British and American Cultural Studies
Theories and Methods

Lecturer: Univ.-Prof. PD Dr. Stefan L. Brandt (‘Brückenprofessor’)  
Room and time: Room 1 (Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik), Fridays 14-16 Uhr - First session: March 9, 2012

Course description: In this course, we will discuss pivotal texts from British and American Cultural Studies, ranging from Cultural Materialism, Film Theory, and Gender Studies to New Historicism, Postcolonialism, and Transnational Studies. The main idea is to present students with the whole gamut of potential approaches in contemporary cultural theory. One insight that participants of the course can gain is that different epistemological perspectives may lead to different results in terms of interpretation and ‘meaning.’ In other words, there is not just one truth, but many different truths, depending on the theoretical lens employed by the interpreter. Students may regard this course as a useful overview, since all major theories and methods of Cultural Studies will be introduced.

Methods: Presentations by students, based on PowerPoint and 4-page handouts to be distributed in class; close readings and analyses of key theoretical texts; forum discussions on Moodle. All texts are available on Moodle: https://moodle.univie.ac.at/.

Aims: It is the aim of this course to support students to explore and apply relevant theoretical approaches from British and American Cultural Studies as part of the process of structuring a Master’s or diploma thesis.

Form of control: Regular attendance; active in-class participation; presentation as part of an expert session with 4-page handout to be distributed in class; reading assignments; occasional quizzes; at least 9 elaborate entries in the discussion forum.

Syllabus
Mar. 9  Introduction – What Are Cultural Studies?
Basic texts (recommended):

Mar. 16  “Get into the Groove” – Theories of Popular Culture
Main texts (obligatory):

Mar. 23  Reading Culture - Theories of Representation and Communication (Birmingham School)
Main texts (obligatory):
Examples: Television, Journals, Newspapers, Commercials, Paintings, Graphic Illustrations, Blogs.

Mar. 30  “Hyper Hyper” – Media Theory, Consumer Culture, and Simulated Realities
Main texts (obligatory):
Examples: Television, Advertising, Media Images (e.g., Vietnam, 9/11, 2012 U.S. Election, etc.)

Apr. 6 & 13 No class! (Easter Holiday)
Relax and enjoy!
Apr. 20

“Strike a Pose” - Gender Studies and Performance Theory
Main texts (obligatory):
Examples: Performance Culture, Music, Theater, Video Clips, Everyday Life.

Apr. 27

Independent Study Unit
You will receive an assignment to do at home.

May 4

Cinematic Pleasures – Film Theory, Psychology, and Phenomenology
Main texts (obligatory):
Examples: Mainstream and Independent Cinema, Photography, Film Stills.

May 11

Race Matters – Ethnicity and Whiteness Studies
Main texts (obligatory):
Examples: Ethnic Literature and Film, Mainstream Portrayals of Race and Ethnicity, Advertisements.

May 18

“Can the Subaltern Speak?” Postcolonialism and the Invention of the ‘Other’
Main texts (obligatory):
Homi K. Bhabha, “Introduction” to The Location of Culture, 1994, 1-18.
Examples: (Post-)Colonial Literature and Cinema, Images and Postcards.

May 25

The Politics of Culture - Cultural Materialism and New Historicism
Main texts (obligatory):

June 1

Independent Study Unit
You will receive an assignment to do at home.

June 8

“Into the Wild” – Nature and Environmental Studies (Eco Criticism)
Main texts (obligatory):

June 15

Inside/Out – Queer Theory and Minority Studies
Main texts (obligatory):
Examples: Mainstream Texts, Queer & Independent Cinema, Sitcoms, Cultural Events.

June 22

Caught in the Matrix – Posthuman Studies and Technoculture
Main texts (obligatory):
Examples: Internet, Digital Culture, Video Games, Facebook, Smartphones, Blogs, Augmented Reality.

June 29

Towards a New Consciousness – Transnationalism, Hybridity, and Border Studies
Main texts (obligatory):
Examples: Transnational/Transcultural Literature and Cinema, Mixed/Hybrid Identities.