

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE MA PROGRAM POSSIBLE DUE TO PARTICIPATION IN ZIP

Due to the funding provided by ZIP (University's Integrated Development Programme) ASC was able to offer first year students in the year 2019/2020, a new, improved programme of studies which embraces the demands of the modern academia and job market. Amendments focused on developing research skills, on the one hand and equipping our graduates with practical and communication skills on the other.

Major changes include:

Curricular activities

- **Key Readings in American Studies** (Semester 1):
A new course aimed to introduce students to working with the crucial texts in American studies run collaboratively by instructors from all the disciplines offered at the Center.
- **Introductory Research Proseminar** (humanities and social sciences) (Semester 1):
A remodeled course focused on strengthening independent research skills of students in the disciplines.
- **Advanced Practical English/Español Práctico** (Semester 2):
Additional language course, follow up to the first semester (30h).
- **Practical Project** (Semester 3):
A new course offered in sections (6 groups min.) for students to choose from an array of possibilities. Its aim is to test theoretical knowledge in practice by organizing a conference, seminar, student exhibition, film festival or Center-related fund-raising. Meetings with interesting people, workshops, mentoring, visits to cultural and art institutions are projected as the forms of work during the project.

Extra-curricular activities:

- **Methodological workshops:**
Offered by specialists in various fields, they will provide instruction on methodological specificities in the disciplines (film studies, media studies, cultural studies, archive research, questionnaires, etc.) and the ways to apply research tools to study primary material.

- **Workshops in soft skills:**

Workshops aimed at developing skills of communication, self-presentation, team work, time management, prioritizing, etc.

- **Transatlantic Symposium**

Expanding the program run since 2012 which entails cooperation among the universities from Germany and the United States. Students participate in seminars, conferences and academic meetings together. Finally, they go on a short academic visit to one of the foreign universities participating in the Symposium. Due to ZIP, ASC can recruit more students to work on the program during regular pre-departure seminars. The best candidates from the group will be selected for the final round (and the trip) through the internal ASC competition.

- **Individual research grants for students**

Twenty most successful students may apply for individual research grants which are designed to fund their research trips in preparation for a master thesis. Students may go to such places as Bibliothek Institut JFK, Freie Universitaet in Berlin; Eccles Center for American Studies at the British Library; Center for American Studies, Royal Library of Belgium, Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut in Berlin.

The program also provides conference funding for 8 students to the USA as a part of ASC cooperation with Humboldt-Universitaet in Berlin and Oregon State University in Portland, Oregon.