



Nordamerikastudienprogramm  
Institut für Anglistik, Amerikanistik und Keltologie

**Events | Veranstaltungen**  
**Summer Term 2012**



**Dr. Olaf Stieglitz**  
**University of Cologne**

## **“Revisiting the 1950s – from Consensus to Conflict, from Nostalgia-Trap to Retro-Chic”**

**Thursday • 12 April 2012 • 4:00-6:00 pm • Room B**  
**Institut für Anglistik, Amerikanistik und Keltologie**  
**Regina-Pacis-Weg 5 • 53113 Bonn**

Over the last two decades, scholars have been emphasizing conflict over consensus, plurality over homogeneity, fragility over stability, and margins over center. In doing so, they have tried to actively deconstruct what they regard as the “illusion of unity” championed by an older historiographical tradition. As a result of this development, the history of many different, and yet inextricably interrelated, “1950s” is now being written. But does this newer mode of historical writing actually free our view of that decade from nostalgia? And do today’s cultural productions that engage with the fifties succeed in adopting and thus popularizing the critical, deconstructive impetus of recent historiography?

In his lecture, Dr. Stieglitz will provide an overview of recent trends in the research on the American 1950s and relate its findings to current representations of that period in art, literature, media productions and design that seem to emphasize a nostalgic temper and thus engage in what has been termed “retromania.” Three topical areas of recent historiographical revisions will be investigated: the Civil Rights Movement, gender and sexuality, and the domestic Cold War.

Olaf Stieglitz teaches U.S. history, currently at the University of Cologne. He has just finished the manuscript of his second research-based book entitled *Confidential Sources – A Cultural History of Informers & Informants in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century United States*. His research is primarily focused on 20<sup>th</sup> century social and cultural history, with special emphasis on Gender History, the History of the Body, and aspects of political culture revolving around questions of loyalty and betrayal. He has also published on the 1950s and the domestic Cold War. His article “Is Mom to Blame? McCarthyism and the Representation of Motherhood in Early Cold War U.S. Media” has just been published.