



Nordamerikastudienprogramm  
Institut für Anglistik, Amerikanistik und Keltologie



## Lecture Series

"Current Issues in North American Studies and Cultural Studies"

Winter Term 2012-13

# Prof. Dr. David Caplan

## Ohio Wesleyan University

### "Reclaiming Rhyme: On Contemporary American Poetry, Hip Hop, and Rhyming Culture"

Tuesday • 20 November 2012 • 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Room A • Institut für Anglistik, Amerikanistik und Keltologie • Regina-Pacis-Weg 5

Americans live in a rhyme-drenched era; rhyme reigns in advertisements, tabloid headlines, aphorisms, and nearly all forms of popular music, including country-and-western, rock, pop, punk, and, most notably, hip hop. Yet much contemporary poetry criticism repeats an outworn truism: rhyme cannot bear the pressure of contemporary reality. To refute this mischaracterization, David Caplan scrutinizes examples from legal and political documents, novels, poems, and songs. The most daring, inventive contemporary rhymers, he argues, are the most conspicuous. Alert to the resources that the culture and the language provide, hip hop artists dominate the contemporary art of rhyme. The effects they achieve are nothing short of astonishing, showing how thrilling rhyme can be, how sexy and appalling. These artists challenge current understandings of rhyme. For this reason, Caplan examines their work: more specifically, the specific kinds of rhymes that hip hop artists favor: doggerel, insult, and seduction.

David Caplan is Benjamin T. Spencer Professor of Literature at Ohio Wesleyan University in Columbus, Ohio. In his academic work, he focuses on poetic form and contemporary poetry. His current book project, under contract with Oxford University Press, is entitled *Rhyme's Challenge*. Further publications include the monograph *Questions of Possibility: Contemporary Poetry and Poetic Form* (Oxford UP, 2004) and *Poetic Form: An Introduction* (Pearson Longman, 2006). Caplan is also a published poet; his writings have appeared in *The New England Review*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, and further journals. His volume of poems *In the World He Created According to His Will* appeared in 2010 (U of Georgia P).