University Course 2014: GRAD 700R

Translating ‘America,’ Translating the ‘Other:’ cross-cultural (mis)communications in an age of globalization

Conveners: Karen Stolley
Tuesdays 3-6pm

Course Description:
During the past decade – after 9/11 and in the context of a continuing global financial crisis and multiple instances of global conflict – many in the United States have sought to understand its position in the world alternately through re-affirmations of American exceptionalism or through a discourse of decline, articulating a global narrative with the US at its center.

In effect, these pursuits are ways of answering the question, How do Americans imagine the US and themselves? But rarely are other questions posed, such as: How do others in the world understand the US? How do Americans imagine "Others" in the world, and how do those "Others" imagine the US in turn? What kinds of competencies are needed to help us answer these questions? This course will:

- Investigate the differences between the “monolingual international” and “translingual and transcultural competence.”
- Focus on the following locations: the Islamic world, Latin America, and Europe (with particular emphasis on Germany).
- Engage three topical concentrations: empire and power; gender and sexuality; and consumer culture and the global economy.

We are also planning to organize a co-curricular film festival related to the topic that will expand the conversation to include a broader audience. We will select films in various languages that deal with issues of cross-cultural communication and miscommunication, understanding and misunderstanding (including views of the US as ‘Other’). Campus screenings will be followed by discussions led by participants in the University Course (who will themselves reflect various sorts of translingual and transcultural experience).