

Current Issues

in North American Studies and Cultural Studies

Lecture Series – Summer Term 2017

**NORTH
AMERICAN
STUDIES
PROGRAM**

UNIVERSITÄT **BONN**

Tuesday, **May 30, 2017**, 6:00-8:00 pm
Room A, IAAK, Regina-Pacis-Weg 5

Prof. Gary Cross (Pennsylvania State University)

Ironies of Modern Nostalgia: An American Perspective



Nostalgia, a sentiment that coincides with modernity and its disruptions, has long been associated with emotional memories of place, community, or even regime. But nostalgia isn't what it used to be, especially in the US. Since the 1970s, it has been mostly tied to memories of childhood and youth *consumption*: Americans today tend to value most those formative experiences which they associate with an increasingly ephemeral consumer culture. Practices like collecting old toys, dolls, and cars reflect a distinct form of nostalgia that is tangible and personal, but often separates Americans into narrow cohorts of memory. How and why this has occurred is explored by Prof. Cross in his presentation which will include a wide assortment of images. He considers the impact of commercial playthings and sites of child-centered fantasy like Disneyland, as well as the ways American car culture shaped nostalgia for coming of age.

Gary Cross is Distinguished Professor of Modern History at Pennsylvania State University. He is the author of various books on consumer culture and childhood, most recently *Packaged Pleasures: How Technology and Marketing Revolutionized Desires* (U of Chicago P, 2014) and *Consumed Nostalgia: Memory in the Age of Fast Capitalism* (Columbia UP, 2015).