



Nordamerikastudienprogramm
Institut für Anglistik, Amerikanistik und Keltologie

Events | Veranstaltungen
Winter Term 2011-12



Martin Luther King Day Lecture 2012

Prof. Dr. Heike Paul
University of Erlangen-Nürnberg

"The Legacy of the Black Power Movement in the Twenty-First Century"

Tuesday • 17 January 2012 • 6:00-8:00 p.m. • HS 17
Institut für Anglistik, Amerikanistik und Keltologie
Regina-Pacis-Weg 5 • 53113 Bonn

The assessments of the legacy and the 'success' of the black power movement in contemporary scholarship are extremely divergent. On the one hand, many scholars quite optimistically turn away from black power and from 'blackness' itself and celebrate 'post-racial' or 'multi-racial' subjects and narratives implying that African American studies and politics have become obsolete; some even declare the "end of the black narrative" (Charles Johnson) in America and thus the end of black victimization, i.e. an African American group identity based – *ex negativo* – on oppression and racism. On the other hand, many scholars articulate the ongoing problems that structural racism is causing for the black population in the US – be it with regard to the prison-industrial complex, police violence, or subtle economic disadvantages. These voices see a continuity of racial discrimination beyond the civil rights movement and a continued need for black power-efforts in order to ameliorate the problems of the black community in the US. In this talk, Heike Paul explores these radically different perspectives on the 'success' and the continued relevance (or irrelevance) of 'black power' for the 21st century. Is this another century defined by the colorline (as W.E.B. Du Bois noted prophetically for the 20th)? What is the function of the 'post-racial' in contemporary cultural and political discourses? In what ways can black power (its agenda, its poetics, and its changing cultural reception) still be an empowerment for today's activist and scholarly practices in what is called a 'post-civil rights' US society?

Prof. Dr. Heike Paul is chair of American Studies at the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg. She received her PhD in 1998 and her Habilitation in 2004, both from Leipzig University. She was a member of the graduate school "Gender and Literature" at the LMU, Munich (1995-1997), a postdoc at Harvard University (1999-2000), and a fellow of the Wissenschaftskolleg (Institute for Advanced Study, 2003-2004) in Berlin. Currently, she is spokesperson of the graduate school "Präsenz und implizites Wissen" funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). She is the author of *Mapping Migration: Women's Writing and the American Immigrant Experience from the 1950s to the 1990s* (1999) and *Kulturkontakt and Racial Presences: Afro-Amerikaner und die deutsche Amerika-Literatur, 1815-1914* (2005). Her current research interests include American myths, transatlantic cultural mobility, Afro-Canadian history and literature, and discourses of 'presence' in American culture and literature.

The lecture and discussion will be followed by a reception.