

<b>Veranstalter:</b>	<b>Prof. Dr. Ute Berns</b>
<b>Modul:</b>	<b>Contagion! Plagues and Pandemics in British Literature and Culture</b> [AA-MA06]
<b>Art der Veranstaltung:</b>	<b>Seminar IV</b>
<b>Veranstaltungsnummer:</b>	<b>53-555</b>
<b>Zeit:</b>	<b>2st. Mo 10-12</b>
<b>Raum:</b>	
<b>Beginn:</b>	<b>02.11.2020</b>
<p><b>Course description:</b></p> <p>This seminar will explore the concept of “contagion” and its multi-facetted functions in literary representations of plagues and pandemics. Already in the Middle Ages, in the context of the pandemic referred to as “the Plague” or the “Black Death”, the term “contagion” has been used in a medical sense to describe “the person-to-person transmission by touch, breath, occasionally sight” (Cohen 2008). And even before that, contagion was used by historians and theologians “to indicate the spread of heretical or revolutionary ideas” (King/Rütten 2013). Although the speculative nature of medical contagion gave way to the discovery of the “microbe” at the end of the nineteenth century (and later the “virus”), the cultural uses and abuses of the term have continued to oscillate between concept and metaphor, medical and social meaning. “Contagion” shaped discourses of “degeneration” in the 1890s and discourses of “AIDS” in the 1980s; the ideas of the French Revolution were deemed “contagious” and so were those of the suffragette movement.</p> <p>In this seminar, we will use the concept of contagion as an inroad to the study of fictional representations of plagues and pandemics from the 18<sup>th</sup>. century to today. We will explore selected historical contexts and we will draw on concepts from the medical humanities to analyse how the concept of contagion features in literary texts. How is the concept linked to strategies of blaming, policing, and ostracizing contagious bodies and ideas and how do literary texts strengthen or undermine this linkage? And how is the concept used, on a metaphorical level, to highlight the rapid transmission and circulation of ideas – not least through literary texts themselves? Students will be encouraged to formulate further research questions that may – or may not – arise in the contemporary Covid culture.</p> <p>Primary texts in the first half of the seminar will include short stories by Edgar Allan Poe and H. G. Wells, as well as Mary Shelley’s novel <i>The Last Man</i> (1826). While moving into the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the seminar will continuously trace the relation between contagion and culture, the particulars of which have varied with the specific time and place. Our discussion will move towards Graham Swift’s novel <i>Wish You Were Here</i> (2011) and leave room for material that emerges from the persisting Covid context.</p> <p>This course will collaborate closely with the companion course referring to American Literature and Culture. In January our two courses together will host a talk by an invited guest, Prof. Dr. Monika Pietrzak-Franger, author of the study <i>Syphilis in Victorian Literature and Culture</i>, (2018).</p> <p><b>Course requirements:</b></p> <p>Regular attendance of our digital sessions and excellent knowledge of the set texts/films; course assignments (e.g. reading responses, or participation in expert groups) during the semester and (to receive the maximum credit points) a term paper.</p>	
<b>Sprechstunden im Semester:</b>	s. Sprechstundenliste
<b>Sprechstunden in der vorlesungsfreien Zeit:</b>	s. Sprechstundenliste