

## The 1950s

[ENG-7/a, AA-V4a/b, ENG-13, AA-MA3, AA-MA4, AA7, AA11, LAA10, AA13, AA-W, AA-WB]

**Monday 10:00 am – 12:00 pm**

**Room Phil 1219**

**Course starts: 3 April, 2017**

US-American culture of the 1950s is characterized by contradictory tendencies: compliance, conformity *and* rebellion. Thus, on the one hand there is a politically conservative climate, the Cold War and the aftermath of the ultimate horrors of the Second World War. The expression “the tranquilized fifties,” coined by the poet Robert Lowell, alludes to this atmosphere of disillusionment and to the retreat into suburban environments, middle-class values and excessive materialism. On the other hand, this sobered atmosphere is challenged by various counter cultures such as the Beat Movement, by a lively art and music scene and the Civil Rights Movement.

In this seminar, we will take a closer look at these tendencies and will discuss artworks from different media: literature, music, visual arts, photography, TV, film, poetry and drama.

### **Please note:**

➔ Active participation in the form of oral reports and presentations is a *vital* part of this seminar. In many cases, we will discuss the artworks that *you* choose. Thus, no silent merging into the margins is possible in this class. Please take this into consideration when enrolling for this course as you will be called to action.

### **Introductory material:**

John Aldridge, *After the Lost Generation*, 1951

Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination*, 1950

### **We will read and study the following texts:**

In the AGORA room:

#### **Essay:**

Norman Mailer, “The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster” (1959)

#### **Drama:**

Arthur Miller, *The Crucible* (1953)

Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)

#### **Poetry:**

Beat Poetry:

- Allan Ginsberg, from “Howl” (1956)
- Allan Ginsberg, “A Supermarket in California” (1956)
- The San Francisco Renaissance:
- Gary Snyder, “Riprap” (1959)

The Black Mountain Poets:

- Charles Olson, “Maximus, to Himself” (1953)

The New York School of Poetry:

- John Ashbery, “Illustration” (1956)
- Frank O’Hara, “The Day Lady Died” (1959)

- Robert Lowell, “Memories of West Street and Lepke” (1959)

**Please purchase:**

Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (1952)

Sylvia Plath, *The Bell Jar* (1963)

**Credit requirements:**

- ◆ Regular attendance (attendance will be recorded)
- ◆ Oral contribution
- ◆ Seminar paper of 15-20 pages