</b>	<b>Montags 15-16 Uhr</b>
<b>Sprechstunden während der vorlesungsfreien Zeit:</b>	

