

Vorträge für Schüler der Neuen Oberstufe an Gymnasien
Admission free
registration: 089-552537-20 or bibliothek@amerikahaus.de

Monday, 3 May 2010, 5:30 p.m.

Comic-Superheroes as a Mirror of American Culture

Speaker:

Daniel Wüllner, M.A., Amerika –Institut der LMU München

When in 1938 Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel created *Superman*, they weren't aware that they produced a milestone in the history of American popular culture. The publication of *Action Comics* #1, the first *Superman* story, occurred synchronous with the birth of a new medium, the comic book. In contrast to its predecessor, the comic strip, the comic book was the first medium addressing exclusively teenaged readers. *Superman* became the prototype for a whole range of comic superheroes to come. While the concept of these comic-superheroes is still the same, these comics interestingly adapted to the socio-cultural climate of America history.

The presentation focuses on the medium comic book and its most famous protagonist, the superhero, as a socio-historical parameter of American Culture. Using examples from the medium's history, we will examine superheroes' struggle for workers' rights in the late 30s and the use of comics during World War II. While in the second half of the 20th century the confidence in the American government diminishes, superheroes directly address these problems: From the fear of an atomic bomb in the 60s to the economic problems during the Regan era, superheroes reflect the lack of trust in American politics. Even today, after the September 11th and the Patriot Act, superheroes lend their voice to illustrate the problematic issues. Through examination of the use of violence, the construction of the hero in mainstream-comics, I will not only show the importance of comic-superheroes for the American culture, but I will also provide the tools to analyze America via its popular culture.

Monday, 14 June 2010, 5:30 p.m.

Trust No One? Conspiracy Theories in American History

Speaker:

Dr. Markus Hünemörder, LMU München

American history is marked by episodic occurrences of what Richard Hofstadter called the "Paranoid Style" in American politics. In the late eighteenth-century, conservatives in New England feared that the Illuminati were trying to bring godlessness and the guillotine to America. Today, about a third of Americans do not believe the official explanations for the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Almost three quarters doubt that John F. Kennedy was killed by a lone gunman, instead blaming a conspiracy that might include the CIA, the KGB, the mafia, Fidel Castro, Lyndon B.

Johnson or even John F. Kennedy himself. This lecture will examine some of the most famous conspiracy theories in American history, some reasons why conspiracy theories are so frequent and persistent, and the role they play in American political and popular culture

Monday, 28 June 2010, 5:30 p.m.

We Shall Overcome – Music of the Civil Rights Movement

Speaker:

Markus Faltermeier, M.A., Amerika-Institut der LMU München

The struggle for civil rights during the 1960s was one of the crucial moments in American social history. The march to Washington, D.C., Martin Luther King's "I had a dream" speech as well as many other significant events have since then been planted into the American cultural memory. This movement for social freedom and equality had its own soundtrack. Black as well as white musicians wrote the songs that accompanied the movement. These songs are still known and recall particular situations in American history: Thousands of people joining in on Pete Seegers "We shall overcome", Bob Dylan on the same stage as Dr. King singing "A hard rain's gonna fall". This lecture will try to give an insight into the significant role that music played during the Civil Rights Movement.

Monday, 12 July 2010, 5:30 p.m.

"Broadway and Beyond: American Drama in the 20th Century"

Speaker:

Dr. Kerstin Schmidt, Amerika-Institut der LMU

This lecture will provide a survey of American drama in the 20th century. Although we will also look at plays that were produced for a mainstream Broadway audience, the focus of this lecture will be on the more innovative American theater scene. We will go "beyond Broadway" and discuss the work of experimental American playwrights that were committed to exploring the boundaries of theater and have often dealt with race, class, and gender as critical and contested issues in 20th-century American society. Dramatists to be considered include Thornton Wilder, Arthur Miller, Edward Albee, Jean-Claude van Itallie, Amiri Baraka, Ntozake Shange, Marsha Norman, Wendy Wasserstein, Suzan-Lori Parks and several others.

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