

Current Issues

in North American Studies and Cultural Studies

Lecture Series – Summer Term 2017

**NORTH
AMERICAN
STUDIES
PROGRAM**

UNIVERSITÄT  **BONN**

Tuesday, **July 4, 2017**, 6:00-8:00 pm

Room A, IAAK, Regina-Pacis-Weg 5

in coop. with the Chair of American Literature and Culture, University of Cologne

Prof. Sarah Wasserman (University of Delaware)

Black Lives and Matter: Policing Harlem in Himes and Ellison



Jeff Wall, *After 'Invisible Man' by Ralph Ellison, the Prologue* (1999-2000)

What can novels from the 1950s and 60s tell us about the Black Lives Matter movement? What do narratives of gentrification and Harlem's object world reveal about the longer history of structural racism in the U.S.? In this talk, Prof. Wasserman tracks two major efforts to represent mid-century Harlem by two very different authors. Though seldom read together, Ralph Ellison and Chester Himes lead readers down, around, and underneath the same streets of Harlem in their novels. Their literary maps challenge the conventional understanding of gentrification by addressing both what changes and what remains as the urban environment is transformed.

Sarah Wasserman is an Assistant Professor of American Studies at the University of Delaware. A co-editor of *Cultures of Obsolescence: History, Materiality, and the Digital Age* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), she is currently working on a book called *The Death of Things: Ephemera in America*. Before joining UDel, she taught at FU Berlin and the University of Bonn.