

Veranstalter.....	Paul Hamann
Thema.....	Of Neurons, Neutrons and Nucleic Acids: Science in Contemporary British Fiction
Art der Veranstaltung.....	Seminar II
Veranstaltungsnummer.....	53-547
Zeit.....	Mo 10-12 c.t.
Raum.....	Phil 1250
Beginn.....	24. Oktober 2016 (zweite Semesterwoche!)

Course description

First of all: do not worry, no previous knowledge of science is required for this course!

Instead of testing you on general relativity, we will debate whether a scientific concept such as general relativity changes when it is expressed as part of a literary text rather than a scientific textbook or journal. Does the medium of literature *do* something to Einstein's theories or Mendel's genetics (and if so, what?) that affects the way in which they are meaningful? And how does a literary portrayal of science reflect on scientific practice as social action? Are all scientists mad and set on destroying the world?

In this seminar, we will be concerned with two major points of interest: one, the formal aspects of how scientific ideas are represented and utilised in fiction and, two, the social dimension of science, for instance as regards the scientist as literary character or the social influence on scientific knowledge and practice.

In order to approach this complex web of poetics and social analysis, we will begin the semester by discussing more generally the relations between science and literature before moving on to investigate literary texts from a growing body of British fiction that has emerged roughly since the early 1990s and which negotiates science with unprecedented sincerity and sophistication. To differentiate these texts, the best of which self-reflexively use science to test the boundaries of the literary form, from science fiction, such labels have been suggested as *science in fiction* or, for the novels, *science novels*.

Over the course of the semester, we will debate the reasons for this new trend in literary production; scrutinise the formal means by which these texts represent science and its practitioners; as well as analyse the conflicts that arise between science and society. We will discuss novels and short stories that deal, respectively, with concepts from the fields of physics, cognitive science/neuroscience and genetics.

Most of the **course material** will be made available to you via Agora once term has commenced but the following novel by Pippa Goldschmidt you will have to buy:

Pippa Goldschmidt. *The Falling Sky*. Glasgow: Freight Books, 2014.

Also, please note that this course begins in the second week of the semester.

Course requirements

Regular attendance and participation, occasional homework assignments/response papers as well as a research paper of about 12-15 pages

In case you want to start reading up on the topic before term begins:

Clarke, Bruce and Manuela Rossini. *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Science*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Sprechstunde in der Vorlesungszeit:	Mondays, 12 p.m. - 1 p.m.
Sprechstunde in der vorlesungsfreien Zeit:	appointments via email