

Current Issues

in North American Studies and Cultural Studies

Lecture Series | Summer Term 2014

**NORTH
AMERICAN
STUDIES
PROGRAM**

Prof. Bryant Simon, Ph.D.

Department of History, Temple University | University of Erfurt

“What’s the Real Cost of a Big Mac? The High Costs of Cheap Food”



Fast food, a term first recognized in a dictionary in 1951, refers to food that can be prepared and served very quickly in an industrial setting. Typically it means processed food sold with preheated or precooked ingredients, and served to the customer in a disposable package for quick consumption. And it has to be cheap, or at least it has to appear to be cheap on the menu.

But the price we pay for fast food doesn't cover the costs of a burger, fries, and a Coke. Even if you don't eat at McDonald's or Burger King, you are paying the price for this food. We pay a hidden premium in taxes and subsidies, environmental decay and animal cruelty, and in worker's health and widespread obesity. So how much does a Big Mac really cost? Is it five dollars? Or twenty dollars? Or two hundred dollars?

Bryant Simon is Professor of History at Temple University, Philadelphia, and Humboldt scholar at the University of Erfurt. His research interests include recent US history, consumer culture, political economy, urban history, and food studies. In his widely acclaimed book, *Everything but the Coffee: Learning about America from Starbucks* (U of California P, 2009) – research that took in visits to more than 450 Starbucks stores in 10 countries – Prof. Simon explores American culture and life in the corporate coffee house, the “corner bar of the twenty-first century,” as well as the daily lives of middle-class Americans and urban professionals around the world. Currently, he is working on a broad-ranging study of the high and hidden costs of cheap food. In his talk, he will share some of this fresh research – and answer the question of how much a Big Mac really costs.

Tuesday, May 6, 2014 | 6:00-8:00 pm | Room A, IAAK