

Current Issues

in North American Studies and Cultural Studies

Lecture Series | Winter Term 2014-15

**NORTH
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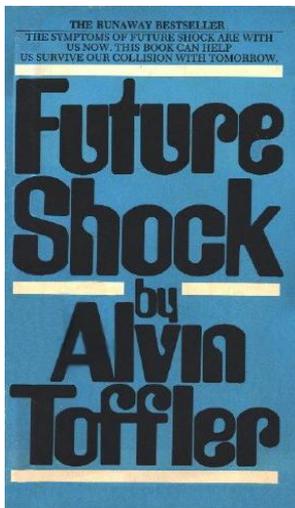
Dr. Torsten Kathke

Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne



“FUTURE SHOCK Is ‘Where It’s At’: Diagnosing the State of America’s Society in the 1970s”

Tuesday, December 16, 2014 | 6:00–8:00 pm | Room A, IAAK



When *Future Shock* came out in 1970, it immediately took America by storm. Written by the futurologists Alvin and Heidi Toffler, it was a popularized sociological mash-up of seemingly everything that concerned US society after the turbulent 1960s: upheaval in the workplace, changing gender roles, crumbling traditional family structures, the rise of computers, and the “death of permanence.” “Future shock” was “a powerful and upsetting psychological disease,” its cause the acceleration of life in every aspect. The world, it seemed, was getting faster and ever more complex. At every corner, society appeared in crisis, spinning out of control. *Future Shock* was talked about in class rooms, homes, and

offices, in newspapers and magazines, on television – and even in the White House. What had happened?

In his talk, Dr. Kathke reflects on why *Future Shock* and other popular books diagnosing the state of American society became bestsellers and cultural touchstones during the 1970s and 80s, a time when the Cold War *détente* opened up a discursive space for national soul searching and the baby boomers sought explanations for their changing environment.

Torsten Kathke received his Ph.D. from the University of Munich and is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies in Cologne. Previously, he held fellowships at the German Historical Institute, Washington D.C., and Arizona Historical Society, Tucson. He is the author of a number of articles on the history of the American West as well as a major contributor to the updated 2013 edition of Rüdiger Wersich and Christof Mauch’s *USA-Lexikon* (Erich Schmidt Verlag).

