



**american studies graz**  
Institut für Amerikanistik



## **Christa Holm Vogelius - Visiting Lecturer**

Department of English, Germanic and Romance Studies – University of Copenhagen

**Nov. 26 - Nov. 30**

**Mon. Nov 26, 9.00 – 10.30:**

### **“Loving Literature— Challenges and Opportunities”**

PS “Loving Literature: Reading,  
Studying, Teaching”, (SR 34.D2)  
Silvia Schiltermandl

**Tue. Nov 27, 11.45 – 13.15:**

### **“Emily Dickinson and Photography”**

VO “Genres/Periods of American  
Literature (Poetry and Its Publics in  
the U.S.”, (HS 34.K1)  
Nassim Balestrini

**Wed. Nov 28, 13.30 – 15.00:**

### **“Arguments from the Visual Archive: Two Case Studies”**

VO “Foundations of Cultural Theory”,  
(HS 06.02) Klaus Rieser

**Thur. Nov 29, 13.30 – 15.00:**

### **“Jacob Riis’s Image- Texts, Race and Reform”**

DQ “Storytelling, Intermediality, and  
Transmediality (Current Research  
Approaches to Interfaces between  
Narratology and Inter-  
Transmediality”, (SR 34.D2)  
Nassim Balestrini, Irina Rajewsky



**Christa Holm Vogelius** is an assistant professor of American Studies at the University of Copenhagen, where she works on nineteenth and twentieth century American literature and visual culture. She has recent work out or forthcoming in *ESQ*, *Legacy*, and *Poe Studies*, and is completing a monograph on nineteenth century women writers and literary conceptions of originality, derivation, and reproduction. Her new research on Riis will take shape both as a traditional monograph and a series of exhibits.

### **Abstract “Jacob Riis’s Image-Texts, Race, and Reform”**

This project examines the work of American photo-journalist Jacob Riis through the lens of sentimentality, racial ethics, and turn-of-the-century notions of reform. While Riis’s use of sentimental appeals—and more broadly tropes of the domestic novel— are often unacknowledged or dismissed by critics, these tactics reveal essential aspects of his racial and national reform project. Riis, I argue, is heir to mid-nineteenth century theories of racial evolution that liberally blended Lamarckism and Darwinism, figuring personal and racial evolution as a process that could take place through environmental influence. Riis’s sentimentality, I argue, centers in large part on his own Danish upbringing, and his projects for reform are modelled on ideals of domesticity from this period.

In this paper, I read Riis’s classic reform texts such as *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) in the light of much more critically overlooked works such as *The Making of an American* (1901) and *The Old Town* (1909) to argue that Riis’s national nostalgia deeply influences his ideas about integration within the multi-national and multi-racial setting of New York’s Lower East Side. The combination of text, halftone print, and woodcut images in all of these works builds up a nuanced argument regarding priorities for reform in the late nineteenth century, while the intermediality of these works was the characteristic that allowed them to succeed when so many other reform texts from the previous decades failed to have the same impact.

## **Information & Contact**

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