



Nordamerikastudienprogramm
Institut für Anglistik, Amerikanistik und Keltologie



Lecture Series

"Current Issues in North American Studies and Cultural Studies"

Winter Term 2012-2013

Dr. Marcel Hartwig

University of Siegen

"'Old World Contagions' and Preventive Medicine: The Fate of American Voluntary Health Insurance Systems"

Tuesday • 11 December 2012 • 6:00-8:00 p.m.

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

Since the Social Security Acts of 1935, the idea of a federal health insurance has haunted medical associations and so called 'grass roots' activists. Ever since, they have planned to banish this ghost from the machine of American Democracy. After President Lyndon B. Johnson's renewal of health insurance for the elderly and the poor with both Medicare and Medicaid in 1965, no further reforms were enacted. When President Obama proposed the Affordable Care Act in 2010, conservatives shunned him as a socialist. In July 2012, the Supreme Court affirmed the constitutionality of the act. Nevertheless, it was during the election night of November 2012 that public debates still whistled the tune of "socialized medicine."

In this lecture, Marcel Hartwig traces the stony path of American health care reform in three steps. Beginning with the first instances of regulated preventive medicine in the 17th and 18th centuries, his talk argues that the need for public health care grew due to the rationalization and professionalization of the medical class. The subsequent institutionalization of the clinic in the 19th century constituted a means both to politicize the effective administration of American citizens and to turn access to health care into a function of socioeconomic class. In this light, the current reformation of social security and federal health care appears as a final step to allow for a 'controlled' corporatization of the health care system – contrary to its highly popularized 'socialist' appeal.

Marcel Hartwig is research and teaching assistant in the English Department at the University of Siegen and holds a Ph.D. from TU Chemnitz. His monograph *Die traumatisierte Nation? "Pearl Harbor" und "9/11" als kulturelle Erinnerungen* was published by Transcript in 2011. In addition, Marcel Hartwig has written essays in the fields of literary criticism, gender studies, and popular culture. An essay collection on *Media Economies* (co-ed. with Gunter Süß) will appear in 2013. Marcel Hartwig's currently works on a project entitled "Transit Cultures: Early Medical Discourses in England and America."