

Veranstalter	Katrin Becker, M.Ed.
Titel	Narrating Class in Contemporary London Fiction: Zadie Smith and John Lanchester
Modul	[ENG-6, ENG-6a, AA-V3a, AA-V3b, ENG-12, AA7, AA10, LAA9, LAA12, AA-MA01, AA-MA02, AA-MA6, AA-WB]
Art der Veranstaltung	Seminar II
Veranstaltungsnr.	53-544
Zeit	Mo, 16-18 c.t.
Ort/Raum	Ü35; Raum 01016
Beginn	16.10.2017

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In sociology, few concepts have as frequently and as fervently been carried to the grave and reanimated as the notion of *class*. Whether the concept is of any analytical value for the study of more or less contemporary fiction is no less disputed. Critical perspectives range from observing a 'demise' of 'class fiction' since the late 1970s (cf. Head), and an emergence of new brands of 'classless fiction' since the 1980s (cf. Bradford), to analysing 'evasions' of class on the surface of these texts which purportedly remain inscribed by class prejudice and class affiliation on a 'subterranean' level (cf. Driscoll).

At the onset of the 2010s, however, it seems that *class* has actually returned as an explicit theme in realist fiction, which is reason enough to reconsider these entrenched debates on whether and how to address the question of *class* in the current historical moment. In this seminar, we will explore how socio-economic inequality is represented in cultural terms with regard to two urban novels published in 2012: John Lanchester's best-selling and very accessible *Capital*, and Zadie Smith's critically acclaimed, refreshingly experimental *NW*.



Source: <http://www.thesocialist.us/revolutionary-comics/>

In terms of social theory, we will adopt Pierre Bourdieu's approach to class analysis, which allows for a combined focus on both economic and cultural modes of social stratification as a dynamic process. We will further explore how the texts participate in what Bourdieu calls "symbolic struggles over the power to produce and to impose the legitimate vision of the [social] world", over "the production of common sense" ("Social Space and Symbolic Power" 20, 21). With an eye on both ideological pitfalls as well as social critique, we will discuss how these novels have tackled the pressing issue of socio-economic inequality in present-day Britain. Moreover, we will of course also address questions of literary form and genre, for instance by comparing Lanchester's and Smith's specific inflections of literary realism and the 'state-of-the-nation' narrative.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

regular attendance, thorough preparation of set texts (with the help of guiding questions), active participation in class, short presentation ("Impulsreferat"), term paper (for those who wish to receive max. number of credits)

! Please purchase both novels in the following (affordable) paperback editions:

Smith, Zadie. *NW*. London: Penguin, 2013.

Lanchester, John. *Capital*. London: Faber and Faber, 2013.

! AND: After dealing with social and literary theory on *class* in the first sessions, we will move on to Lanchester's *Capital* in November – in other words: Do start reading :)

Sprechstunde	Nach Vereinbarung per Mail (Katrin.Becker-2@studium.uni-hamburg.de)
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