



Call for Papers
2026 Annual Conference
4–6 November 2026, Radboud University (Nijmegen)

***American Protest Cultures:
Protest, Dissent, and the Cultural Politics of the United States***

From the revolutionary rhetoric of the Declaration of Independence to contemporary mobilizations against democratic backsliding, protest has been central to the American experiment. The United States often understands itself as a nation born of dissent—its identity shaped not only by institutions of governance but also by those who challenge them. Across centuries, across borders, protest has functioned as a cultural engine: from abolitionists, suffragists and conscientious objectors to Black Lives Matter and climate justice activists; from Native and Indigenous sovereignty movements to digital grassroots campaigns; from countercultural art to the transformative power of music, satire, and performance.

How do protest movements produce meaning and mobilize feeling? How do they generate new political subjectivities and collective identities? How do they transcend borders and boundaries? What role do aesthetics and embodiment play in sustaining movements and shaping their legacies? And how might we understand protest not simply as a response to injustice, but as a generative force in American cultural life?

In an era marked by intensified polarization, environmental crises, renewed struggles over civil rights, and the rise of populist and authoritarian tendencies, these questions feel especially urgent. This conference invites scholars across disciplines—history, sociology, literature, political science, media studies, art history, cultural studies, gender studies, environmental humanities, Indigenous studies, performance studies, and beyond—to examine the diverse forms, aesthetics, affects, and infrastructures of protest in the United States, and the ways the current moment has shaped protest within and between the United States, Canada and Mexico.

We welcome contributions that situate U.S. protest in hemispheric, transnational, or comparative perspectives, especially with neighboring Canada and Mexico.

We seek work that explores not only the practices of American protest but also how acts of dissent continually reshape cultural narratives, national mythologies, and competing visions of American identity, democracy, and futurity. We are interested in a wide spectrum of political positions and forms of protest, including movements that challenge, defend, or seek to reconfigure existing power structures, including national boundaries.

We welcome proposals addressing, but not limited to, the following areas:

- Movements for racial, Indigenous, and immigrant justice: African American freedom struggles from abolitionism to Black Lives Matter; Indigenous resistance, sovereignty, and Land Back movements; immigrant rights, border struggles, and sanctuary activism; protest as survival, cultural production, and political theory.
- Labor, class, and economic justice: Union organizing and strikes; gig economy protests; the history of labor radicalism and its contemporary legacies; movements contesting austerity, precarity, and economic inequality.
- Gender, sexuality, and bodily autonomy: Feminist, queer, and trans liberation movements from suffrage to Stonewall to contemporary intersectional activism; struggles over reproductive rights, sexual citizenship, and care work.
- Environment, climate, and multispecies activism: Youth climate movements; Indigenous water protectors; eco-activism; environmental and blue humanities perspectives; animal rights and multispecies approaches to protest.
- Literature, poetry, and narrative forms of dissent: How literary form, voice, and storytelling articulate resistance and imagine alternative futures; protest in memoir, fiction, poetry, life writing, and speculative genres.
- Musical cultures of dissent: Protest songs; jazz as critique; punk rebellion; hip hop activism; the politics of sound, voice, and listening.
- Visual and performing arts: Protest in film, television, and documentary; stand-up comedy and satire as political intervention; comics, graphic novels, and visual cultures of resistance; performance art and street theater.

- Campus, youth, and countercultural movements: Student activism, free speech movements, antiwar protests, divestment campaigns; 1960s counterculture, psychedelia, and alternative communities; contemporary campus and youth mobilizations.
- Digital activism and new media: Hashtag movements, viral protest, cyberfeminism, online public spheres, and the infrastructures of digital mobilization; surveillance, data, and digital repression.
- Carceral resistance and abolition: Prison activism, anti-incarceration campaigns, and critiques of policing and the carceral state; abolitionist organizing and imaginaries.
- Memory, monuments, and public space: Toppling statues, memorial cultures, heritage debates, and activist reimaginations of the built environment; museum interventions and counter-archives.
- Faith, spirituality, and moral protest: Religious activism, liberation theology, interfaith coalitions, and spiritualized dissent; the moral rhetoric of protest and conscience.

Keynote Speakers:

- Prof. Stefania Milan (University of Amsterdam)
- Prof. Wilfried Raussert (Bielefeld University)
- Prof. Stephen Tuck (London Interdisciplinary School)

Submission Guidelines

Individual papers:

Please submit a 300-word abstract for a 15-minute paper. The abstract should clearly articulate your research question, historiographical or theoretical framing, sources, and argument, and may include 3–5 keywords.

Panels:

Panel proposals should include a 300–400-word overview of the panel’s theme, questions, and intellectual rationale; 100-word abstracts for each individual paper, short (100-word) bios for each participant, a panel chair, and (optional) a commentator. Please indicate the panel organizer and primary contact person.

Roundtables:

Roundtables are meant to foster open conversation rather than formal papers. Proposals should include a 400–600-word description of the session's theme and goals, along with short (100-word) bios for 3–5 confirmed participants.

Workshops:

We welcome workshops that focus on methods, pedagogy, public humanities, or activist collaboration. Proposals (400–600 words) should outline the topic, intended audience, goals, and proposed activities, as well as any specific logistical needs (room set-up, audio-visual requirements, etc.).

Poster sessions:

Poster presentations are particularly encouraged from graduate students and early-career scholars, though all are welcome to apply. Please submit a 200–300-word abstract describing your project, its methods, and its contribution to the conference theme.

Please send your submission in a PDF file along with a brief biographical statement or CV to the Board of the Netherlands American Studies Association at board.nasa@gmail.com no later than **Friday, May 8, 2026**.

Applicants will be notified of decisions in the second half of May 2026.

Registration

Registration for the event will open in the summer. The conference fee is €50 and includes a free annual NASA membership. Current NASA members may attend free of charge.

The Netherlands American Studies Association is committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive scholarly community. We actively encourage proposals from scholars of diverse genders, ethnicities, abilities, career stages, and institutional contexts. The strength of our field depends on a wide range of perspectives and experiences, and we aim to create a conference environment where all participants feel welcome and respected. Interdisciplinary approaches and contributions from early-career researchers are particularly encouraged, as are creative, collaborative, and performative formats. If you have questions about accessibility or specific needs, please feel free to contact the organizers.

We look forward to convening a vibrant conversation on how protest animates, unsettles, and redefines American cultures—past, present, and future.

Conference website: <https://www.americanprotestcultures.com>

For more about the Netherlands American Studies Association, visit:

<https://www.netherlands-america.nl/mission/>