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Dirt and Waste in American Popular Culture: Aesthetics, Discourses, (Bio)politics

From dirty conscience to dirty mouth, from dirty work to dirty thoughts, from desert dust to swamp mud, from pure blood to white trash – dirt and waste can carry out various cultural functions as literal sanitary standards, metaphors, rhetorical figures, aesthetic motifs, ethical and political categories, signifiers of social status or the nature vs. culture divide, and many more.

In this class, the consideration of their cultural work will serve three major purposes:

- an insight into various historically and regionally conditioned phenomena reflected by American popular culture
- an opportunity to get familiar with various ways of analyzing culture, as well as recognizing the research potential and specific needs of particular cultural media and genres, from literature to digital games
- a survey of theoretical approaches to dirt and waste, revealing different ideological or philosophical backgrounds of their conceptualizations.

Class subject areas will cover such topics as dirt and identity; playable waste; waste and capitalism; dirt and waste as theory; or dirt as life. Theoretical approaches will range from waste studies to biopolitics, to posthumanism, to gothic studies.