

2nd Annual American Studies Workshop
**CROSS-CULTURAL READINGS
OF THE UNITED STATES**
Zagreb, May 24th, 2014



Venue: Room A-105, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ivana Lučića 3, Zagreb

Workshop Program

12:00 Opening remarks

Professor Walter Hölbling (University of Graz):

American Studies in Europe: "Divided We Stand"

Professor Moira Baker (Radford University):

Margin at the Center: Appalachian Studies and (Re)Mappings of "America"

Discussion

13:30 Lunch Break

14:15-15:30 Workshop session 1 (followed by short discussion)

Ksenija Kondali (University of Sarajevo):

Transnational and Transcultural Dynamics and Identities in Joseph O'Neill's *Netherland*

Aleksandra Izgarjan (University of Novi Sad):

Translation, Transformation, Transvestism: Contemporary American Writers' Poetics of Translation

Sven Cvek (University of Zagreb):

CUDOS to Digital Humanities: Remarks on Technology and Academic Labor

Lovorka Zergollern-Miletić (University of Zagreb):

Croatian Students' Perception of American Culture

15:30-16 Coffee Break

16:00-17:15 Workshop session 2 (followed by short discussion)

Borislav Knežević (University of Zagreb):

A Crisis of Liberal Education? A Few Remarks on the American University and Its Disciplines

Tatjana Jukić (University of Zagreb):

An Austrian-Hungarian America: Emerson for Croatia, 1905

Stipe Grgas (University of Zagreb):

The United States as Represented in Croatian Marxist Thought

Jelena Šesnić (University of Zagreb):

Bogdan Radica and the New Croatian Emigration of the 1970s

17:30 HUAms General Assembly meeting

Organizers: Croatian Association for American Studies (HUAms), American Studies Program, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Zagreb.

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ABSTRACTS AND BIOS

Professor Walter Hölbling: American Studies in Europe: 'Divided We Stand'

As Paul Lauter once summed it up, with its military and economic influence, its cultural and linguistic reach, the United States is—for better or for worse—too formidable and potent not to be understood clearly and critically. HOW to understand the USA has been a vehemently discussed issue ever since 1998 ASA president Janice Radway suggested that „American Studies“ better be re-named „cultural studies,“ or some such. Over the past 16 years we have seen the arrival of a plethora of new terms – starting with the not so exciting coinage „New American Studies“ and diversifying into a host of terms that preferably include „trans-,“ „cross-,“ „anti-,“ „post-,“ „comparative,“ „queer,“ and even „diasporic“ – a term which until not so long ago usually only referred to the history of the Jewish people from antiquity to the present.

If, as then ASA President Emory Elliott argued in his 2006 address, „diversity“ is now the key concept in American Studies, this lively pool of buzzwords certainly testifies to it. While it also seems to indicate a trend towards the globalization of American Studies, this process itself spawns another debate that is tied to the object of our discipline as well as to the concepts and tools of the field itself: Is globalization actually Americanization – often understood as the unfettered spread of ruthless capitalism across the globe? If so, how to assess this phenomenon with the methods of our discipline? Has Radway's 1998 provocative suggestion been vindicated and „America“ has become a diffuse free-floating signifier for „trans/international“ Americanization?

As European scholars we have one advantage, though: Looking across the Atlantic, our object of study is very clearly visible – the USA have not disappeared in the flood of buzzwords, and there is little indication they would do so in the foreseeable future. The New Americanists will still try to understand the same old USA, but with different concepts; the debate about US exceptionalism will continue, enriched by more comparative aspects and cross-cultural perspectives. For a better understanding, as Winfried Fluck as well as Stipe Grgas, among others, suggest in recent papers, scholars might pay more attention to the importance of capitalism and economy as decisive forces in US society and culture. I think we should also look more closely into the extremely mediated character of US everyday life, including the new media as well as the ownership of media conglomerates like FOX, Time Warner, etc., and on the impact they have on the practice and processes of US democracy. Another research focus might be the compatibility of fundamentalist religion and democratic society, from a comparative perspective.

Skeptical optimist that I am, I expect that the intensified sharing of US and international American Studies scholars' perspectives will help us to gradually establish a more comprehensive view on all these issues under discussion, and to better place them in their appropriate historical, political, and socio-cultural contexts. For our research and teaching of US culture and society, only an inclusive approach guarantees the necessary and most authentic level of complexity and differentiation which can make students aware that the flood of simulacra they receive via everyday mass media are exactly that.

Walter W. Hölbling is a recently retired professor of U.S. Literature and Culture at the American Studies Department at Karl-Franzens-University in Graz, Austria. Among his authored and edited publications are *Fiktionen vom Krieg im neueren amerikanischen Roman* [Fictions of War in Recent American Novels], *Utopian Thought in American Literature*, *Der Krieg der Bilder. Ausgewählte Dokumentarfilme zum Zweiten Weltkrieg und zum Vietnamkrieg*, *The European Emigrant Experience in the U. S. A*, *Nature's Nation' Revisited: American Concepts of Nature from Wonder to Ecological Crisis*, *What Is American? New Identities in U. S. Culture*, *U. S. Icons and Iconicity, Theories and Texts. For Students By Students*, and *Landscapes of Postmodernity. Concepts and Paradigms of Critical Theory*, as well as a good number of articles on American Studies in Europe, U. S. war fiction and film, Indian captivity narratives, US postmodern and postcolonial fiction, and the affinities of U.S. literature and film to public political rhetoric. He was one of the "founding fathers" of the Austrian Association for American Studies in 1975 and later on also served as Secretary General of the European Association from 1994-2002. Teaching and research have taken him to European,

Japanese, and U.S. universities. He is currently working on a revised English version of his study on recent U. S. fictions of war since 1945 and is also gathering material for a monograph about Austrian refugee publishers in the U.S.A. In his free time, he occasionally succumbs to his poetic vein and has so far published two volumes of poetry in English – *Love Lust Loss* (2003) and *Think Twice* (2006) - together with a former colleague from the Graz University English department.

Professor Moira Baker: **Margin at the Center: Appalachian Studies and (Re)Mappings of "America"**

This presentation examines the development of Appalachian Studies as a distinct interdisciplinary field within American Studies in the U. S. To do so, we will first examine the ideological construction of "Appalachia" as a desperately impoverished region, inhabited by a backward people living in a "culture of poverty" that is badly in need of "development" by outside missionaries, educators, industrialists, and government relief programs. This dominant, mythic representation of Appalachia has its historical roots as far back as the 19th century, while the actual, literal map of the region with boundaries marking its limits has changed over time, subject to the agenda of those doing the defining and mapping. The dominant representation of the region that haunts the imagination of most Americans today maps it out as a marginal space in every respect: topographically wild, barely inhabitable, socially primitive, isolated from the rest of the world, culturally impoverished or quaint at best, a drag on the national economy, and beyond reclamation: a throw-away land of throw-away people doomed by their own essential deficiencies.

Next we'll look at how the field of Appalachian Studies over the past 30 years has challenged the above mythic representation and ideologically interested mapping of the region. By making the Appalachian region and its vast diversity central to its inquiry in the fields of History, Economics, Anthropology, Biology, Literature, Sociology, Political Science (etc.), Appalachian Studies has exposed the false dichotomy between "margin" and "center" to lay bare the mechanisms of domination used to define regions as "marginal" in order to exploit them, their people, and their resources. A review of work in these and other disciplines demonstrates the rich ecological and cultural diversity of the region. (Appalachia is the second most bio-diverse region in the world second to the tropical rainforests in Latin America.) The mythic mapping of Appalachia as a wild and backward place—a throwaway land of throwaway people—has served the interests of multinational energy conglomerates that have historically devastated the physical environment and impoverished the working class. Appalachian Studies has worked to expose this exploitation, to illuminate the rich cultural forms that have developed within the region, and to document the persistent work of activism and resistance to exploitation that has also characterized the region.

Moira P. Baker Baker received her B.A. in English from the College of St. Rose in Albany, New York, and her MA and Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame, specializing in Renaissance Literature. Having joined the English Department at Radford University in 1986, Professor Baker teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in Renaissance literature, American literature, American and international women writers, Women's Studies, and Gender/Sexuality Studies. She served as a mentor for eight years in the Graduate Teaching Fellows Rhetoric and Composition Training Program, and is a co-founder and present Director of the Women's Studies Program. Her wide-ranging scholarship has been published in such journals as *South-Atlantic Review*, *English Renaissance Prose*, *Virginia English Bulletin*, and the *Harvard Gay and Lesbian Review*. She has contributed chapters to *English Renaissance Prose of the Early Seventeenth Century* and *The World is our Home: Society and Culture in Contemporary Southern Writing*; she has presented numerous papers at international, national, and regional professional conferences. The 2001 recipient of the Radford Foundation's Donald N. Dedmon Professorial Award for Teaching Excellence, she was awarded a Fulbright Specialist Grant in 2011 to teach courses in American literature and women writers at the J. J. Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia. She has returned to Osijek as a Fulbright Scholar for the 2013-2014 academic year to teach courses in American literature while working on her project: "Toward a Writing-Centered Pedagogy: Writing-to-Learn and Learning to Write in the Discipline of American Studies."

PRESENTERS

Sven Cvek: **CUDOS to Digital Humanities: Remarks on Technology and Academic Labor**

In this talk I intend to comment on the relationship between technology and academic labor as it is articulated in the recent debates about "Digital Humanities." These debates, from which the discipline of American Studies was not excluded, mostly revolve around the politics of what some describe as yet another in the long series of disciplinary turns in the human sciences, this time a "digital" or "computational" one. Apart from the obvious issue of digital technology as a technical supplement to research and teaching, the question is most often posed in terms of access to and visibility of scholarly work. I want to propose that the problem also needs to be situated in the context of the more fundamental change that the "digital turn" brings to academic labor, particularly in its disciplinary form. Starting from a brief overview of the current debate—and taking

into account our peripheral position within the global flows of scholarly resources—I would like to look at the "digital turn" as a symptom of a larger transformation of the division of academic labor that is underway.

Sven Cvek works in the American Studies program of the English Department at the University of Zagreb. His primary field of study is contemporary US literature and popular culture. He has published one book, *Towering Figures: Reading the 9/11 Archive* (Rodopi, 2011), and several articles in reviewed journals or collections. His latest publication is "Keeping Terror Alive: The Political Economy of Visibility in Inside Man" (in *Terror and the Cinematic Sublime: Essays on Violence and the Unpresentable in Post-9/11 Films*, McFarland 2013).

Stipe Grgas: **The United States as Represented in Croatian Marxist Thought**

Although from the present moment the last formulation of my title might seem a contradiction in terms, if not an oxymoronic syntagm, there has existed a constellation of thinkers who have derived and contributed to Marxist thought in Croatia. On the present occasion I propose to incorporate this archive as an object of Croatian American Studies and of the discipline within the region as a whole. My hypothesis is that a reading of this archive will provide evidence that will not only evince an ideological take in these reading but will uncover a blind spot in the Marxist paradigm, a blind spot for capital itself and for the way it has mutated in the United States. Without deriving any ready-made conclusions from this hypothesis I offer it as a problem that can contribute to a thicker understanding of our cross-cultural encounters.

Stipe Grgas is Full Professor and acting chair of the American Studies program at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. He has published three books, edited two and has written some hundred articles on American, Irish and British

literature and culture as well as on topics having to do with the interdisciplinary field of human spatiality. He was guest lecturer at a number of European universities (Odense, Aarhus, Leipzig, Genoa) and has presented his work at numerous international conferences. He spent the academic year 1994-1995 as a Fulbright scholar at Yale University and was again awarded a Fulbright scholarship for the 2011 summer semester which he spent at Cornell University. He is the acting president of the Croatian Association for American Studies and the president of the regional organization of American Studies (AASSE). He has published three books: *Nietzsche i Yeats* (1989), *Ispisivanje Prostora: Čitanje suvremenog američkog romana (Writing Space: Reading the contemporary American novel, 2000)* and *Kažnjavanje forme: irsko pjesništvo poslije Yeatsa (Punishing Form: Irish Poetry after Yeats, 2006)*. Together with Svend Erik Larsen he edited the collection of essays *The Construction of Nature* (1994). In 2004 he edited a collection of Croatian translations of contemporary Irish short stories.

Aleksandra Izgarjan: Translation, Transformation, Transvestism: Contemporary American Writers' Poetics of Translation

Translation is based on the process of mediation between cultures. Narrative strategies in the works of contemporary American writers (such as code-mixing and code-switching, literal translation, covert translation, and withheld translation) not only mediate between the dominant and minority cultures, they simultaneously disrupt the dominance of English language and culture and create a third space in which different modes of expression and hybrid identities coexist. Translation becomes a metaphor for living as a *mestizaje*, in a border land between cultures. This liminal space allows for different perspectives and their juxtaposition. Thus usage of mixture of codes reflects an inner drive which cannot find ready expression in a single language, but rather becomes a third language with its own rhythm and lyricism. Transvestism, transformation and translation enable the characters to cross the boundaries of gender, class and ethnicity that constrain them and let the margin speak thus making it a focal point of the contemporary American writers' poetics.

Aleksandra Izgarjan is an associate professor, University of Novi Sad. She teaches courses in American Literature and American studies at the English Department. She has recently participated in the following projects: "Comparative Studies of Serbian and Foreign Literatures and Cultures" and "Serbian and Foreign Literature and Culture in Contact and Discontact". She has published two books and more than thirty articles in the field of literature and gender studies. She was a guest lecturer at New York University, Howard University and University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa, USA and participated in postgraduate programs at the University of Illinois at Chicago, USA and Democracy and Diversity program in Krakow, Poland. She is the president of the Serbian Association for Anglo-American Studies and vice-president of the Association for American Studies in South East Europe.

Tatjana Jukić: An Austrian-Hungarian America: Emerson for Croatia, 1905

It was principally through Antun Gustav Matoš (1873-1914) that Croatian literature received its modernity for the twentieth century, as well as its sense of Europeanness. His essay on Emerson (1905) can be analyzed as part of the same agenda, especially in view of its marked Nietzschean overtones; it is Nietzsche's Emerson that Matoš brings to Croatian culture and, with it, a corresponding inflection of both Europe and philosophy. While this suggests that a Nietzschean America comes to shape the American phantasm for the twentieth-century Croatian modernity, I propose to discuss another operation which is equally critical to this placement of Emerson: the way in which Austrian-Hungarian cultural practices, definitive to Croatia at the time and at work in Matoš, decide

Emerson's profile and refract some of its Nietzschean features.

Tatjana Jukić is Professor of English Literature at the University of Zagreb. She also teaches on the doctoral programs of Comparative Literature and Croatian Language and Literature. Author of two books, *Zazor, nadzor, svidanje. Dodiri književnog i vizualnog u britanskom devetnaestom stoljeću (Liking, Dislike, Supervision. Literature and the Visual in Victorian Britain, Zagreb, 2002)* and *Revolucija i melankolija. Granice pamćenja hrvatske književnosti (Revolution and Melancholia. Limits of Literary Memory, Zagreb, 2011)*. She has written articles on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, psychoanalysis, film and philosophy.

Borislav Knežević: A Crisis of Liberal Education? A Few Remarks on the American University and Its Disciplines

The aim of this paper is to revisit the issue of the specific character of the institutional site of disciplinary articulation in the USA. Currently, the academic debates about American academia revolve around the effects of the economic crisis of the previous decade, which often included diminishing funding, institutional reorganization, hiring freezes, and, subsequently, narratives of declinism. Whether this is a short-term phenomenon or a long-term trend is up for a much lengthier discussion. However, it can barely escape notice that academic discourse concerning the status of academic disciplines and knowledge in general has not really taken center stage in academic life in the recent period. If we broaden the perspective, it could also be noticed that sometimes the goings-on in American academia are

outside the United States regarded as an indicator of global trends in higher education. This paper seeks to suggest that any serious comparative analysis of global educational trends should seek a way to come to analytical terms as much with changes in social contexts and policies affecting university life as with the vast variety of different university systems around the world, which differ significantly in terms of organization, curricular policies, academic hierarchies, funding, and not the least, institutional cultures—all this as the character of knowledge itself seems to be undergoing massive changes. What that means for that specific philosophy underlying American higher education – liberal education – is among the most pressing questions facing the American university today.

Ksenija Kondali: Transnational and Transcultural Dynamics and Identities in Joseph O'Neill's Netherland

Applying the analytical lens of the “transnational turn” in American Studies, in particular Günter Lenz’s approach to the politics of American Transcultural Studies and Laura Bieger’s re-evaluation of the nexus of globalization and individualization (2011), this paper examines the intricate relationships and identities in Joseph O’Neill’s novel *Netherland* (2008). In this novel, through an array of characters based in New York City, the writer presents challenges to narrowly defined concepts of citizenship, national belonging and identity in transcultural contexts. The aim of this paper is to investigate the patterns of human relations and the construction of specific identities shaped by the crossing and reconfiguring of national, cultural, geographical, racial and other boundaries. More specifically, this analysis centers on ways in which transnational and transcultural dynamics and identities are negotiated through cricket as the novel’s core metaphor for post-9/11 US and

through New York City as a conglomerate of cultural pluralities and transcultural space.

Ksenija Kondali has taught a wide range of literary courses in the English Department of the University of Sarajevo, since 1995. She received her Ph.D. in English and American Studies from the University of Zagreb in 2012, under the supervision of Prof. Stipe Grgas, and her BA and MA from the University of Sarajevo. Dr. Kondali is an international contributing editor of the *Journal of American History* published by The Organization of American Historians. Her research interests include contemporary American literature and culture, literature-to-screen adaptations, and postcolonial approaches. Currently, Ksenija Kondali is Head of the English and American Literature Program and Deputy Head of the English Department of the University of Sarajevo.

Jelena Šesnić: **Bogdan Radica and the New Croatian Emigration of the 1970s**

Bogdan Radica, born in Split in 1904, residing in New York City from 1945 until his death in 1993, is one of the foremost intellectuals in the ranks of post-World War Two Croatian emigration in the West. He was a journalist, diplomat, university lecturer, scholar, writer, and a prolific contributor in a number of US, West European and Croatian émigré publications (Nova Hrvatska, Hrvatska revija, Hrvatski glas, Danica, etc.). In this presentation, however, I will be looking at his assessment of a certain impasse observable between the old and the new generations of Croatian emigrants, who are coming into their own in a politically turbulent era of the 1970s instigating new forms of political and, often, military activism. For Radica and most of his generation, however, this indicates a split between the two types of diasporic political engagement while advertising a wider, more encompassing global realignments framed by the Cold

War politics.

Jelena Šesnić is an associate professor in the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb. She publishes in English and Croatian, while her research and teaching are focused on American Studies methodologies, American literature of the nineteenth century, and American ethnic writing. Her publications include: *From Shadow to Presence: Representations of Ethnicity in Contemporary American Literature* (Rodopi 2007); *Mračne žene. Prikazi ženstva u američkoj književnosti, 1820-1860* (Leykam, 2010), and, as editor, *Siting America/ Sighting Modernity: Essays in Honor of Sonja Bašić* (FF Press, 2010). She is a co-founder and currently a secretary of the Croatian Association for American Studies (member of the EAAS).

Lovorka Zergollern-Miletić: **Croatian Students' Perception of American Culture**

American culture is usually considered to be the predominant culture in the world – a type of culture that is present in many countries alongside the national culture(s). It may also be described as pervasive in a variety of human activities (sports, music, business, cuisine...). In Croatia, people are daily exposed to American series, sitcoms, films, American music and news from the States (especially news concerning popular culture and show-business). Owing to the internet, Croatians, especially young ones, come into contact with various aspects of American culture. Bearing the above in mind, I am interested to what extent Croatians are really familiar with American culture, and what exactly they know about it. Being a university teacher, my primary interest concerns university students, especially those studying at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb – future generalists and primary school teachers of English. To gain insight into the above problem, I have started conducting a study that will include approximately 60 second-year and third-year students at the Faculty of Teacher Education. I am planning to base my paper on the obtained data.

Lovorka Zergollern-Miletić was born in Zagreb, Croatia. She graduated from the Faculty of Humanities

and Social Sciences in Zagreb, majoring in English and French. In 1990 she defended her M.A. thesis concerning American literature (Black Humor in the Novels by Kurt Vonnegut and Joseph Heller). From 1985 until 1993 she worked at the Institute of Linguistics, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, as a junior researcher. From 1993 until 2010 she worked at the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences as a language instructor (lector), teaching various language, translation and cultural courses. She has published articles concerning linguistics, language teaching, as well as culture, and was a co-editor of two books of proceedings published by the Croatian Association of Applied Linguistics. She worked on two major research projects in linguistics, and two projects concerning teaching English in Croatia, and participated in the Pestalozzi training programme "Education for cultural and linguistic diversity". She defended her Ph.D. thesis in linguistics in 2008 (Definiteness and Indefiniteness in English and Croatian). She has been working at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb as an Assistant Professor since April 2010, teaching grammar and practical language and translation courses to future primary school teachers of English.