

Call for Papers

Planetary Precarities: Perspectives of/on the Age of Post-Truth

36th Annual Conference of the Postgraduate Forum (PGF) of the German Association for American Studies (GAAS/DGfA)

Ours is an increasingly precarious planet, haunted (to borrow Anna Tsing's phrasing) by uncertainty, instability, and dissolution. Even as global crises like climate change threaten to destabilize ontological futures, political upheaval in the U.S., among other places of unrest, undermines epistemological integrity. The age of post-truth – heralded by the weaponization of Donald Trump's "alternative facts," and hallucinatory and suddenly ubiquitous AI – coincides with planetary precarity, the sense of neoliberal capitalist-fueled social vulnerability and lack of certainty. "Truth matters," assert New York Times columnist Margaret Renkl, historian Timothy Snyder, and critic Bruno Latour. But does it still? And if so, where does fiction, that slippery, speculative, subversive art, fit in? How is the sense of "radical disorientation, uncertainty and loss of meaning" that characterizes the precarious present moment on a planetary scale, according to Bourdieu, reflected and refracted in works of art, including literary texts, and other forms of cultural production? What insights into the complex workings of precarity in post-truth societies do cultural productions provide, and what role do they play in contributing to and/or subverting post-truth sentiments? How can we think about and analyze fiction in a time where fictitious narratives seem to hold more power than science and truth?

With our conference topic, we intend to follow Bruno Latour's call for our shared scholarly responsibility to work against the erosion of facts. As Latour writes, the threat to an emancipated public discourse no longer comes "from an excessive confidence in ideological arguments posturing as matters of fact—as we have learned to combat so efficiently in the past—but from an excessive distrust of good matters of fact disguised as bad ideological biases!" Opening a constructive dialogue on various manifestations of planetary precarity, including aspects of gender, race, class, dis/ability, sexuality and their intersections, which has been advanced by an increase in erosion of facts or "truth" in the past years, we invite scholars to become collaborative participants in the construction of shared worlds – working to stabilize facts and not just expose their fragility through examining the efficacy of cultural productions as responses to the precarities of the post-truth era.

This year's PGF-conference invites participants to explore questions of planetary precarity and post-truth in all their cultural, political, historical, and aesthetic dimensions. In continuing the long-standing tradition of postgraduate collaboration within American Studies and the GAAS at the University of Bayreuth, the event will serve as a platform for emerging scholars from all American studies disciplines, including but not limited to literary and cultural studies, history, sociology, political science, didactics, and media studies, to exchange ideas, build networks, and engage with wider communities of knowledge production.

We invite proposals for individual 20-minute papers as well as alternative formats such as roundtables, workshops, and creative or performance-based contributions that engage with the conference theme. We also welcome presentations on current research projects that are not necessarily related to the conference topic, if within the field of American studies.

Potential topics include (but are not limited to):

- Post-truth as a planetary condition
- Cultures of uncertainty, precarity, and crisis
- Truth, fiction, and knowledge in precarious times
- Narrative, storytelling, and the rhetoric of precarity and post-truth

- Social precarity and structural inequality (race, gender, class, sexuality, and dis/ability in post-truth contexts)
- Misinformation, conspiracy, and epistemic violence
- Democracy and the erosion of institutional authority
- Affective politics: emotion, fear, and cognitive bias in public discourse
- AI, communication technologies, and new media in post-truth contexts
- Ecocritical perspectives on precarity and post-truth: climate crisis and environmental disinformation
- Aesthetics of doubt, ambiguity, and speculation
- Resistance, repair, and practices of truth-making
- Methodological challenges and ethical responsibilities of scholarship

Please submit abstracts of 300 words in Word (.docx) format. In the same document, please include 3–5 keywords and a short bio (80 words), as well as your full name, institutional affiliation, and email address. Please send submissions to pgf@dgfa.de by **July 24, 2026**. We will communicate our decision by the beginning of September.

Location: University of Bayreuth

Conference date: 12-14 November, 2026

Conference website: <https://pgfubt.wordpress.com/>