

Winter Term 2009/10

W.E.B. Du Bois Lectures
Tuesday, 18.30 - 20.00
Dorotheenstr. 24 (Hegelplatz)
Room 1.501
10099 Berlin-Mitte

The W.E.B. Du Bois Lectures
are sponsored by

Institute for the International Education of
Students (IES),

Embassy of the United States of America, Berlin

and

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik

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For possible changes in the lecture program please
consult our American Studies homepage
<http://www.angl.hu-berlin.de/>

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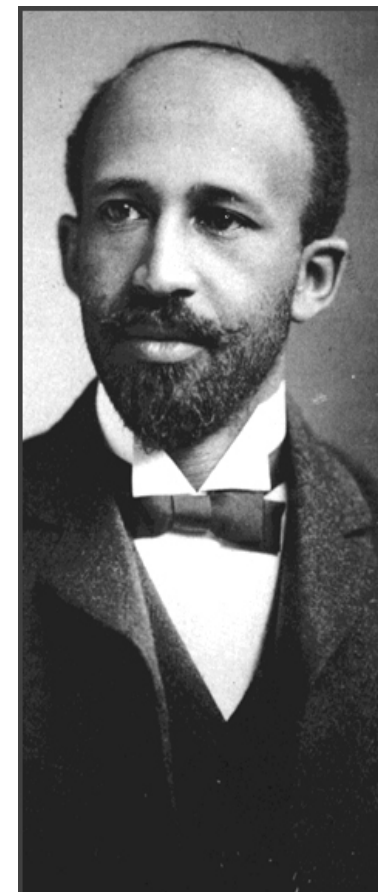
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W.E.B. Du Bois Lectures



American Studies

W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963)

The **W. E. B. Du Bois Lecture Series** in American Culture Studies sets out to offer new contributions to the urgently needed intercultural dialogue by inviting scholars and intellectuals to give lectures open to a wider audience that address some of the crucial aspects and problems of public culture and the modes of cultural critique today. The lectures are named in honor of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868 to 1963) an important and influential intellectual, scholar, public figure, and writer of 20th century America. After doing graduate work at Harvard University, he was a doctoral student at Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität (now Humboldt-Universität) from 1892 to 1894. In Berlin he studied with Gustav von Schmoller, Adolf Wagner, Heinrich von Treitschke, and Max Weber. The first African American ever to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard in 1895, he was subsequently professor of economics and history at Atlanta University from 1897 to 1910 and became widely known for his numerous historical and analytical studies of the social, economic, political, and cultural status of black people in the United States. In his famous book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), which combined political essays, cultural critique, autobiographical sketches, and fiction, Du Bois elaborated his notion of the inescapable "double-consciousness" that characterizes the lives of black Americans and his vision of the crucial role racial conflicts were to play all over the world in the new century: "The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line." He was a co-founder of the racially integrated civil rights organization *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (NAACP) and organized several Pan-African Congresses (from 1919 to 1945) which addressed the problems of imperialism and decolonization in a worldwide context. As editor of *The Crisis*, the journal of the NAACP, from 1910 to 1934, and of *Phylon*, from 1940 to 1944, Du Bois created a forum for black American literature, cultural and political debate, and social thought that situated African Americans in the wider frame of a revised notion of a multicultural democratic society in the United States and its interrelations with other parts of a postcolonial world. In 1958/59, he received an honorary doctorate from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. He emigrated to Ghana in 1961 where he edited the *Encyclopedia Africana*. Du Bois died in Ghana in 1963.

W.E.B. Du Bois Lectures

Stephen Guy-Bray
University of British Columbia, Vancouver
Queer Historiography
October 26, 2009 (Monday!)

Ruth Mayer
Universität Hannover
The Glittering Machine of Modernity: The Chinatown in American Silent Film
November 3, 2009

David Goldfield
University of North Carolina
The Obama Presidency and Race in America
November 24, 2009

Una Chadhuri
New York University
Dead on Stage: Animal Bodies and an Aesthetic of Livingness
December 15, 2009

Herwig Friedl
Universität Düsseldorf
Out of Bounds: American Visions of the Thinker and of Thinking
January 12, 2010

Aaron Jaffe
University of Louisville, Kentucky
The Unpleasant Profession of Varian Fry: Modernist Poetry, Cultural Value, and Administration
January 26, 2010

American Studies in Perspective

In the age of globalization, the gradual unification of Europe, and the increasing awareness of the crucial importance of the political organization of social heterogeneity and cultural differences, a critical engagement with U.S. American culture and society has become ever more urgent. The repercussions of American multiculturalism, the interplay of competing public cultures, the impact of the new media, and the transnational perspectives of American cultural production have fundamentally changed the direction, the academic organization, and the public role of the interdisciplinary project of American Studies in the United States. These new developments not only challenge our understanding of the role American Studies should play in the German universities, but also demand a new, genuinely dialogical conception of American Studies that articulates different and conflicting experiences and visions of the future from both sides of the Atlantic in a globalizing context. American Studies in Germany, seen in the wider European frame, can provide a forum in which the most pressing issues of the powerful dynamics of cultural differences, of the reorganization of the production of cultural knowledge, and of the implications of a reconstitution of the public sphere, all of them critical issues for the new Berlin Republic, can be debated in a transnational, comparative perspective.

The American Studies Program at Humboldt-Universität defines its research objectives and curricula in this context. It therefore focuses on the literary and cultural representations of, and theoretical approaches to, categories such as 'race,' ethnicity, gender, class, region, and age, and their complex interrelations within and beyond American society. Literary studies are complemented by studies of other print media, film, television, the internet, and the arts. The American Studies Program is involved in the new interdisciplinary Gender Studies program and cooperates closely with Cultural Studies, Cultural Anthropology, and the Modern Literature and Language Departments at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Intercultural dialogues are pursued in collaborative research projects with scholars from the United States and European countries. These activities materialize in a number of student and faculty exchange programs with various American and European universities.