Borders, boundaries of nations and, presumably, of identities, and migration, their legal and illegal crossing, have long played an important role in literary studies. At the same time, literary border studies have been characterized by a fundamental tension: while on the one hand pointing to the exclusion and potentially, the violence manifested in the border, on the other hand they celebrated the border lands as a site of emergence of new identities. Gloria Anzaldúa’s 1987 *Borderlands/La Frontera*, a multi-genre investigation of the U.S./Mexican border, remains a central text in this regard and serves as a case in point: Anzaldúa’s *new mestiza* embodies a hybrid, subversive identity of the borderlands, while at the same time at the border “the third world grates against the first and bleeds,” as Anzaldúa writes (*Borderlands*, 3). The border here is a wound, both a sign and act of violence; it is a violation of human rights, politically, economically, and culturally, signalling an exclusion that goes beyond the exclusion of Mexican immigrants from the U.S.

Recently, cultural and literary scholars have begun to refer to concepts of ‘cultural’ or ‘cosmopolitan citizenship’ in order to capture issues of political participation, human rights claims, and processes of inclusion and exclusion, in short: ways of negotiating and imagining cultural membership and socio-political participation in and through literature in a world marked by migration and transculturation. In my presentation, I understand ‘citizenship’ broadly “as the ways and means by which a society imagines and organizes social membership, political participation, and societal arrangements” in order “to use this term to develop an analytical framework with which to historicize the conditions of societal arrangements and to fundamentally problematize them” (*Queering Demokratie*, 22; transl. KS). I will take the questions asked by Anzaldúa’s seminal text as a starting point to critically reflect on the potential of these concepts for the analysis of literary texts as negotiations of belonging and human rights against – individual and collective – experiences of violence and dispossession. While the U.S./Mexican border in Leslie Marmon Silko’s 1992 novel *Almanac of the Dead* serves as my main example, I will in conclusion look at possibilities to transfer my findings to the reading of contemporary European borders as well.

**References:**

