

According to newer theories, the idea of culture can no longer refer to a homogeneous and harmonic state of being – instead these theories define cultures as necessarily hybrid, mixed and diasporic. The object and intention of these views is always the destabilization of concepts of dominance and the attempt to think not in terms of either/or but of multiplicity. In spite of, or maybe because of this multiplicity the concept of "Multiculturalism" has come under heavy scrutiny: does the "happy multicultural society" foreclose or obscure differences? Does it force assimilation instead of preserving minority cultures? Is multiculturalism inevitably an elitist idea?

But then again: Is there any other way than to become a multiculturalist? The turf remains heavily contested as postmodern societies try to strike a balance between necessary differences and the most common denominator.

With respect to the fact that multiple cultures can only be defined from multiple perspectives, the conference's title proposes to open up the necessary "spaces of contradiction". What are these spaces, where do we find them - where do cultures take place? As one of the prominent sites of cultural production, the urban space brings forth syntheses of cultures, mixtures and hybrids – it is the primary site of negotiation and also conflict. Furthermore, the multicultural coincides with the multimedial: Does the technological revolution of the information age work to eliminate differences wherever the necessary infrastructure exists, how can we grasp culture when cyberspace assumedly levels national borders? Do multiple cultures spread their influence via the internet, or does a new form of leveling take place, are there new concepts which appear in an environment outside the traditional borderlines?

Certainly, the question of the dominant and the marginal have to be addressed. Hegemonic patterns and lines of discrimination continue to exist in multicultural societies – how can they be changed or overcome without foreclosing differences? In how far are marginal cultures forcibly "mainstreamed" and what are their strategies of resistance? How do minorities resist segregation and how do they affirm themselves? How does one discriminate between cultural self-affirmation and isolationism? And also, how does this relate to our task as students of trying to understand and analyze foreign cultures, or our own? Are multicultural societies comparable?

The new concepts and realities of culture – focusing on hybridity, the diaspora and the multiple - leave no room for easy antinomies like "it's them or us". Inevitably addressing the political, the conference will focus on questions like these and others, all relating to the interaction of multiple cultures and identities, and the perspectives arising therefrom. It will also take into account our very own and personal stance and position in a cultural framework which is getting increasingly intertwined, be it in the media, politics, academia or cyberspace.

Students of all faculties are invited to present original or seminar papers on the topic, join the discussions or just listen.

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The American Studies Program at Humboldt-Universität
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Organizers

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For possible changes to the program, as well as for further information and background material, please consult the web site of the conference at

www2.hu-berlin.de/amerika/projects/multiplecultures

Multiple Cultures – Multiple Perspectives

Questions of Identity and Urbanity in a Transnational Context. 3rd Annual Students Conference, May 15-17, 2003



Thursday, May 15, 2003

16:00 - 17:00: Opening of the Conference
UL 6, R 3119

Philipp Kneis, Simon Strick, Claudia Schwarz
Opening Address

Matthias Oppermann
Keynote Address:
Story, Archive, Apparatus. American Studies Decentered

17:20 - 18:00: Reception
UL 6, R 2004 A

18:00 - 20:00: Guest Lecture
UL 6, R 2097

Prof. Bob Boyer,
Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, Regina, Canada
The History of Aboriginal Art and How it Affects Bob Boyer

This talk is part of the lecture series
"Citizenship and Multiculturalism in Canada.
Cultural Difference and Identity Construction".

(www2.hu-berlin.de/amerika/projects/kanada)

Friday, May 16, 2003

UL 6, R 3119

10:00 - 12:00: Session I

Chair: Philipp Kneis

Christoph Raetzsch
Cultural Hybridity

Bert Bobock
Identity Formation and the Internet

12:00 - 13:30: Lunch Break

13:30 - 16:00: Session II

Chair: Jennifer Evans

Eddie Bruce
Afro-German Identity: A Diasporic Literature

Simon Strick
Emulation-Dialogics-Diaspora: Strategies of Intercultural Translation in German Minority Rap

Carsten Junker
On the Difficulty of Being White and Not Racist

16:00 - 16:30: Coffee Break

16:30 - 19:00: Session III

Chair: Susann Neuenfeldt

Beatrice Michaelis, Elahe Haschemi Yekani
"Where are the Lesbians?" - The Topography of Lesbian Desire in 1950s and 1960s America in the Pulp Novels of Ann Bannon

Philipp Kneis
"Friends of Ours." Strategies of Minority Self-Assertion and Self-Definition on "The Sopranos"

Ben Letzler
"A sliced tomato you have maybe": Jewish-American Literature and the Question of Food

Round-Up Discussion

Saturday, May 17, 2003

UL 6, R 3119

10:00 - 12:00: Session IV

Chair: Claudia Schwarz

Sladjia Blazan
Gender and Migration in Contemporary Slavic American Literature

Laimas Fergizas
Refugee Migration as Founding Basis of Multiculturalism

12:00 - 13:30: Lunch Break

13:30 - 16:00: Session V

Chair: Anne Koch-Rein

Alexandra von Barsewisch
Bordering on Images: Reflections on the Film The Garden of Eden by Maria Novaro

Steven Corcoran
Multiculturalism and Universality

Michael Funk

Searching for Room at the Inn: Minority Conservatism and the Critique of Multiculturalism

16:00 - 16:30: Coffee Break

16:30 - 19:00: Session VI

Chair: Simon Strick

Kim Förster
Reading New York City and Other Cities in Novel Ways. The Construction of New Meanings of Urban Spaces in and through Paul Auster's New York Trilogy

Manuela Thiel
American Indians and U.S. Higher Education

Claudia Schwarz
"A Nuyorican State of Mind."

On Nuyorican Poetry and the Refusal to be Colonized.

19:15 - 20:00: Concluding Discussion

Chair: Hannes Schaser

Closing of the Conference

(all times s.t.)