

# Current Issues

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

**NORTH  
AMERICAN  
STUDIES  
PROGRAM**

George Porter Thomas, M.A.

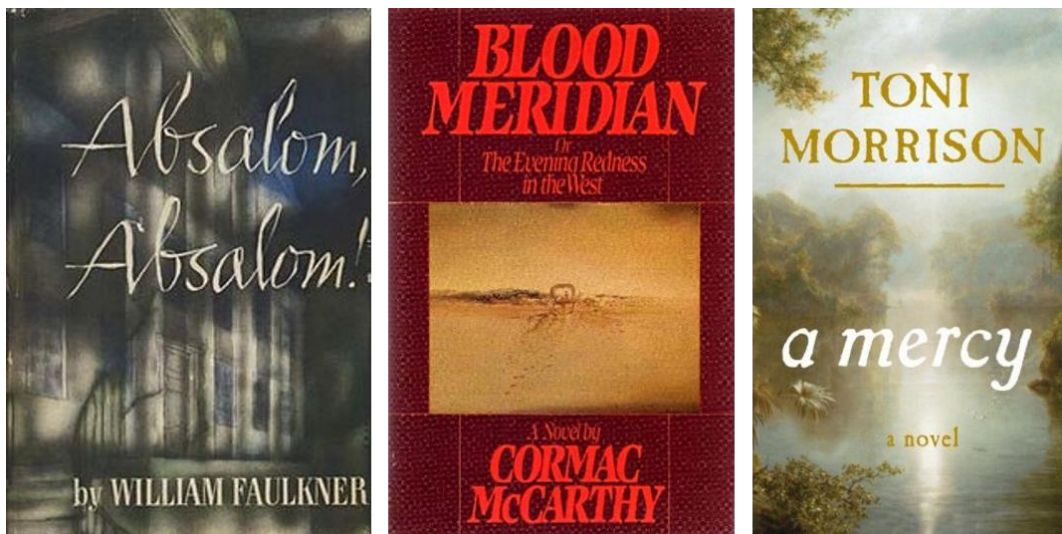
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## “Telling Time in the Twentieth-Century American Novel”

Tuesday, January 26, 2016 | 6:00–8:00 pm  
Room A, IAAK, Regina-Pacis-Weg 5



Why is everyone talking about time all of a sudden? What is involved in the ‘temporal turn’ in American literary studies? What can temporality tell us about literature that history cannot? In order to answer such questions, George Thomas argues that certain novels by William Faulkner (*Absalom, Absalom!*), Cormac McCarthy (*Blood Meridian*), and Toni Morrison (*A Mercy*) are in fact not historical novels but “temporal novels” – self-reflexive attempts to represent in fiction senses of time outside of historicity. Touching on literary history, temporality theory, and the politics of memory, his paper will take us to Colonial Virginia, the US-Mexico borderlands after the Mexican-American War, and Civil War-era Mississippi in order to pursue a counterintuitive thesis: it is precisely by questioning the very idea of history that these novels make the past come alive.

George Porter Thomas is a Lecturer in American Studies at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz. He is a PhD candidate in American Literature at the University of California, Davis, and also holds degrees from the Universities of Chicago and Virginia. His research focuses on the intersection of history and temporality in American 20<sup>th</sup>-century literature, with a particular interest in the US South.