



Nordamerikastudienprogramm
Institut für Anglistik, Amerikanistik und Keltologie



Lecture Series

**"Current Issues in North American Studies and Cultural Studies"
Summer Term 2011**

Dr. Todd Carmody
FU Berlin | University of California, Berkeley

**"Days Without Paul Robeson:
Spirituals, Solidarity, and the East German Archive"**

Tuesday • 28 June 2011 • 6:00-8:00 pm c.t. • Conference Room, IAAK

Todd Carmody's talk considers Paul Robeson's celebrity in East Germany, focusing in particular on how the singer's performances of African American spirituals were framed in the popular press. While Robeson visited the GDR but three times, twice for state ceremonies in 1960 and again for a brief period of medical convalescence three years later, his fame in the socialist state was remarkable. As an outspoken critic of the U.S. government and the best-known interpreter of the "sorrow songs" created by African American slaves, Robeson was a strong ally of the Soviet Union and its satellite states. Situating Robeson's international celebrity within the longer history of transatlantic performances of the spiritual, Carmody asks how notions of racialized embodiment and racialized suffering are called on to authenticate the GDR's founding ideology of antifascism. He ultimately suggests that Robeson's hypervisibility in the East German imaginary had less to do with the raced body per se than with the long (and useful) shadow it casts.

Todd Carmody is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Freie Universität Berlin and will join the English Department at the University of California at Berkeley as an ACLS Visiting Assistant Professor this fall. His research interests include nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature, transnational American studies, race and ethnicity, affect studies, and poetry and poetics. He is currently at work on two book projects. "Shades of Inclusion: The Public Life of Race in American Literature, 1925-1961" rewrites the history of racial appropriation from the Harlem Renaissance through the Cold War. "Trading in Sorrow: Racialized Feeling and Transatlantic Performance" considers the circulation of African American spirituals in Germany from the nineteenth century to the present, examining the global economies of historical memory, commodification, and solidarity. Essays drawn from these studies have appeared or are forthcoming in *Callaloo*, *The Journal of Modern Literature*, and *Criticism*.