Semestr zimowy 2025/2026, 1DSM

**Mixed race and affect in American literature**

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the possibility of racial mixing was feared, scorned, and treated as a major problem in American public discourse. Recent US Census figures suggest that racial mixing is on the rise. But the change may not necessarily be a matter of racial demographics, since interracial sex, within and out of wedlock, was common in America since the colonial era, particularly on Southern plantations, where black women were routinely raped by their masters. What is new is the willingness to acknowledge that racial purity is a fiction, and to reflect on the implications of this fact. Census forms now include a mixed-race box, and there is a growing interest among both market readers and scholars in narratives by mixed-race authors, many of whom were passed over at the height of Multiculturalism because they did not fit smoothly into the ethnic identity paradigm. Narratives about mixed race generate a steady flow of sophisticated scholarship.

By reading fiction and criticism produced at various points of the 20th and 21st century, we shall explore a variety of formal strategies for dealing with this emotionally loaded subject. We shall think about multiracial literature’s critical and affective potential, borrowing tools from theories of race and affect. To contextualize the literature, we shall make forays into the history of American race relations, particularly the changing meaning of whiteness.