

The Chair of American Studies (Prof. Dr. Julia Faisst, Interim Chair) is honored to welcome **Prof. Dr. Dr. hc. Werner Sollors (Harvard University, Honorary Doctorate from the University of Regensburg)** in the second week of May 2023.

The stay is generously funded by the Regensburger Universitätsstiftung Hans Vielberth.

You are cordially invited to the following three events:

Guest Lecture “Goethe and Black America” on Wednesday, 10 May 2023 at 4 p.m. (c.t.) in H24. The event will be followed by a

Meet and Greet with Prof. Sollors at 6 p.m. in SG 2.14.

Roundtable Discussion (for MA and PhD students) with Prof. Sollors on Thursday, 11 May 2023 at noon (c.t.) in SG 2.14.



Abstract “Goethe and Black America”

In August, 1805, both Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and the Abbé Henri Grégoire were in Magdeburg cathedral, where the now famous 13th -century statue of a black St. Maurice stood and still stands. This coincidence held the potential of a dialogue. What might the German universalist Goethe who would advocate the idea of “world literature” and the French anti slavery activist Grégoire, a foundational figure in what became later known as “black studies” and author of the pioneering book *De la littérature des Nègres* have said to each other? How did Goethe respond to the pressing issue of race and slavery in literature? And how did African American authors from Frances E.W. Harper to Claude McKay and from W.E.B. Du Bois to Rita Dove draw on the author of the novel *Werther*, of the original bildungsroman *Wilhelm Meister*, of the philosophical drama *Faust*, and of such poems as “Erlkönig,” “Prometheus,” “Das Beste,” “Wanderers Nachtlied,” and “Heideröslein”? The answers to these questions suggest that a surprisingly extensive part of the tradition of literature and journalism, of musical and theatrical performance by African Americans can be accessed through the lens of their adoption of, and quibbles with, Goethean works, ideas, maxims, and biographical anecdotes, including those about his last words.

About Prof. Dr. Dr. hc. Werner Sollors

[WERNER SOLLORS](#) earned his doctorate from the Freie Universität Berlin and is Henry B. and Anne M. Cabot Professor of English Literature, *Emeritus*, at Harvard University. At Harvard he taught American, African American, and Comparative literature for more than three decades and served as chair of Afro-American Studies, History of American Civilization, and Ethnic Studies. He has also taught at Columbia University, at the Università degli Studi di Venezia, Cà Foscari, and at New York University Abu Dhabi. He is the author of an extensive body of works, among them such books as [Beyond Ethnicity](#), [Neither Black nor White yet Both](#), [Ethnic Modernism](#), [The Temptation of Despair](#), [Schrift in bildender Kunst](#), and, most recently, [Un bambino a Bergen-Belsen](#), and such articles as “W.E.B. Du Bois in NaziDeutschland, 1936,” [“Goodbye Germany,”](#) “Kleine Reise in die Baedeker-Vergangenheit,” “Jewish American Prose Writing: Immigration and Modernity, 1900-1945,” “‘A World Carefully Faked for Our Coming’: German-American Encounters in 1940s Bavaria (and Beyond),” [“‘Everybody Gets Fragebogened Sooner or Later’: The Denazification Questionnaire as Cultural Text,”](#) “Seeing Images, Thinking of Words: Visual Art as Translation,” and [“‘Better to Die by Them than for Them’: Carl Schmitt Reads ‘Benito Cereno.’”](#) He has edited numerous studies and literary works and coedited, with Greil Marcus [A New Literary History of America](#), now also available in [Russian translation](#), with Winfried Fluck [German? American? Literature?](#), with Marc Shell [The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature](#), and with Julia Faisst und Alan Rosen [Die Toten habe ich nicht befragt](#), a collection of interviews David Boder conducted with survivors in 1946.

He is the recipient of fellowships from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities. He received the Constance Rourke Award for the best essay in *American Quarterly*, the Everett Mendelsohn Excellence in Mentoring Award at Harvard, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for the Study of Multiethnic Literature of the United States (MELUS), two Sylvia Lyons Render Awards from the Charles W. Chesnutt Association, two W.E.B. Du Bois medals from the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute at Harvard, and honorary doctorates from the Universität Regensburg and the West University Timisoara. A corresponding member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and an honorary member of the Bayerische Amerika-Akademie, he is also a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a member of the Academia Europaea.