

Venue

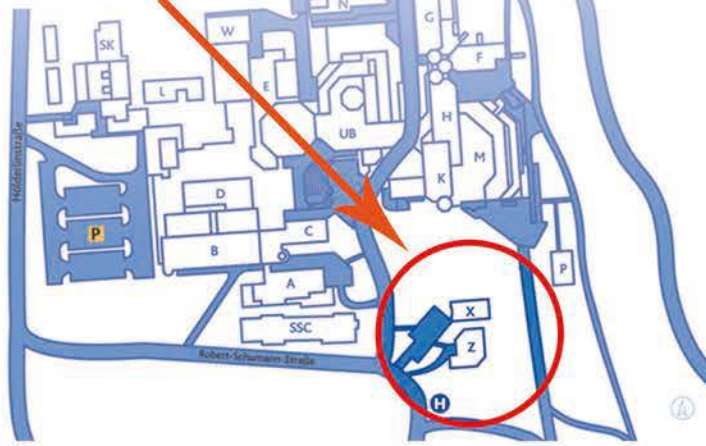
University of Siegen

Campus Adolf-Reichwein-Straße (AR)

Adolf-Reichwein-Straße 2

57076 Siegen

AR-X 1.04



Travelling information

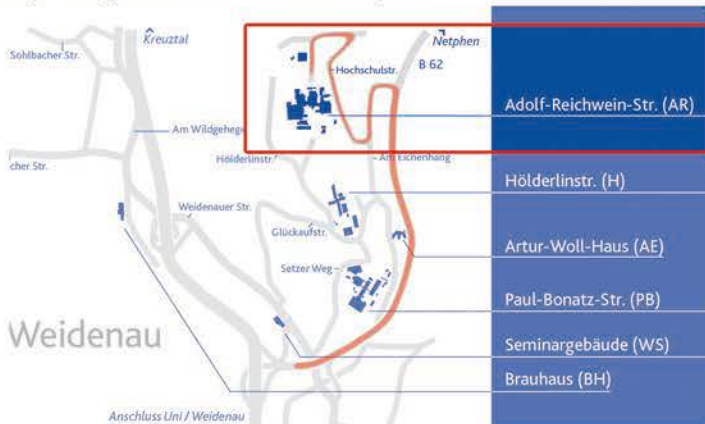
By bus:

From Siegen's central station, Siegen ZOB, lines C111, C106, run every 30 minutes to university / Haardter Berg.

Lines C111 and C106 depart from Weidenau ZOB every 30 minutes.

By car (via highway):

Take exit ramp (B54 / B62) Siegen-Weidenau (direction Netphen). At the second traffic light turn left into "Eichenhang". At the next traffic light turn right into "Hochschulstraße". At the end of the road turn left into "Haardter-Berg-Straße". You will find parking facilities and a parking block close to the campus.



American Rock Journalism

PD Dr. Ulf Schulenberg und Dr. Marcel Hartwig (University of Siegen)

The worlds of rock journalism and academia have so far often seemed incompatible. Even at the beginning of the 21st century, it still seems easier to imagine an academic elaborating on Adorno's interpretation of Schönberg than on the multilayered complexity of the term "pop". Undoubtedly, a lot has changed with the establishment of cultural studies in the 1970s and 1980s. However, one also has to see that rock journalism has so far played only a minor role for the field of American Studies. This is deplorable insofar as rock journalism can teach one much about America. Would it seem too frivolous to advance the idea that after the much-debated demise of the hipster it is the American rock journalist who is capable of elucidating the complexities of style, form, and myth? The American rock journalist, it seems, is also an Americanist seeking to appreciate his homeland. As far as this attempt at understanding is concerned, one only has to think of what is still one of the most fascinating texts of American rock journalism: Greil Marcus's *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music* (1975). That Marcus intends to approach his topic in an Americanist manner already becomes obvious in the "Author's Note" at the beginning of the book. He writes: "What I have to say in *Mystery Train* grows out of records, novels, political writings; the balance shifts, but in my intentions, there isn't any separation" (ibid: xi). Refusing any kind of separation between the different kinds of material he discusses, Marcus underscores that what he brings to his book is "a recognition of unities in the American imagination that already exist" (ibid: xi).

What Marcus focuses on is what he terms "the resonance of the best American images" (ibid: xi). What, one might feel tempted to ask, would be the resonance of those images at the beginning of the 21st century? What this boils down to is that American Studies can learn a lot from rock journalism, while the latter at least to a certain degree can be regarded as a variation of the former.

In his book *Sound Effects* (1981: 168) popular music scholar Simon Frith identifies the ideology of rock as being "valued for its political stance, its aggression, its sexuality, [and] its relationship to cultural struggle." Frith here draws attention to the codes and practices of rock music and locates its meaning-makers in fan communities (ibid 165), a great part of which may also be identified as autodidactic and (semi-)professional rock journalists. As makers of meaning, rock journalists are institutionalized among others in music journals, fansites, and blogs. There they define and circulate criteria of individualism, authenticity, independence (as opposed to mainstream), and originality – this practice results in a fluid body of manifestations of distinct American myths.

Moreover, American Rock Journalism is also dependent on corporate structures due to its strong connection with the music industries. As such this practice renders a field of post-industrial struggle in providing services that can be regarded both as branded and corporate but – with regard to the locus of fan communities – by the same token also as autonomous. As a cultural practice, American Rock Journalism further establishes and circulates tropes of youth cultures that determine criteria for the respective politics and styles.



American Rock Journalism

International Conference University of Siegen

28 February 2014, 2 pm
1 March 2014, 10 am

AR-X 1.04

Conference Organizers:
PD Dr. Ulf Schulenberg
schulenberg@anglistik.uni-siegen.de
Dr. Marcel Hartwig
hartwig@anglistik.uni-siegen.de



Keynote speakers

Richard Goldstein

Richard Goldstein (Hunter College, NY, USA) is music journalist and cultural critic. He wrote for the Village Voice from June 1966 until 2004, eventually becoming executive editor. He specializes in gay and lesbian issues, music, and counterculture topics. He has issued two collections of his work, *Reporting the Counterculture* (1989) and *Goldstein's Greatest Hits* (1970). He also released a collection of rock lyrics interspersed with psychedelic illustrations, *The Poetry of Rock* (1969). This book has been taught in literature classes in a number of secondary schools and universities. Beginning in the early 1970s, Goldstein has been a champion of gay rights and issued early calls for attention to the AIDS epidemic. Since then, he has tackled the cutting-edge topic of gay power politics with two books: *The Attack Queers* (2002) and *Homocons: The Rise of the Gay Right* (2003). He famously issued a call in *The Nation* for Eminem to duel with him, taking exception to the controversial rapper's homophobic lyrics. Goldstein is a GLAAD-award winner for his contributions to the gay community.

Devon Powers

Devon Powers, Ph.D. (Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA) researches the intersections between music, history, and the circulation of culture in an attempt to understand how, why, and under what circumstances and constraints music becomes popular. Of particular interest to her is cultural intermediation – the people and processes that operate "in between" the production and consumption of culture. To this end, recent endeavors have explored the history of music journalism, music and promotional culture, popular music historiography, and music in new media environments. An avid music consumer and fan, Powers has also worked as a freelance music journalist as well as in nonprofit public relations. She served on the 2010 program committee for the International Association of Popular Music (IASPM) - U.S., and in 2009 was named an Emerging Scholars Fellow at Franklin & Marshall College. She holds a BA (1999) in Women's Studies and English from Oberlin College and a doctorate (2008) in Media Studies from New York University (*Writing the Record*, 2012). Powers joined the Department of Culture and Communication at Drexel University in 2008, and commonly teaches classes on consumer culture, popular music, and media criticism.

Program

American Rock Journalism
International Conference at the University of Siegen,
28 February to 1 March 2014

Thursday, 27 February 2014, 9bar

6.30 p.m. Conference Warming

Friday, 28 February 2014, AR X 1.04

2.00 p.m. – 2.30 p.m.

Welcome Addresses and Introduction

2.30 – 3.30 p.m. Plenary Lecture I

Richard Goldstein (Hunter College, New York, USA):
The Birth of Rock Criticism: An Eyewitness Account

3.30 – 4.00 p.m.

Coffee Break

4.00 p.m. – 6. p.m. Panel I

Authorship and Rock Journalism

Christian Werthschulte (Ruhr-Universität Bochum):
The Dea(r)th of the author?

Nadja Geer (FU Berlin): "Super-High-Functioning
Autistics": The Autonomy and Agency of a Rock Critic

Ulf Schulenberg (Universität Siegen): "Teenagers
Screamed Philosophy; Thugs Wrote Poetry":
Greil Marcus's Rock Journalism and the Notion of
Transgression

6.30 p.m. – 8.00 p.m. Conference Dinner

8.30 p.m. – 10.00 p.m. Film Screening *A Band Called
Death* (2012)

Program

Saturday, 1 March 2014, AR X 1.04

10.00 – 11.30 a.m. Panel II

Authenticity and Rock Journalism

Konstantin Butz (Kunsthochschule für Medien Köln):
Bikinis, Zombies, and Wild Riders of Boards: *Thrasher
Magazine* and Skateboard Journalism in the 1980s

Hans Frese (Universität Hamburg): Rise Above:
Representations of 1980s Indie Culture and the
Problem of Authenticity

11.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. Lunch Break

1.00 – 3.00 p.m. Panel III

American Literature, National Identity, and Rock
Journalism

Billy J. Stratton (University of Denver, USA):
Disappear Where? The Seduction of Punk in Bret
Easton Ellis' *Less Than Zero* and Penelope Spheeris'
The Decline of Western Civilization

Julian Weber (Berlin): What's the "American" in
American Music Journalism

Marcel Hartwig (Universität Siegen): "We Can always
Empathize with Ourselves": Pastiche, Parody, and
Rock Journalism in Bret Easton Ellis' *American
Psycho* (1991)

3.00 – 3.30 p.m. Coffee Break

3.30 – 4.30 p.m. Plenary Lecture II

Devon Powers (Drexel University, Philadelphia, PA):
The Village Voice and the Birth of Rock Criticism