

## **Kazuo Ishiguro: Aesthetics, Subjectivity and Collectivity**

Time: THU 16-18 // Philosophie-Gebäude, Ü 21

**! Please read the following carefully before enrolling for the seminar.**

Students are kindly asked to 'unenroll' from the seminar (and also from its WueCampus site) if they should realize that the seminar is not suitable for them.

### **Seminar description** (long)

The decision to award the 2017 Nobel Prize in Literature to Kazuo Ishiguro may have been unexpected. Yet it did not come as a real surprise. Indeed, the quality of Ishiguro's fiction is in its uncanny knack of assessing and worrying – and perhaps of simultaneously affirming (?) – British discursive heartlands from a strategically decentred perspective. In feeling the depths – i.e. the strange tenacity as well as the unavoidable datedness – of dominant British constructions of subjectivity and collectivity, the novelist's chief tool has been a heightened awareness of both the inclusionary and the exclusionary power of the aesthetics of language. The seminar will try to discover the methods, the ideological implications and the multi-faceted reception of Ishiguro's art. This is a seminar for devoted readers who are interested also in literary criticism, cultural theory and British history.

In the course of the semester, we will discuss three of Ishiguro's eight novels in full:

- *A Pale View of Hills* (1982) [ISBN-13: 978-0571258253]
- *The Remains of the Day* (1989) [ISBN-13: 978-0571200733]
- *Never Let Me Go* (2005) [ISBN-13: 978-0571224142]

It is recommended that students get exactly these editions.

Please try to have the books ready at the beginning of the semester and read *A Pale View of Hills* before the first meeting on 12 April.

We will also read *extracts* from two other novels by Ishiguro, *When We Were Orphans* (2000) and *The Buried Giant* (2015). You need not necessarily buy these additional two books. However, reading them in full may still be an idea.

### **The level of the seminar**

This seminar is catalogued as a 'Hauptseminar.' While access to courses is not systematically restricted at JMU, the classification of seminars as 'Proseminare', 'Hauptseminare' and 'Oberseminare,' which has been introduced in the domain of English Literature and British Cultural Studies (Lehrstuhl für Englische Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft), aims to provide students with a clear idea as to the level and requirements of particular courses. Here (in German) is the definition a 'Hauptseminar':

Hauptseminare richten sich an BA- und Lehramts-Studierende ab dem 4. Fachsemester sowie an Masterstudierende. Sie sind um zentrale Themen und Texte der anglistischen Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft organisiert und bieten einen vertiefenden Einblick in verschiedene Epochen, Gattungen, Medien oder Methoden. (See the SUV catalogue on the chair's website: [LINK.](#))

In your own interest – but also in the interest of the seminar which you are planning to attend –, please make sure that this description matches your competence and expectations. Prospective participants should have successfully completed at least the required introductory courses as well as at least one seminar on a less advanced level.

### **Preparing for the seminar / Assignment for the first meeting**

This seminar requires preparation before the first meeting. →

**a) Please make sure to have read *A Pale View of Hills* by 12 April.**

**b) Assignment for the first meeting:**

Briefly respond to the following questions:

- What have you been able to find out about the gestation and reception of *A Pale View of Hills*?
- What strikes you as significant, noteworthy or unusual about the novel?  
(You might for example think about the topics or the plot of the novel, its ideational or ideological implications, its narrative technique or its use of language.)
- From which perspective/s should this novel be discussed in the seminar?
- Thinking about the seminar as a whole:  
Which questions and topics should we address/emphasize in discussing Ishiguro's work in the course of the semester?

*Please be ready to present your views and findings during the first meeting.*