Introduction to British Cultural Studies
(Einführung in die britische Landeskunde und Kulturwissenschaft)

Time: WED, 16-18 // Room: Philosophie-Gebäude, Hörsaal 2

Office hrs: Thu 12.30-13.30 // Room 5/E/20 (Please enter your name in the list next to my office door.)

23/10 Introduction
   a) Scope and objectives of the course
   b) Organizational issues and general principles
   c) The resonance of ‘Culture’

30/10 Cultural studies
   A first outline of the history, objectives, and objects of (British) cultural studies

06/11 Cultural sign systems and cultural spaces
   Communication, representation, convention

13/11 Mapping Britain
   ’Real’ and ‘imaginary’ geographies

[20/11 Buß- und Bettag]

27/11 History (part I)
   a) ‘History’ and the cultural work of narratives
   b) From ‘Stonehenge’ to ‘the Tudors’ – Key structures and key constructions of pre-modern history

04/12 Discourse, power and subjectivity
   Masters, servants and slaves in early-modern culture and literature

11/12 History (part II)
   Making modern Britain and making the British Empire

18/12 War and memory
   War culture and the cultural management of violence

08/01 Popular culture and the media
   Practices and theories in Britain after the Second World War

15/01 Politics
   The political system and political culture in contemporary Britain

22/01 (Im)migration, identity, and the politics of representation
   Discourses of nationality and ethnicity

29/01 Cultural studies and popular music / Wrap-up
   Performance, subjectivity and media culture

*****

11/02, 10-12, room TBA — Final test
General classification of the course (SUV category):


Course description:

"Culture is the software that determines our lives" (Rainer Winter). British cultural studies want to understand how this 'software' shapes us and our social environment. However, cultural studies are just as interested in how we – as cultural, social and political agents – shape the 'software.' The goal is to throw fresh light on ways of representing, feeling and acting that are usually taken for granted. In consequence, cultural studies are practical and theoretical at the same time.

The lecture will provide an introduction to both the specific 'project' of British cultural studies and to the study of British history, society and culture more generally. On the one hand, we will discuss key concepts in cultural theory and discuss a selection of exemplary cultural phenomena. On the other hand, we will not fail to address the geographic, historical, political and institutional basics of life in Britain and some of its former colonies.

Assessment will be through a written exam.

Preparing for the course:

This introduction to cultural studies should not be considered simply as lecture but as a lecture course in the full sense of the term. In order to achieve good results in the final test – and, perhaps still more importantly, in order to lay the foundations for your further course of study in relation to the history, societies and cultures of the Anglophone world – it will be necessary to constantly prepare for lectures all through the course of the semester (by going back to the last lecture and by doing the assigned reading for upcoming lectures).

As pointed out in the original course description, it is also vital that participants will have done some preparatory work even before the first meeting takes place on 23 October:

➔ In preparation for the lecture course, students are asked to obtain and read Aleida Assmann's *Introduction to Cultural Studies: Topics, Concepts, Issues* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2012) [c. € 18,-].

Another valuable resource to be used in preparation for the course and in preparation for individual course meetings is Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* – now available in the 5th edition (Los Angeles: Sage, 2016), but earlier editions may also be consulted.


For information on British history, institutions and life see especially Jürgen Kamm and Bernd Lenz, *Großbritannien verstehen* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2004), and Jody Skinner, *Anglo-American Cultural Studies*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Francke / UTB, 2016) [note that the latter book can be accessed online through the portal of the university library].