

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Special Issue of *Amerikastudien / American Studies*

“Queer Politics in Media and Legal Cultures”

In 2022, the Floridian Parental Rights in Education bill, commonly known as “Don’t Say Gay Bill,” heralded a new era of legal censorship specifically targeting LGBTQ persons. Later that year, Florida’s Governor Ron DeSantis punished the Walt Disney Company for publicly speaking out against the state’s increasingly hostile anti-queer stance. By dissolving Disney’s special status as an independent governing district, DeSantis retaliated for the company’s public criticism.

What happened in Florida is exemplary of current U.S. American struggles over cultural hegemony. 2021 saw an unprecedented number of book challenges and bans, with non-binary author Maia Kobabe’s graphic novel *Gender Queer* (2019) spearheading the list. Parents, school boards, politicians, and state legislatures pressure for this and similar titles to be taken off school curriculums, school libraries, and, in some cases, libraries of entire districts or states. While previous censorship targeted topics of race and racism in schools, parental concern is now leveled at issues of diversity, equality, and inclusion in general. Such efforts attack not only the legitimacy of these books’ subject matter, but also the subjects that they speak to.

This Special Issue of *Amerikastudien / American Studies* “Queer Politics in Media and Legal Cultures” addresses how media *do* say gay (and non-binary and trans) and have always done so. Contemporary productions impress with ever more diverse representations and narratives of queerness or queer subjects. Popular culture and social media have become one of the central venues “where anxieties about sociolegal issues are negotiated using fictional means” (Olson 5). This Special Issue focuses on how queerness is narrated in and through legal texts and media productions. We seek to identify the media’s potential as a subversive political force that challenges heteronormative tenets and anti-LGBTQ tropes and narratives. Simultaneously, we are interested in examining how laws and legal texts influence queer media productions.

To date, most scholarship focuses on the warranted criticism of negative stereotypes of queer representation in the media. Building on the work of Judith Butler and Sara Ahmed, this issue “turns around” discursive trajectories to emphasize how queerness resists these legal-cultural forces and becomes possible in and through media (Ahmed 15). Drawing on a wide range of primary texts, including different media—such as graphic novels, films, television, video games, and social media—, and legal texts—such as court opinions, executive orders, bills, and laws—, our aim is to sketch queer possibilities in media and interventions in political anti-LGBTQ discourses.

We invite contributions that offer novel and interdisciplinary perspectives on queer politics in U.S. American media and legal cultures, whether on a representational, narrative, or structural level.

Potential topics include but are not limited to:

- queerness in media and law
 - how media reflects and negotiates current legal and cultural developments of LGBTQ experiences
 - genealogies of (anti-)LGBTQ discourses
- queering media and law
 - new configurations of the concept of queerness (e.g., queer hermeneutics of law, queer narratology)
 - survival strategies and subversive practices in times of censorship
 - un-doing cis- and heteronormativity (e.g., queer temporalities, queer interventions)
- queer media and law
 - queerness beyond representation
 - theoretical work on media's and law's role in fostering a more diverse conception of other people's lived realities

If you are interested in contributing to this Special Issue of *Amerikastudien/American Studies*, please submit an abstract of 300 words with the article title, 5-6 keywords, and a short biographical note to the guest editors Laura Borchert (laura.borchert@anglistik.uni-giessen.de) and Melanie Kreitler (melanie.kreitler@anglistik.uni-giessen.de) (subject line "Abstract Submission Special Issue") no later than **May 15, 2023**. You will be notified by June 1, 2023 whether your paper proposal has been accepted. Invited articles of 8,000 words will be due **August 1, 2023**, and will be subject to full, double-blind peer review. The planned publication date is in late 2024.

About *Amerikastudien* / *American Studies*

Amerikastudien / *American Studies: A Quarterly* (*Amst*) is a double-blind peer reviewed journal and the official journal of the German Association for American Studies, dedicated to an interdisciplinary and transnational concept of American Studies and covering all areas of the discipline, including literary and cultural criticism, media, history, political science, linguistics, and pedagogy. *Amst* aims to reach beyond the limitations of analogue accessibility, to offer opportunities for engagement, dialogue, and intellectual exchange to American Studies scholars across disciplines, generations, and nations, and to thus open up new opportunities of global professional exchange.