

# Current Issues

in North American Studies and Cultural Studies  
Lecture Series | Winter Term 2015-2016

**NORTH  
AMERICAN  
STUDIES  
PROGRAM**

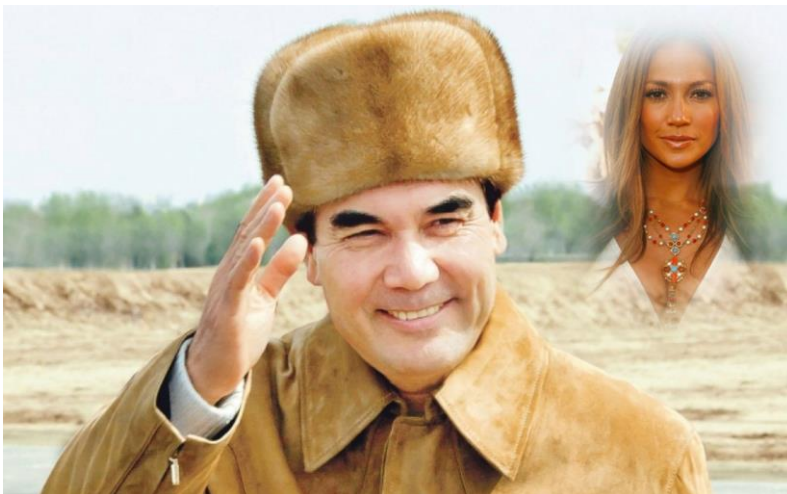
Prof. Martha Bayles  
Boston College

  
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## “Dancing in Chains: Why Music Cannot Keep the World Free”

Wednesday, November 4, 2015 | 6:00–8:00 pm  
Room A, IAAK, Regina-Pacis-Weg 5

Lecture in the context of the seminar  
“Key Developments in American Foreign Policy”  
(Dr. Manfred Stinnes)



President Berdimuhamedow of Turkmenistan and Jennifer Lopez who sang „Happy Birthday“ to him in 2013

Jazz, rock, pop, hip-hop – for generations, these styles of American popular music have been inspiring the world’s dissidents, rebels, and freedom fighters. An article of faith for millions of avid musicians and listeners in every country, this ideal-

ized vision of American music as a force for liberation is also a principle of good practice for thousands of US public diplomats. But is it true?

In recent years, some scholars have doubted this idealized vision; others have debunked it outright. There are grounds for such questioning, especially of the motives and methods of US government officials in the past. But today we face a more urgent question: how, and to what degree, is American popular music becoming a force for *repression*?

Martha Bayles teaches in the honors program at Boston College and writes regularly for the *Weekly Standard*, *Wall Street Journal*, and the *New York Times*. She is the author of *Hole in Our Soul: The Loss of Beauty and Meaning in American Popular Music* (1994) and *Through a Screen Darkly: Popular Culture, Public Diplomacy, and America’s Image Abroad* (2014).