



SALZBURG GLOBAL SEMINAR

Salzburg Seminar American Studies Alumni Association (SSASAA)

Globalization and American Popular Culture

Friday, September 25 – Monday, September 28, 2009

The globalization of American popular culture has been the subject of much critical attention in recent years – particularly in debates questioning whether American culture bears primary responsibility for increasing global cultural homogenization or whether, on the contrary, it has facilitated the development of a fascinatingly complex global cultural heterogeneity. American cultural influences have had a major effect on other cultures and they continue to play a crucial role in the cultural dynamics of globalization. Questions to be addressed will include: What does “American popular culture” mean in an era in which cultural industries are thoroughly international in terms of ownership and in terms of the contents of the cultural commodities they produce? For example, of the remaining ‘majors’ in the music business, only one could be described as remotely ‘American’. Jazz is often considered to be the classical music of America, yet is this phenomenon perhaps being misinterpreted by applying nationalist parameters? US cinema has from the beginning been part of a transatlantic cultural exchange, but with regard to production this exchange has been limited to economic and cultural elites, working in both the US and Europe. Television is yet a different case since national TV industries are more resistant to US influence than national cinema industries, although in the last five years ‘quality’ American television has become far more prominent in European countries. There will be discussion about US nationalism in cinema and electronic games in the context of the US’s use of the New International Division of Cultural Labor to obtain and maintain its geopolitical objectives, emphasizing the role of the state in the export and textuality of these culture industries. Participants will also discuss two contradictory directions in which American mass cultural forms have been taken at the European receiving end – one where the appropriation of an American mass cultural vernacular has been used to produce statements which can be seen as cultural resistance – the other a direction where American cultural influence has served to commodify, or commercialize, European ventures in the area of public history (the Disneyfication of public history). The purpose of the symposium is to examine the above issues in depth by exploring the dynamics and impact of American popular culture on national and local cultures, on national cultural industries, on American cultural diplomacy, and on the process of globalization.

Speakers:

Ron Clifton (chair), Retired Counselor in the Senior Foreign Service of the United States

Rob Kroes, Former Chair, American Studies Program, University of Amsterdam; Former President, European Association of American Studies

Toby Miller, (Keynote Speaker), Professor and Chair, Media & Cultural Studies, University of California Riverside

Roberta Pearson, Professor of Film and Television Studies, Institute of Film and Television Studies, University of Nottingham

Alex Seago, Chair, Social Sciences, Richmond American International University

Reinhold Wagnleitner, Associate Professor of Modern History, University of Salzburg

For further information, contact Ms. Marty Gecek, Symposium Director, mgecek@SalzburgGlobal.org