

Current Issues

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

NORTH
AMERICAN
STUDIES
PROGRAM

Prof. Christopher E. Forth
University of Kansas | Universität Erfurt

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“Fat American or Fattened American? Corpulence, Consumption, and Animality”

Tuesday, October 27, 2015 | 6:00–8:00 pm
Room A, IAAK, Regina-Pacis-Weg 5



When the state of California banned the production of foie gras in 2012 it was disgust at the French practice of force-feeding ducks and geese (known as *gavage*) that was at the heart of the media storm that ensued. Yet in the course of the controversy, *gavage* was unmoored from its connection to human-animal relationships and employed by French critics to describe American imperialism, consumption, and obesity. By displacing the site of *gavage* from birds to humans such responses made use of animal alterity to depict the insatiable American as the ‘true’ beast – fat and stupid, but also predatory and devouring – and thus a more appropriate object of disgust. In his paper, Prof. Forth examines cultural stereotypes about ‘the fat American’ to illuminate the nexus of disgust and animality that structures negative images of corpulent bodies.

Christopher E. Forth is the Howard Chair of Humanities & Western Civilization at the University of Kansas and editor-in-chief of the journal *Cultural History*. His research revolves around the history of gender, sexuality, the body, and the senses. He is the author of *Masculinity in the Modern West* (2008) and a co-editor of *Fat: Culture and Materiality* (2014). Currently, he is completing a monograph on the cultural history of fat.