MEDIA LITERACY AND U.S. DEMOCRACY

WELCOME TO WTA 2024

The Wittenberg Teacher Academy 2024 is dedicated to issues of media literacy and U.S. democracy. We offer 2.5 days of talks, interactive workshops, and informed conversation sessions by U.S., Scottish, and German scholars, practitioners, and emerging artists with talks and workshops on the interconnectedness of media practices and citizenship, issues around social media, AI, and media at large in the EFL-classroom, modern American drama's engagement with new media and politics, as well as simulation games of U.S. elections, and much more.

Julia Nitz, Main Organizer

Julia Nitz is Associate professor of Anglo-American Cultural Studies at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg. She has served as Executive Director at the Center for American Studies and is co-founder of the Intercontinental Crosscurrents Network for the study of transatlantic women's networks in the long nineteenth century (crosscurrents.uni-halle.de).

Her research focusses on the American Civil War, women's life writing, intertextual cultural studies, historiographic and museum narratology as well as Anglophone (Caribbean) film and adaptation studies. Her publications include *Georg III. Rezeption und Konstruktion in den britischen Medien* (1990–2006) (WVT, 2010), *Towards a Historiographic Narratology* (2011), and with Sandra H. Petrulionis and Theresa Schön, an edited volume on *Intercontinental Crosscurrents: Women's Networks across Europe and the Americas* (2016).

Her most recent monograph *Belles and Poets: Intertextuality in the Civil War Diaries of White Southern Women* (LSUP, 2020) establishes the extent to which literature offered a means of exploring ideas and convictions about class, gender, and racial hierarchies in the Civil War-era South.

Apart from her interest in British and American cultural studies, Julia is a passionate player of Ultimate Frisbee and an ardent reader.

Leucorea | Collegienstraße 62, 06886 Lutherstadt Wittenberg

THURSDAY, 28 NOV. 2024

15:00   Arrival and Check in

16:30   **Welcome and Introduction**

Julia Nitz, Main Organizer (MLU Halle-Wittenberg)
U.S. Consulate General Leipzig
Representatives of the Muhlenberg Center for U.S. Studies
and the English Department at MLU

17:00   Keynote
Artificial Intelligence and Education

Emily Drew (James K. Batten Professor of English, Davidson College)

18:30   Dinner Buffet (Best Western)

20:00   **"News or False?" – Trivia Game**

Emily Drew (James K. Batten Professor of English, Davidson College)

FRIDAY, 29 NOV. 2024

8:00   Breakfast (Leucorea)

9:00   Lecture
**Challenging Democracy in the Digital Era: Corporations, Civic Rights,
and Intersubjectivity in Jennifer Haley's *Neighborhood 3* and *The Nether***

Johanna Hartmann (MLU Halle-Wittenberg)

10:00   Lecture
**MIL Citizens:
Informed, Engaged, Empowered**

Roslyn Kratochvil Moore (Deutsche Welle Akademie)

11:00   Coffee break

11:30   **Conversation groups with lecturers**

13:00   Off time

15:00   Workshop I
**Presidential Elections on TikTok –
Discussing U.S. Politics in the EFL Classroom**

Kim Röding and Juliane Götz (MLU Halle-Wittenberg)

Workshop II
Mis-/Disinformation Management and AI in Your Classrooms

Jürgen Meyer and Jiann-Chyng Tu (MLU Halle-Wittenberg)

16:30   Coffee break

17:00   **Workshops I + II continued**

19:00   Round tables with speakers and Thanksgiving Dinner (Best Western)

SATURDAY, 30 NOV. 2024

8:00   Breakfast (Leucorea)

9:00   **News from the U.S. Embassy's Public Diplomacy Section**

Martina Schulze (U.S. Embassy Berlin)

9:30   Workshop III
**The Unique States of America: Gaming the Political System –
A Simulation Game**

Niclas Hüttemann (TU Chemnitz)

11:15   Coffee break

11:45   **Workshop III continued**

13:00   **Feedback and Farewell**

14:00   Tour of Town

Keynote | 28. November 2024 | 17:00 Uhr

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND EDUCATION

Emily Drew (James K. Batten Professor of English, Davidson College)

This talk explores how AI works, its potential impacts on education, and opportunities and concerns related to AI's classroom use.

Emily Drew is a three-time Emmy-winning journalist and professor at Davidson College, where she teaches about the spread of misinformation and disinformation, especially in relation to U.S. elections, democracy, and foreign policy. Her field work has included presidential campaigns, domestic and overseas terrorist attacks, mass shootings, natural disasters, journalism's role in democracy, and the impact of artificial intelligence on journalism.
www.davidson.edu/people/emily-drew

28. November 2024 | 20:00 Uhr

"NEWS OR FALSE?" – TRIVIA GAME

Emily Drew (James K. Batten Professor of English, Davidson College)

This trivia game will test your ability to spot false news headlines, deep fakes, and other forms of disinformation.

Lecture | 29. November 2024 | 09:00 Uhr

CHALLENGING DEMOCRACY IN THE DIGITAL ERA
Corporations, Civic Rights, and Intersubjectivity in Jennifer Haley's *Neighborhood 3: Requisition of Doom* and *The Nether*

Johanna Hartmann (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg)

The impact of the digital era on democracies is a growing concern, with phenomena such as social media, fake news, or deepfakes. Jennifer Haley's "tech plays" explore these concerns by depicting fictional worlds where corporate structures have replaced democratic ones, and digital innovations disrupt social relations. In this talk, I focus on two of Haley's plays: *Neighborhood 3: Requisition of Doom* (*N3RD*) and *The Nether*. *The Nether* is set in a future where, due to an ecologial catastrophe, most public life has shifted into a digital realm. *N3RD* portrays an American suburban community divided by a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG) popular among teenagers. I argue that the main dystopian theme in both plays is how deregulated corporate control of digital spaces affects social and political life. Through their themes and aesthetics, Haley's plays suggest that digital realms are not separate from physical reality but extensions of it. The possibility of dis-embodiment in virtual spaces is critiqued as a myth that has enabled corporate domination and a lack of democratic regulation of digital realms. Thus, Haley's plays *N3RD* and *The Nether* employ theater as a political force.

Johanna Hartmann is Assistant Professor of American Literature at Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg. In her research, she focuses on American drama and theater since the 19th century, questions of (inter-)mediality (e.g., painting, photography, film), and contemporary literature. She is the author of *Literary Visuality in Siri Hustvedt Works: Phenomenological Perspectives* (Königshausen und Neumann 2015). In her habilitation project she focused on modernist American short plays and theater photography. She is the editor of *Censorship and Exile* (together with Hubert Zapf, V&R 2015), *Zones of Ambiguity in Siri Hustvedt's Works: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (together with Christine Marks and Hubert Zapf, De Gruyter 2016), *The Tragic in Contemporary American Drama and Theater* (together with Julia Rössler, guest issue of *JADT* 31.2 2019), *Theater & Community: Poetics, Politics, Performances* (together with Ilka Saal, *JCDE* 12.1, 2024), and *The Body in/of Don DeLillo's Plays* (forthcoming in *TSLL*, 2025).

Lecture | 29. November 2024 | 10:00 Uhr

MIL CITIZENS: INFORMED, ENGAGED, EMPOWERED

Roslyn Kratochvil Moore (Deutsche Welle Akademie)

As democracy faces challenges like rising authoritarianism, declining trust in journalism, and widespread disinformation, educators are essential in equipping students with the skills to navigate this complex media landscape. This session will examine how disinformation and polarization, worsened by AI technologies like deepfakes, affect young people's engagement with news. Many students increasingly rely on algorithm-driven content, often neglecting crucial news sources. In this context, Media and Information Literacy (MIL) is vital for fostering informed citizenship and supporting democratic values. The session will present DW Akademie (DWA)'s MIL approach, featuring creative and interactive activities designed to engage students and promote critical thinking. DWA's „MIL Heroes and Villains" storytelling method encourages role-playing and analysis of media narratives, transforming passive consumption into active participation. Additionally, it will explore the role of media in elections and democratic practices, emphasizing the need to regain trust in public interest media. By equipping individuals with the skills to critically assess information and actively participate in the media environment, we can help ensure that democracy prevails.

Roslyn Kratochvil Moore is Head of Digital Sphere at DW Akademie where she is responsible for thematic topics such as Media and Information Literacy (MIL), Digital Rights, Innovation for Dialogue, Digital Authoritarianism and Digital Security. She has over 20 years' experience in international development mainly focusing on education projects. She has lived and worked for many years in India, Kenya and Sudan. Roslyn has been working for DW Akademie since 2015, based in Bonn, Germany, but is originally from Scotland.

Workshop I | 29. November 2024 | 15:00 Uhr

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS ON *TIKTOK*
Discussing U.S. Politics in the EFL-Classroom

Kim Lisa Röding & Juliane Götz (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg

Over 120 million US citizens use *TikTok* (Statista 2024), with young adults especially watching short videos of people dancing, lip synching, or sharing their opinions on trending topics. *TikTok* has not only become the biggest online platform for creating and sharing content online but has also been shaping public opinion regarding political decisions around the world. The social media app feeds its users content tailored to their preferences, contributing to the widening gap between opposing political camps. While some creators claim to share the truth about political leaders, others arbitrarily spread misinformation to influence election outcomes without their consumers' awareness. Despite its policy prohibiting political advertisement, *TikTok* users find ways to disparage one candidate or promote another.

This workshop aims to develop a tool for students and teachers to analyze *TikTok* videos with influential content, using the 2024 Presidential Elections as an example. After an introduction to the US electoral system and the two-party system, students will examine political content on the platform and create valid criteria to evaluate *TikToks* sharing political views on the presidential candidates. The videos will be analyzed not only for their content and argumentation but also for the format and performance of the creator or others featured. In the end, students will be tasked with creating their own *TikTok*-like videos promoting opinions they support.

Works Cited

DataReportal, We Are Social, and Meltwater. "Countries with the largest TikTok audience as of July 2024 (in millions) [Graph]." *Statista*, 31 Jul 2024, http://www.statista.com/statistics/1299807/number-of-monthly-unique-tiktok-users/.

DataReportal, & We Are Social, & Meltwater. (July 31, 2024). Countries with the largest TikTok audience as of July 2024 (in millions) [Graph]. In *Statista*. Retrieved September 03, 2024, from https://www.statista.com/statistics/1299807/number-of-monthly-unique-tiktok-users/

Juliane Götz is a research assistant at the English Didactics department at Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg (MLU). In 2019, she graduated with a degree in English Studies, Education Studies and Political Sciences from MLU. During her studies, she was teaching English at different levels in Germany as well as German as a Foreign Language at *Winterbourne International Academy* in Bristol, UK, in 2014/15. Additionally, she joined a research team of the Political Didactics department in a project on democratic education at secondary schools in Saxony-Anhalt. After graduating, she went on to teach English and Social Studies at secondary school level. Since 2021, she has been pursuing a PhD in English Didactics. Her research focuses on conversation analysis of teacher-student-interaction led by pre-service teachers.

Kim Röding studied English, Physical Education and Italian at the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg and the University of New Mexico. She wrote her thesis on "Teaching 9/11 – Eine Unterrichtsreihe für die gymnasiale Oberstufe zu den Ereignissen und Folgen des 11. September 2001". During her studies, she worked as a student assistant and took up opportunities to teach English as a Foreign Language at several German schools as well as an American high school. She recently joined the English Institute at Martin-Luther-University as an assistant researcher in the field of English Didactics and looks forward to realizing her interest in the potential of short films for the EFL classroom in a PhD project. In her free time, she enjoys cooking, baking, drawing, painting, and doing sports. She is a member of a track and field team and plays Ultimate Frisbee.

Workshop II | 29. November 2024 | 15:00 Uhr

MIS-/DISINFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND AI IN YOUR CLASSROOMS
Peer Discussion and Exchange

Jürgen Meyer and Jiann-Chyng Tu (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg)

This bifocal workshop will explore best practice strategies not only for understanding but also for managing misinformation and disinformation, as well as current issues related to artificial intelligence in EFL classrooms. After an introductory presentation of a range of thematic anchors, participants will have the opportunity to actively explore a few related themes in stations, including critically approaching authentic textbook materials and exploring assistive AI tools that can also be used in the teaching practice. A concluding interactive exchange among participants will reflect on their attitudes toward these topics, their practical relevance for the EFL classroom, and the insights gained during the workshop.

NEWS FROM THE U.S. EMBASSY'S PUBLIC DIPLOMACY SECTION

Martina Schulze (U.S. Embassy Berlin)

Jürgen Meyer completed his Habilitation in the field of English Literature, titled *Textvarianz und Schriftkritik: Dialogische Schreib- und Lesekultur bei Thomas More, George Gascoigne und John Lyly* (Heidelberg 2010). In 2014, he moved into the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and published the monograph *Fachdidaktik Englisch: Fokus Literaturvermittlung – Eine hermeneutische Analyse von Lehrwerken der gymnasialen Oberstufe* (Tübingen 2021). After several interim-professorships at the universities of Bielefeld, Erfurt, Konstanz, Paderborn and Vechta, he has joined the Anglo-American Literary and Cultural Studies team at the MLU Halle-Wittenberg since October. His main research areas are Coursebook Analysis, Media in the Digital EFL-Classroom, Teacher Professionalization in TEFL, as well as Cultures of Knowledge, Textual Criticism and Reader Response in Literary Studies.

Jiann-Chyng Tu is a lecturer and researcher in American literature and culture at MLU Halle-Wittenberg. He received his BA in German and English from Wake Forest University (USA) and his MA in American Studies (Literature and Culture) from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, where he is also a doctoral candidate in American literature. Before joining MLU Halle-Wittenberg, he held teaching positions at universities in Berlin, Münster, Bamberg, Regensburg, and Augsburg. His research interests include African American literature and culture, multiethnic literature of the United States, transnational American studies, Black internationalisms, literary history, and food studies. Currently, he serves as one of the two postgraduate representatives to the advisory board of the German Association for American Studies (GAAS/DGfA).

Martina Schulze is an Established Opinion Leaders Specialist/Program Specialist in the Public Engagement Section of U.S. Embassy Berlin with a portfolio of American foreign and security policy, economic programs and global affairs which include climate and energy policies. Previously, she was head of the international office of Hamburg University of Applied Sciences, worked for the Georg Eckert Institute – Leibniz Institute for Educational Media in Braunschweig and was program head of a large private foundation in Hamburg. She has a Master of Arts in International Relations from Boston University and a Master of Arts in American Studies from Hamburg University.

THE UNIQUE STATES OF AMERICA: GAMING THE POLITICAL SYSTEM
A Simulation Game

Niclas Hüttemann (TU Chemnitz)

How are states in the US politically distinct, and what makes them unique? Through the method of simulating and gaming a fictional bill in the US senate, this workshop presents a way to gamify discussions about different states as well as US politics, making them more approachable in the EFL classroom. By taking on the roles of elected US senators, workshop participants will learn how politicians must balance diverging interests – those of regional actors, their colleagues, or their own – in order to get their political positions into the legislative draft and ultimately passed as a bill.

As of 2020, **Niclas Hüttemann** is a researcher at the Institute for Political Science at the Technical University of Chemnitz. His PhD research focuses on organized interest groups active in Germany's foreign policy, with a particular emphasis on parliamentary access and foreign economic policy issues, such as globalized supply chains. In addition to his research, he is active in a youth NGO that focuses on teaching about parliamentary systems and how politics works in national and European Parliaments, particularly through simulation games.

Organized and moderated by Julia Nitz

Assistant Organizers:
Aline Leuchtenberger and Lena Holz

Anglistik/Amerikanistik, MLU Halle-Wittenberg
wta@amerikanistik.uni-halle.de

This teacher training is officially accredited by
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and ThiLLM, Thüringen.

Leucorea
Collegienstraße 62
06886 Lutherstadt Wittenberg

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