

Unreal City: Venice in the Nineteenth-Century Imagination (with excursion 24-30 May)

Lecturers: Prof. Dr. Tobias Döring, Dr. Wolfgang Funk (Mainz), Dr. Irmtraud Huber

Course description:

For the British and Americans in the 19th century, Venice was in many senses an imaginary city, even when they actually came to visit. The Venetian republic had come to an end and the city quickly became a monument to loss and absence. With the rising tourist trade of the 19th century, Venice turned into a museum of itself. Having lost its own political agency, Venice offered a screen for the fears and desires of its visitors. These visitors themselves soon inscribed themselves into the imaginary cityscape. Early in the century, Lord Byron in particular, but Percy Bysshe Shelley, too, not only wrote about Venice, but became themselves subjects and inspiration for later literary engagements with the city. Some decades later, John Ruskin's life-long obsession with Venice would begin to assert its immense influence on British perceptions of the city. This research seminar will sample literary engagements with Venice throughout the 19th century, beginning with the Romantics and ending with Henry James, covering different text genres (poetry, narrative prose, travel writing, art criticism). The aim of the seminar is to open up the breadth of different literary encounters of the city as well as to trace and highlight similarities and recurrent imagery, and to root research result in the direct experience of the city. With a strong individual research component, this seminar will introduce students to research in online databases, fieldwork and digital literary mapping.

Dates:

- 2-3 preparatory sessions (Fridays, 24 April, 8 May, 15 May), 2 pm
- Field trip to Venice: 24-30 May

Participants:

This graduate seminar (which is intended to be used as a 512 or 522 seminar, but could – after consultation with me – also used for other graduate courses) is a collaboration with Venice International University (VIU) and the Universities of Mainz and Munich. We'll take 12 students from the LMU and 8 students from Mainz.

Accommodation: 4-6 bed rooms on San Servolo

Field trip schedule:

- Travel from Mainz will have to be planned individually (Train, plane, grand tour); however, there is a chance to join the group travelling from Munich; for this, here are the relevant train times (if you chose to do so, you might partake of a group discount):
- departure, Sunday, 24 May: meeting at 11:20 at Munich Central station, in front of Starbucks. Train leaves at 11:34. Arrival in Venice Santa Lucia: 18:25
- return, Saturday 30 May: train from Venice Santa Lucia leaves at 15:35, Arrival in Munich: 22:27
- daily schedule: seminar sessions 9am-1pm, individual city exploration 3-5pm, evening seminar sessions 8-10 pm

Costs:

- Accommodation on San Servolo: ca. 300 €
- Travel: ca. 100-200 €
- approx. 300 € for meals and public transport
- I have already applied for – and received – some funding, but you should be able and willing to expend ca. 600 € for the trip.

Course preparation and requirements:

- Reading: Participants read Henry James's *The Aspern Papers* before the first preparatory session. In addition, a substantial reader with further primary and secondary reading material will be provided which participants are asked to read in preparation for the field trip.
- Group work: As an independent research task, students will be assigned an author, whose connection to Venice they will explore further, individually in preparation of the field trip and in a collaborative group work joining students from Munich and Mainz during our stay in Venice. Their research results will be presented as a contribution to a digital literary map of Venice, as well as a student-led selected guided tour on Friday afternoon. Groups will be assigned in the first preparatory session.
- seminar paper or essay (depending on the requirements of the course)

Registration for the course:

To participate please write a motivation letter (300-500 words) briefly outlining your interest in the topic and (if applicable) your previous encounters with the more general aspects of the topic (19th-century literature, city/space in literature, travel writing, tourism...). Please also include your Studiengang (MA or M.Ed.), the course you would like this seminar to be used as, as well as your intention how to travel to and from Mainz.

The letter is to be sent to wfunk@uni-mainz.de by **10 February**. Participants will be notified by the end of February.