



Life

Online Public Lecture and Workshop

Key Concepts of the Humanities and Social Sciences | GSAH | Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies

Guest: Prof. Dr. Mita Banerjee, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz
Moderation: Prof. Dr. Gabriele Rippl, Chair of Literatures in English/North American Studies, Director, Department of English, Universität Bern
Date/Room: Friday, November 6, 2020
Lecture (public): 10.15 am – 12.00 pm
Colloquium (on registration): 13.00 pm – 18.00 pm
Online via Zoom:
<https://unibe-ch.zoom.us/j/96509341262?pwd=c2ptTjNyczl6eWZwalZoY0Rka3h5Sz09>
Meeting-ID: 965 0934 1262
Kenncode: 026692

Public Lecture

Narrative Medicine and the Black Maternal Mortality Crisis

As of 2018, African American women in the US were three to four times as likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women. But it was only when award-winning tennis player Serena Williams faced severe problems giving birth to her first child, Olympia, that many were willing to admit that perhaps there was a racial bias in the American health care system after all. This paper looks at the current black maternal mortality crisis through the lens of narrative medicine. As both a methodology and a field of research, narrative medicine uses the tools of literary analysis to enhance medical practice. Looking at racial disparities in the American health care system from a narrative medicine perspective, we may thus wonder whether medical practitioners listen to the narratives of black patients differently than is the case for white patients. In this context, both African American women and their relatives need to engage in a practice of what might be called medical storytelling in order to read the practice of medicine against the grain. Finally, while this paper looks at what narrative medicine can bring to medical practice and the didactics of medicine, it also asks what narrative medicine might do to the humanities as a critical practice. If literary analysis brings to medicine an attention to close reading and “close listening,” narrative medicine, in turn, may add a material dimension to the humanities. In the dichotomy of black and white but also far beyond it, bodies may indeed matter not only to medical practice, but to the humanities as well.





Colloquium

For PhD students and advanced Master students of the University of Bern

Part 1 of the colloquium is dedicated to the discussion of the lecture and the texts suggested by the guest. In Part 2, a core group present their PhD thesis, speaking for about 20 minutes (English preferred, German possible) on how the concept of "Life" and related concepts/approaches such as "Autobiography"/Narrative Medicine, Life Writing connect to their research questions and which aspects of the texts are of particular relevance to their own work. The presenters raise questions for the discussion with their peers, which should contribute to the development of their thesis. Finally, in Part 3, the conversation will open up again so that the other PhD or advanced MA-students have an opportunity to address issues related to their projects.

Required reading:

Charon, Rita et al. 2016: Introduction. In: Charon, Rita et al.: The Principles and Practice of Narrative Medicine. Oxford: Oxford University Press (Online Edition: DOI 10.1093/med/9780199360192.003.0001)

Spiegel, Maura and Danielle Spencer 2016: Accounts of Self: Exploring Relationality Through Literature. In: Charon, Rita et al.: The Principles and Practice of Narrative Medicine. Oxford: Oxford University Press (Online Edition: DOI 10.1093/med/9780199360192.003.0002)

Banerjee, Mita 2018: Medical Humanities in American Studies: Life Writing, Narrative Medicine, and the Power of Autobiography. Heidelberg: Winter. Chapter 9: Trauma, Repatriation, and Representation: Life Writing as an Alternative Form of Knowledge Production. Pp. 307-336.



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Research interests:

Medical Humanities, Autobiography research, inter-relationships between humanities and natural sciences/medicine, *Humandifferenzierung*, Age Studies, Indigenous Studies

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