



Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Amerikastudien

**67th Annual Conference  
of the German Association for American Studies (DGfA)  
“Participation in American Culture and Society”  
Universität Heidelberg, June 4-6, 2020**

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Klara Stephanie Szlezák (Passau), Uwe KÜchler (Tübingen)
17. **Crisis of Economic Participation**  
Christian Lammert (FU Berlin), Natalie Rauscher (Heidelberg), Welf Werner (Heidelberg)
18. **Publishing, Gatekeeping, Patronage: Participation and/in the Literary Field**  
Philipp Loeffler (Heidelberg/Frankfurt), Tim Sommer (Heidelberg)
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Stefanie Schäfer (Jena), Gabriele Pizarz-Ramirez (Leipzig)
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Anja Schüler (Heidelberg), Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson (Augsburg)
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Jan Stievermann (Heidelberg)

### 1. **Divided We Stand: Non-participation as Anti-Imperial Endeavor?**

Verena Adamik (Potsdam), Kristina Baudemann (Flensburg)

In the context of US American history, the term 'non-participation' might at first call to mind Henry David Thoreau's act of "Civil Disobedience" or, maybe, Herman Melville's "Bartleby, The Scrivener," as the titular character would simply "prefer not to." Other ready examples of non-participation include conscientious objectors, reclusive religious communities like the Amish, the counterculture of the 1960s and 70s, the sovereign citizen movement, and various utopian communities and ecovillages. Such acts of non-participation as a means of voicing dissent are often stylized as typically US American endeavors. This suggests the existence of a grand US American narrative of non-participation, which indicates "the power of American social and political discourse not to pre-empt dissent but rather to absorb and co-opt," as Carl Guarneri eloquently puts it ("The Americanization of Utopia" 75).

However, refusals to participate by those who are excluded in various ways in US American society are not merged into the national narrative in this manner. While marginalized peoples are refused full access to, and participation in, social and cultural institutions, they are also not granted the privilege of 'dropping out' (as tentatively suggested by Stuart Hall) – i.e., they are penalized when they reject the conventions of mainstream society. For example, ghettos and reservations are treated in markedly different ways than communes, an argument made by Richard Hogan in "The Frontier as Social Control." This is illustrated by the forceful assimilation of Indigenous children in American Indian boarding schools, or the excessive military force used against the African American commune 'MOVE.'

This panel aims to investigate non-participation in a seemingly inclusive US American project through those living on its margins. Papers may include but are not limited to the following topics:

- Non-participation as a resistance strategy;
- Acts of non-participation in state institutions by those who home-school, live 'off the grid,' or establish unlicensed market economies;
- Maroon communities, African American independent communities and utopian practice;
- Indigenous North American non-participation as an expression of political sovereignty;
- Literary and artistic expressions of Black Nationalism.

Confirmed speakers:

René Dietrich (Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz): "Refusing Inclusion in the Settler Multicultural: Native Voices, Literary Sovereignty, and the Resurgent Politics of Indigenous Anthologies"

Nicole Waller (University of Potsdam): "Participation 'Otherwise': Theorizing Non-Participation as Decolonial Act"

Please send abstracts (250-300 words) and a short bio to Verena Adamik ([verena.adamik@uni-potsdam.de](mailto:verena.adamik@uni-potsdam.de)) and Kristina Baudemann ([kristina.baudemann@uni-flensburg.de](mailto:kristina.baudemann@uni-flensburg.de)).

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## **2. Whiteness and American Studies**

Mita Banerjee (Mainz), Eva Boesenberg (HU Berlin)

What is the role of Whiteness Studies for American Studies? At its most fruitful, Whiteness Studies counters a phenomenon which legal scholar Ian Haney López has termed the "transparency syndrome": the invisibility of whiteness and of white privilege. If US – as well as German – culture has traditionally been conceived as a model in which the white mainstream was located at the center while ethnic minorities were relegated to the margins, whiteness studies seeks to upset this model. It calls on white communities to participate in a debate about ethnicity, transparency, and privilege. The purpose of whiteness studies is hence twofold: First, it makes whiteness visible and hence de-naturalizes it; second, it investigates the exclusionary mechanisms which white privilege gives rise to. Whiteness Studies can thus be seen as key to discussions of social participation: Through the contrast between visibility and invisibility, they explore the question of who gets to participate in national meaning-making and identity formation, who is excluded, and on what basis such an exclusion may take place.

Conceiving of whiteness as a location or vantage point from which exclusionary mechanisms can be performed, Whiteness Studies have been keenly aware of both its context-specific and its historically dynamic definition, as well as its intersections with other social categories. In this vein, Transnational Whiteness Studies have stressed that whiteness can take different shapes in different national contexts.

Like many other academic fields, American Studies has been structured by unacknowledged whiteness, which poses serious challenges to the participation of People of Color and Indigenous scholars. So how can the discipline be transformed to reflect more diverse

perspectives and forms of embodiment in Germany as well as the US? How has Critical Whiteness Studies contributed to the self-understanding of American Studies in recent years? What might it mean for white scholars to be allies of those still too often marginalized in and excluded from our field? The workshop will address the questions for both the US and the German contexts.

Possible topics for presentations include, but are of course not limited to:

- structural racism in the discipline
- unacknowledged whiteness in syllabi and canons
- white defensiveness and the difficulties of moving beyond “white innocence“
- the chances and limits of Critical Whiteness Studies
- critical engagement with whiteness in American Studies

Speakers: Suncica Ozretic-Klaas (Potsdam) Samira Spatzek (Bremen)

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### **3. Who participates in global affairs anymore? Sources and discontents of polarization in U.S. foreign policymaking**

Gordon Friedrichs (Heidelberg), Florian Böller (Kaiserslautern)

The polarization of American politics and society severely challenges democratic accountability of the political system and its agents. This is mainly because polarized elections and the decline of the median voter turns open political competition into electoral safe havens to the cost of majority representation. In turn, this alienates certain parts of the public and limits the possibility for participation in the policy process.

This workshop wants to explore how these restrictions to political participation affects U.S. foreign policy. The decline of the ideological center in American politics implies that only extreme voters and political representatives actually participate in the foreign policymaking process, leading to a potential disconnect between elites' views of global affairs and the public's general preferences. This finds expression in the Trump administration but also has potentially deeper effects for the institutions involved in foreign policymaking and the expertise surrounding the policymaking process.

We invite scholars to investigate the following set of research avenues in their papers:

How does polarization restrict the representation of foreign policy preferences? Can we identify a systematic disconnect between the public at large and legislators?

How has the landscape of foreign policy expertise in American politics changed and which actors seek to influence U.S. foreign policy in the light of a lack of broader participation?

To what extent, if so, does the Trump presidency, and other populist movements, seek to take advantage of this lack of public participation in the foreign policy realm?

How does polarization affect congressional participation in U.S. foreign policy? Do we witness a return to presidential unilateralism or has the pendulum in fact shifted back to Congress?

Please submit your abstract (max. 250 words) and contact information (name, email, institution) no later than January 13, 2020 to Gordon Friedrichs (gfriedrichs@hca.uni-heidelberg.de) and Florian Böller (boeller@sowi.uni-kl.de).

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#### **4. Dispatches from the Method Wars: New Approaches to Cultural Agency and Participation in American Studies**

Ilka Brasch (Hannover), Alexander Starre (FU Berlin)

“If the era of high theory was followed by an entrenchment of historicism,” Rita Felski recently wrote, “we are now in the midst of the method wars.” The discipline of American Studies has traditionally prided itself on its methodological diversity. Yet, given the recent debates concerning close/distant reading, literary sociology, political formalism, as well as the growing engagement in literary and cultural studies with interdisciplinary methods from sociology, political science, and media studies, there needs to be a more robust conversation about the state of method within American Studies in Germany and beyond.

This workshop aims to provide a forum to take stock of recent methodological advances, with a focus on scholarship that explores the multiple forms of agency and participation clustered around cultural artifacts. We encourage workshop papers that forego the case-study format in favor of more reflexive thinking about the shape, scale, and scope of their analytical practice. Direct theory-to-text applications are discouraged. Instead, contributors will utilize the notion of “participation” as foremost a methodological challenge and a provocation to tease out the various social entanglements of their objects of study—and not least to also see *themselves* as academic participants in larger fields of cultural interaction.

Central concerns include, but are not limited to:

- How do we study more than a text itself? That is, how do we analyze paratextual material and activities around a given text, and how do we account for the agency of texts?
- How do some of the most widely read scholarly interventions of recent years (e.g. by Rita Felski, Caroline Levine, Bruno Latour, Lauren Berlant) translate into academic practice in American Studies?
- To what extent do critical methods reinforce or challenge aesthetic hierarchies (high vs. low; popular culture vs. art)?
- Which methodological adjustments does archival work entail?
- What is the place of close readings today?

#### **Confirmed Speakers:**

Ruth Mayer (Leibniz University of Hannover): “Against Method: Literary Studies and Intuition”

Maria Sulimma (University of Duisburg-Essen): “Needs to Be More Explicit about the Methodologies...’: Reluctance, Collaboration, and Vulnerability in Research Processes”

Please send a 300-word abstract and a short biographical statement to:

Ilka Brasch, Leibniz University of Hannover, ilka.brasch@engsem.uni-hannover.de

Alexander Starre, FU Berlin, alexander.starre@fu-berlin.de

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## 5. Authorship and Cultural Participation in the Nineteenth Century

Dustin Breitenwischer (FU Berlin), Karin Hoepker (Wien/Erlangen)

In the long nineteenth century, questions about creativity, authorship, and cultural participation reached new levels of significance in literature and the arts. Not least in the United States, the succession and interrelation of enlightened Idealism and Romanticism on the one hand, and the advent of early modernist aesthetics on the other, have introduced an understanding of creative subjectivity and cultural communication that still shapes current academic and non-academic discourses. Current re-readings of the nineteenth century's complex aesthetic economies focus on the de-canonization of 'Western' aesthetic norms in and through the recognition of global or planetary literature and nineteenth-century cultural paradigms.

The workshop focuses on instances of denied or impeded participation—as in cases of discrimination based on race, gender, class, or queer identities—and issues of the conditions of individual mis-/recognition as well as cultural mis-/representation. We want to bring together scholars who, in their current projects, reconsider, reframe, or reevaluate the dynamics that enable or prohibit authorial intervention and cultural participation in a landscape of shifting mediality and practices of writing; and we envision talks that tackle questions about authorship, creative subjectivity, and cultural participation from diachronic or transhistorical perspectives. The workshop also explicitly welcomes projects of "distant reading" (from the fields of media studies, digital humanities, etc.) that work on C19 fields of authorship and networks of literary production.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- autobiographical narratives/life writing (slave narratives, diaries, etc.)
- authorial participation and race, gender, class, or queer identities
- editorial processes and interventions
- paratextual information and its poetic significance
- questions of genre, media comparisons, and negotiations of fictionality
- circumstances of production and reception; cultural sociology of the literary market
- conceptualizations of authorship beyond literature

Confirmed Speakers: Andrew Gross (Göttingen), Heike Schäfer (PH Karlsruhe)

Please send an abstract of your proposed paper (app. 300 words) and a short bio (via email) to the workshop organizers:

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Doing Literature in a Global Perspective"  
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## **6. Community Outreach: Aesthetic Education and the Challenges and Chances of Participation**

Birte Christ (Gießen), Andrea Zittlau (Rostock)

Community Outreach seeks to provide a creative and aesthetic education in disadvantaged areas of society. While its programming attempts to spark an interest in the humanities, it also enhances the voices of those who remain silent in the public discourse. This is not only true for the North American setting. Gayatri Spivak pleads for a return to the humanities in her 2012 book *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. There she also laments that literature and the arts are trapped in an elitist academic environment when they, in fact, should be everywhere, and thus advocates community outreach. However, the first reviewer of Spivak's book on amazon comments: "This is a very intellectual book. Looks like someones [sic] PHd [sic] thesis I bought it becausvit [sic] has reproductions of my artwork in it." This comment reveals the gap between the community that provides the outreach and those who take part in it. While Spivak's book is not intended for a general audience, many artworks coming from community outreach programs indeed reach the public via venues such as Spivak's but not the community itself, or vice versa.

This workshop seeks to investigate tools and methods of community work and open up a conversation about chances and challenges. We also invite practitioners in community outreach work. Instead of papers, we would like to practice a workshop setting, this time aimed at the academic community, testing tools and approaches. We then invite an open conversation based on experiences and curiosity to understand the dynamics of such a community setting in the capitaloscene world.

Questions that will be addressed include:

Who defines the communities in need of outreach?

Whose participation in what areas of society does community outreach facilitate?

Who is speaking and who is listening?

Confirmed Speakers:

Serena Lee (Toronto, Canada): *Washing the Dishes for Domestic Workers. Conversations on Community and Performance Art.*

Misty Sol (Philadelphia, USA): *Planting the Garden of Colors. Black Children and the Joy of Art.*

Contact: [andrea.zittlau@uni-rostock.de](mailto:andrea.zittlau@uni-rostock.de), [Birte.Christ@anglistik.uni-giessen.de](mailto:Birte.Christ@anglistik.uni-giessen.de)

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## **7. Participation in American Memory Culture**

David Eisler (Heidelberg), Julia Lange (Hamburg)

As with other aspects of American society, participation in American memory culture has been uneven and contested since its inception. Characterized by competing visions of identity and references to a historical past with different meanings for different groups, American collective memory is as much the product of power and authority as it is an honest recognition of the nation's history. Despite a recent push for more inclusivity as well as the development of social media applications such as Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube that have opened new areas of

memory culture and increased individual access to influential platforms, mainstream memory-making narratives are still driven by institutions and hierarchies whose interests often clash with the identities of marginalized groups with limited access to the memory industry.

Whether it's former soldiers downplaying the role of slavery during post-Civil War reconciliation, the routine depiction of Native Americans as savages in cultural productions, or racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in the contemporary publishing and film industries, questions of participation in American memory culture are at the foundation of American cultural identity. This panel will investigate the forms and dynamics of that participation and explore their effects on American collective memory. Contributions are encouraged to consider any aspect of memory culture, from monuments, memorials, and museums to literature, film, and so on. Who decides what should be remembered? Whose voices are amplified? Whose are silenced? How do those with privilege and cultural authority assert their dominance and encourage (or discourage) participation in American memory culture?

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Institutional gatekeeping and access to the means of cultural production
- Inclusion and exclusion from national memorials, monuments, and other "sites of memory" (e.g., currency, commemorative stamps, street names, federal holidays, etc.)
- The role of social media and the democratization of memory culture
- Cultural appropriation and the ethics of representation
- Literary canonization and the role of the archive
- Memory practices and preservation in minority groups
- Transnational participation in American memory culture
- Tension between curated memory institutions (such as museums)—where decisions are made by experts—and the viral demands of the public

### **Confirmed Speakers:**

Prof. Dr. Sabine Sielke (Bonn): *"Monumental Experience, or: Aesthetics, Participation, and Current Memory Cultures"*

Jennifer Volkmer (LMU München): *From "Nerds in Basements" to the Unknown Archivists of Pop Culture: Tumblr, Resources, and New Modes of Memory-Making in Pop Culture and Fan Studies*

Lena Gotteswinter (Regensburg): *"What Would Jack Kerouac Do?" or "What Would Miles Davis Do?": Hipster Icons, Collective Memory, and the Return to Black Hipness*

Dr. Tanja Schult (Stockholm): *"Monumental Presence and Widespread Dispersal. The Peace and Justice Memorial and the Transformation of American Memory Culture"*

Please send proposals (up to 300 words) and a short bio to both David Eisler (deisler@hca.uni-heidelberg.de) and Julia Lange (julia.lange@uni-hamburg.de).

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## **8. The Politics and Poetics of Nonhuman Participation**

Astrid Franke (Tübingen), Gesa Mackenthun (Rostock), Timo Müller (Konstanz), Babette Tischleder (Göttingen)

This workshop merges two formerly independent proposals that both considered the question of nonhuman participation a vital topic called for by the conference theme. The workshop aims at extending the concept of participation beyond the human: challenging its underlying anthropocentrism and asking how it can be made productive to rethink relationships in a more-than-human world, we want to relate the political and legal dimensions of nonhuman participation to the aesthetic and imaginative work of literature and the arts. Considering that American culture has traditionally engendered a broad range of ecological thought and imagination, we want to discuss how literary texts foster and contribute to “the project of the nonhuman turn . . . to find new techniques, in speech and art and mood, to disclose the participation of nonhumans in ‘our’ world” (Jane Bennett).

Moreover, in a time when, due to anthropogenic impact, biodiversity loss and species extinction have reached an alarming scale, we need to heed Donna Haraway’s appeal that “Western-indebted people can no longer figure themselves as individuals or societies of individuals in human-only histories.” Drawing on recent scholarship in the field of Ecocriticism, New Materialisms, Indigenous Studies, Animal Studies and Environmental Humanities, we will discuss how the concept of participation might be extended to reckon with the lives and futures of nonhuman beings, including animals, trees, and waterways, with which we have co-evolved and on which we depend, but which are rarely granted political representation. Which literary and philosophical traditions, which ideas of nature, kinship, trans-corporeality and community (already) exist in North American culture that could be (re)activated for a more “response-able” imaginative conception of a world that human and nonhuman creatures share?

We seek one paper (15 mins) and two panelists, who offer a 7-minute statement and participate in a roundtable discussion in the second part of the workshop.

Confirmed speakers: Katharina Luther (Tübingen), Susanne Opfermann (Frankfurt/Main), Sonja Schillings (Gießen), Birgit Spengler (Wuppertal)

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## **9. Im/Mobility, Justice, and Civic Engagement in American Urban Environments: The Cultural and Political Importance of Participation**

Ulrike Gerhard (Heidelberg), Margit Peterfy (Heidelberg)

There has been rapid growth in attention paid within the humanities to mobilities since the turn of the millennium, and with good reason. In descriptions of the “New Mobilities Paradigm,” as sketched by Tim Creswell in 2010 or Mimi Sheller in 2014, the emphasis on complex relational dynamics between the movements of people, things, and information delineates a field of study speaking to various disciplines, to name just a few: geography, cultural and literary studies, history, musicology, sociology, art history, philosophy. Although these disciplines may all have their very specific objects of study, with respect to mobility – and immobility – they share a conceptual interest in the way objects, people, and ideas move along various trajectories in defined spaces. One of the fundamental questions they have to address is the question of who

is privileged enough to take part in, or profit from, these movements. Participation becomes here synonymous with agency and power.

For our workshop, we invite contributions that address the question of participation as it is related to mobility and immobility (stillness) in US-American cities, and in cultural representations of cities (literature, art, film, mixed media, etc.). You might want to address any of the following research questions, but you are of course welcome to follow your own, related, agendas:

- Public transport, or lack of, and civic engagement
- Being able to stay put: resisting gentrification and displacement
- Embodied and gendered meanings of mobility & participation in urban environments
- Accessibility of education; school districts, education equality
- Civil rights history and economic participation
- Black moves: moments of history in African American mobilities
- Urban ecologies: eco-critical readings of nature moves in the city
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Confirmed speakers:

Gregg Culver, Heidelberg University: Mobility, Participation, and the Making of the Neoliberal "Creative City"

Caroline Rosenthal, Universität Jena: Wild Cities: Identity Politics in Practices of Urban Birding

Please contact: [margit.peterfy@as.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:margit.peterfy@as.uni-heidelberg.de), [u.gerhard@uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:u.gerhard@uni-heidelberg.de)

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## **10. Incarceration and Participation in American Life**

Catrin Gersdorf, MaryAnn Snyder-Körber (Würzburg)

Locked up, shut down, in the hole, the pen, solitary. Although specific forms of incarceration differ across historical periods and locales, the terms used to describe confinement practices as well as jails and the larger penal system work to underscore one consistent point: While American civil life is founded on the principle of participation, perceived trespasses against that order are punished by blocking the ability to participate in social and civic life.

This panel is interested in exploring logics and practices of punishment through what sociologists such as Orlando Patterson, Zygmunt Bauman, and Joshua M. Price have discussed as "social death," but which might also be productively understood in terms of „participation death“ or an "alienation of participation rights." In such a reading, the deprivation of the possibility to vote, to exercise free speech, assemble without restrictions, or simply to partake in collective social life works together with the systemic violence characteristic of social death in dehumanizing systems such as chattel slavery to render the subject an "isolate" (cf. Patterson). Equally important for the discussion that this panel aims to develop, however, are the ways in which such isolation is circumvented and participation is achieved in spite of, and in some cases through, reigning logics and practices of punishment. Practices of vocational training, continuing education, pen pal and prison gardening programs all offer possibilities for participation within the frameworks of punishment.

Archives to explore include traditions of prison writing from Austin Reed's recently recovered nineteenth-century prison memoir *The Life and Adventures of a Haunted Convict* (ca. 1859/2016) to more recent contributions such as Shaka Seghor's *Writing My Wrongs* (2013). Photography, film, and TV offer further rich fields for examining dynamics of participation and punishment in US-American society. In the last ten years, serial television has repeatedly turned to the prisons in series like *Oz* (1997-2003), imagining the prison not as an exile from the US-American social order, but rather as its epitome: a notion echoed in recent work building up on Eric Schlosser's 1998 discussion of mass incarceration such as Peter K. Enn's analysis of the United States as the *Incarceration Nation* (2016). Beyond the named examples, the organizers welcome contributions that consider "participation death" and its potential circumvention within a range of historical periods and locales as well as disciplinary perspectives.

Contact Information:

Please send abstracts (c. 250 words) and short CVs to the following e-mail addresses:

maryann.snyder-koerber@uni-wuerzburg.de

catrin.gersdorf@uni-wuerzburg.de

Confirmed Speakers:

Steven D. Hoelscher (University of Texas, Austin): "From Georgia to Moscow and Back Again: Langston Hughes's Chain Gang Story"

Judson Barber (University of Texas, Austin): "Geographies of Confinement: Texas's Landscape of Carcerality and Dispossession"

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## **11. The color-blind welfare state? Participation, marginalization and exclusion in the U.S. welfare state**

Grit Grigoleit (Universität der Bundeswehr Hamburg)

The U.S. welfare system has been contextualized as a liberal regime in which a strong preference on market solutions with guiding norms of individualism and self-reliance prevail. Participation in the regular labor market is often a prerequisite for access to programs commonly termed welfare. Yet since the beginnings of the American social welfare system, various minority and immigrant groups were routinely discriminated or even excluded from welfare. African American women in particular are strongly associated with a high dependency on welfare as well as welfare abuse; perceptions that lead to the highly racialized "controlling image" (Hill Collins) of the "welfare queen". Whether or not poor people are considered to be entitled to welfare, has been highly racialized and gendered in public and political debates, which in turn play a crucial role in how 'welfare' is commonly perceived and consequently designed. As a result, implementation, access and eligibility to welfare programs differ greatly among racial groups as well as along the line of gender and produce vast socio-economic inequalities that they ought to diminish.

The workshop therefore seeks to explore how race / racism, and gender have been structuring forces in determining eligibility, scope, form and function, or exclusion from welfare programs. The workshop invites papers that investigate the intersections and interactions between race/racism, labor market participation and social welfare.

Possible paper topics include, but are not limited to the following themes:

- historical perspective of how race and gender have been operating within the U.S. welfare state
- Making un/equality – un/equal laws or dis-equaling practices?
- labor market participation and processes of racialization
- ideologies, norms, narratives pertaining to welfare policies
- gendered / racialized representations of poverty, and welfare (recipients) in film, literature, (social) media, political and public discourse
- the role of community-based or religious institutions in providing access to education, housing, and work and thus offering alternatives to welfare
- acts of resistance / coping strategies of welfare recipients in dealing with stigmatization and racism

Confirmed speakers:

Prof. Dr. Axel Schäfer (University of Mainz), "Race, Ethnopolitics, and Social Welfare from the Progressive Era to the New Deal"

Dr. Michael Oswald (University of Passau), "Legitimacy of Inequality: Frames and Narratives"

Prof. Dr. Isabell Heinemann (WWU Münster), "Safeguard of the Nation: Advocating the White Middle Class Nuclear Family Ideal through Welfare"

Please send abstracts of about 300 words and a short bio statement to [grit.grigoleit@hsu-hh.de](mailto:grit.grigoleit@hsu-hh.de). Selected papers from the workshop will result in a publication (special issue).

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## **12. Architectures of Exclusion: Racial Identity, Participation, and the Built Environment**

Bärbel Harju (München), Nicolle Herzog (Tours)

From the "Big House" to the White House, from the New England "Commons" to all-white suburbia, from Southern slave quarters to Black public housing projects in Northwestern cities, American culture has always enabled participation in but also its opposite, exclusion from the American dream through the built environment. Far from being politically or ideologically neutral, architectural and urban planning are often complicit with racist politics and the construction of racialized identities. How and where Americans live has continuously shaped, represented, and reinforced cultural identities and the values attached to them.

Our workshop will investigate how the constructed, physical, and social environment enables or prevents participation, and how "White" spaces often depend on an ideology of exclusion. Speakers should address one (or several) of the following issues: How do white privilege and racial exclusion become visually naturalized in private and public buildings? In what ways are houses and other built structures linked to racial identities, ownership, participation, and racially inflected lifestyles? To what extent is the built environment complicit in maintaining the status quo of unequal access and racial inequality in the United States? How does spatial experience shape and inform our understanding of race and space?

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Architecture and participation
- Exclusionary built environments throughout history (internment camps, reservations, public housing projects, suburbs, etc.)
- Racial identity and participation in spaces coded as “White”
- Government buildings, public spaces, and political participation
- Built environments and the intersection of race, class, and gender
- Racialized architectures and landscapes in literature and the arts
- Participation on social media and other online spaces

**Confirmed Speakers:**

Prof. Dr. Astrid Böger (Hamburg): “Homeless in New York: New (Media) Responses to an Old Problem”

Prof. Dr. Ingrid Gessner (PH Vorarlberg): “Monumental Protest: Notes on Contested Commemoration in Public Space”

Organizers:

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### 13. Like, Comment, Subscribe: YouTube and the Participation Revolution

Alexandra Hauke (Passau), Eva Maria Schörgenhuber (Wien)

The American video-sharing platform YouTube, originally designed to enable ordinary people to self-publish and view audiovisual content for leisure purposes, has become a Google-owned and commercialized medium whose success depends on what Neil Gibb has recently termed “the participation revolution:” on YouTube, “revenue is generated from participation, not [only] from the sale of a song or product. [...] The participation revolution signifies a structural shift in how our societies and economies work—a shift from passive consumption to active participation” (57).

Many content creators on YouTube enjoy the financial benefits of self-branding processes, which are possible because “fans and other consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content” (Jenkins 10). Such an exchange testifies to the platform’s dependence on what Frank Kelleter has termed “the feedback loop” (12), a technique whereby video production and reception take place simultaneously and infinitely to ensure the increase of the respective channel’s success. This interaction, along with YouTube’s low-threshold entry point, promises inclusivity on behalf of all users and thus speaks to the platform’s alleged democracy, suggesting global equal opportunity to access and participate in its narrative, financial, and commercial development. A look at YouTube’s most-subscribed channels, its highest-paid creators, and its changing policies, however, raises

questions about the website's cultural politics and the algorithm's potential biases, for these success stories—dominated by white, heterosexual, able-bodied, U.S.-American men—expose the platform's practices of in- and exclusion. Thus, YouTube's less-than-equal participatory culture defies its own "mission [...] to give *everyone* a voice" (YouTube, "About").

In this workshop, we want to look at the possibilities and limitations of the participatory practices on and surrounding YouTube. By discussing the platform's democratic potential as well as its shift towards an economy of exploitation and commodification through participatory revenue, we want to scrutinize YouTube's uneven politics of representation, popularity, and involvement.

Possible topics for papers include but are not limited to:

- Participation on YouTube from a historical perspective
- Democracy and participation on YouTube
- YouTube celebrity and participation
- (Transmedia) storytelling and serialization on YouTube
- The role of intersectionality, diversity, and transnationalism in participation
- Fan cultures and affect
- Individualism and community on YouTube
- Collaborative practices
- YouTube as an American medium

Confirmed speakers

**Lucia Soriano (California State University, Fullerton):** "Participatory Consumption and American Beauty Influencers on YouTube"

**Florian Zitzelsberger (University of Passau):** "'Tell me your story and I'll tell you mine': Illusions of Participation and Metaleptic Co-Narration on YouTube"

Please send an abstract (300-350 words) and a short biographical note to both [alexandra.hauke@uni-passau.de](mailto:alexandra.hauke@uni-passau.de) and [eva.schoergenhuber@univie.ac.at](mailto:eva.schoergenhuber@univie.ac.at)

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#### **14. "Not Me. Us": Imagined Collectives in American Literature, Culture, and Politics**

Simone Knewitz (Bonn), Stefanie Müller (Münster)

In his 2020 presidential campaign, Bernie Sanders suggests that the progressive generation as a collective body, rather than an individual candidate, is bidding for the nation's highest office. As Bernie puts it, "Not me. Us." In this workshop, we use this invocation of collective identity and agency as a starting point to explore how American literature, culture, politics, and the economy imagine collectives. This question is particularly pertinent to an exploration of participation in US society because the latter is usually framed in terms of the individual (despite the active role that collectives play in the political marketplace).

Hence, we encourage inquiry into the varieties of collective organization in the United States today and what types of agencies these forms of organization afford, whether it be legal, economic, or political. Contributions should investigate forms and representations of collective organization and agency in the present. Collective bodies include corporations as much as flash mobs, and inquiries should highlight how these collectives act in the world and what that tells us about their participation in US society. Prospective papers may address but are not limited to the following topics:

- the narrativization and aesthetics of collectives in different literary genres and media;

- literary and cultural representations of collective consciousness;
- the motif of individual-vs.-group in literary and cultural representations and in political rhetoric;
- we/they narration in factual and fictional texts;
- digital storytelling and group agency.

Confirmed Speakers:

Michaela Beck (TU Dresden), "From Vulnerable Collectives to Vulnerability as Collectivity: The 'Affective Politics of Fear' in Anne Valente's *Our Hearts Will Burn Us Down*"

Simon Strick (FU Berlin), "The Emotional Collectives of Neofascism and White Nationalism (and remarks on feeling collectively against them)"

Please send an abstract of no more than 300 words and a short bio to both Simone Knewitz (sknewitz@nap-uni-bonn.de) and Stefanie Müller (s.mueller@uni-muenster.de).

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## **15. Maker Cultures: Material and Digital Practices Between Empowerment and Discipline**

Reinhild Kreis (Duisburg-Essen), Regina Schober (Mannheim)

In the past decades, the boom of DIY practices and goods as well as the interactive potential of the digitalized world have led to enthusiastic praise of a participatory culture that has allegedly allowed individuals to actively engage in the creation of their environments. Our panel sheds critical light on the productive tension between the emancipatory and the disciplinary potential of maker cultures, ranging from DIY to technology-based practices such as blogging and hacking. By doing so, the panel seeks to establish a more nuanced evaluation of what making and creating means in contemporary America. We want to critically explore how social groups along the lines of race, class, and gender are expected to employ resources such as time, money, knowledge, and materials, and how the use of these resources hinders and furthers participation. As a model case of what Michel Foucault has called a "technology of the self," maker cultures both direct and regulate body and mind within larger social conventions and networks of power. We thus ask how maker cultures can yield independence and autonomy, or function as mechanisms of reproducing normative social hierarchies.

We invite contributions that address, but are not restricted to, the following aspects:

- Forms and functions of contemporary maker cultures in the United States
- Material and non-material processes of producing, consuming, and "prosuming" (A. Toffler) objects and social environments
- Individual agency and modes of participation in maker cultures such as DIY, crafting, blogging, hacking, housework etc.
- Ethics and moral economy of maker cultures
- Social and economic opportunities as well as pressures to participate in maker cultures

- Knowledge and skills required to participate in maker cultures
- Cultural narratives of US maker cultures between utopia and dystopia
- Intersectional approaches that examine the politics, privileges, and regulatory functions of maker cultures

### Confirmed Speakers

Dr. Katharina Gerund (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg): Doing Domesticity: Military Spouses and Cultures of Homemaking in the 21st Century

Lene Anette Karpp (FU Berlin): Disciplined Subversion and Creativity? D.I.Y. Punk Feminism in the U.S.

Abstracts of 300 words and a short CV should be sent to Reinhild Kreis (reinhild.kreis@uni-due.de) and Regina Schober (rschober@mail.uni-mannheim.de) by January 13, 2020.

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## **16. Participation in / through Language, Literature and Culture (Education)**

Klara Stephanie Szelezák (Passau), Uwe Kuchler (Tübingen)

Participating in a society is of high political importance, while language and education are symbols of the significance as well as success for participation. The political commotion about education serves as an example thereof, such as the strikingly different educational and societal understanding of inclusion in the USA and Germany, the debates surrounding language education and migration, and the discussion about school types and social segregation. The defining role of participation is translated into classroom methodology by efforts to differentiate and individualize tasks, to broaden student activity, and at the same time, to foster empathetic and collaborative learning.

Regarding issues of participation in North American Culture and Society with a particular focus on (language) education, the following questions should be addressed in this workshop:

- Which texts, cultural products, or aspects of language lend themselves to teaching and learning about societal or cultural participation?
- How do comparisons between the USA and Germany contribute to participation, how do they provide models for furthering inclusive or inadvertently exclusive settings?
- How is the role of languages, literatures, and cultures challenged by recent migrations to the USA and to Europe? How does education tackle the endeavor to have migrants participate in their host society?
- How have recent collective movements, most notably Fridays for Future, rallied large numbers of students in the USA and globally to demonstrate young people's political and societal participation and, not least, to address questions of environmental and political education?
- Which methods and techniques may secure participation in classroom settings? How are learners prepared to participate in disciplinary, societal or vocational discourses?

We invite papers on Foreign Language Education and American studies with a focus on teaching contexts. Papers may focus on, but are not restricted to, the questions raised above.

Confirmed Speakers:

Elizabeth A. Wheeler (Eugene/Oregon): “Collaborators: Educators and Child Activists with Disabilities as Allies in Civic Participation”

Judith Hofmann (Köln): “Participatory Culture and Digital Media in the EFL Classroom - A Task Typology”

Proposals should include affiliation, title, abstract, biographical statement, and audio/visual requirements. Please submit your abstracts to both: Klara Stephanie Szlezák (Passau) [szleza01@ads.uni-passau.de](mailto:szleza01@ads.uni-passau.de) and Uwe Kuchler (Tübingen) [uwe.kuechler@uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:uwe.kuechler@uni-tuebingen.de)

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## **17. Crisis of Economic Participation**

Christian Lammert (FU Berlin), Natalie Rauscher (Heidelberg), Welf Werner (Heidelberg)

More and more people in the United States live from paycheck to paycheck; economic marginalization and economic insecurity have been on the rise for quite a few decades. At the same time, key economic indicators such as unemployment rates and GDP growth seem to suggest that the economy has recovered from the Great Recession of 2008 for quite a while. Because of these conflicting experiences with the U.S. economy, less people trust their government to identify and implement the policy changes that are needed to return to times in which a rising tide lifts all boats, as John F. Kennedy famously proclaimed in the 1960s. Many Americans blame government for conducting policies that lead to growing economic inequality and insecurity – for the bottom half, or even the bottom 90%, of income recipients. As a result, establishment candidates are being voted out of office.

The aim of this panel is to discuss how different economic, political and societal factors have contributed to the crisis of economic participation in the United States in recent history and how economic participation and security have changed compared to the post-war era. Papers might analyze, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- the economic, fiscal, trade and social policies that have had an influence on the U.S. welfare regime since the end of the Second World War,
- specifically the patterns of economic globalization that transformed welfare states into competition states,
- the power shift from labor to capital and the role of the government,
- the effects of technology and the emergence of the new economy on current and future work arrangements,
- societal and political changes, that have exerted influence on economic participation – such as polarization.

Please contact: [wwerner@hca.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:wwerner@hca.uni-heidelberg.de), [nrauscher@hca.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:nrauscher@hca.uni-heidelberg.de), [clammert@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:clammert@zedat.fu-berlin.de)

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## **18. Publishing, Gatekeeping, Patronage: Participation and/in the Literary Field**

Philipp Loeffler (Heidelberg/Frankfurt), Tim Sommer (Heidelberg)

Over the past two decades, digital forms of publishing, reading, and reviewing have extended access to the field of literary production in ways that seem to suggest an increasing democratization of culture. At a time at which the boundaries of traditional authorship appear to have become more permeable, the “Age of Amazon” has lent authority to cultural practitioners that have long been looked upon as amateur writers or lay critics. Exerting their power through online forums such as Goodreads and publishing platforms such as Kindle Direct or Smashwords, they circumvent more conventional taste-making institutions associated with newspaper criticism, academic journals, or prestigious prizes and fellowships. And yet, while some of the sites of literary consecration may have shifted over time, the notion that there are higher and lower forms of literary practice has remained relatively untouched. Literary production today may appear as an unconstrained republic of letters propelled by a rhetoric of liberal pluralism, but it remains informed by aesthetic standards that have dominated the field since the middle of the nineteenth century.

Given such continuities and tensions, this workshop seeks to contextualize the complexities of literary participation and to situate historically the agents and institutions that have restricted (or allowed) access to the literary field since the latter half of the nineteenth century. We invite papers that focus on topics that include (but are not limited to) the following:

- gatekeeping institutions from the Modernist little magazines to Goodreads
- moments of literary exclusion and censorship
- new forms of publishing between commercial and non-commercial literary markets
- literary sponsorship models today and in literary history
- modern artistic-institutional shelters (MFA classes, fellowship programs, libraries, museums)
- non-traditional / non-academic / non-professional forums for literary critical activity (bookclubs, TV shows, chatrooms, blogs, etc.)

Confirmed Speakers:

Merve Emre (Oxford), “Sensitive Readers and the Sociology of Not Reading”

Günter Leypoldt (Heidelberg), “The Laureate Position in Literary Space”

Please send abstracts of 250 words and a short bio to Philipp Loeffler (philipp.loeffler@as.uni-heidelberg.de) and Tim Sommer (tim.sommer@as.uni-heidelberg.de).

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## **19. Are you laughing with us or at us? Participatory Laughter in North America**

Michael Louis Moser (Dresden/Leuven), Nele Sawallisch (Mainz)

Comedic performances—whether in the forms of stand-up, (late-night) television talk shows, satiric documentary, sitcoms, ironic activism (Day), satirical newspapers, or other formats—represent moments of engagement that are centered around the notion of “participation”. In one sense, this participation describes how audiences and performers work together in humor

events, and how they uphold or undermine political narratives. Such dynamics make comedic performances essential to understanding (political) participation in the United States' current politically charged climate.

In another sense, we are also interested in institutional frames and hurdles that regulate who can(not) participate in comedic settings, and how. Since late-night comedy as well as the stand-up scene are still predominantly white and male, for example, we want to think about a fundamental concern of "participation" in democratic systems, i.e. what instruments of exclusion and discouragement from participation are used in comedic performances (structural, financial, political). How can comedy be used as a tool to address inequalities and engage contentious societal issues?

Therefore, this panel invites contributions on the following and other related issues:

- Performance and comedy
- Audience engagement
- Modes of participation and exclusion in comedy
- Diversity in all its manifestations and the comedic landscape
- Conservative comedians/comedies
- Activism and comedy
- Mainstream versus niche comedy
- Comedic medialities (on screen, off screen, satirical newspapers/comics, ironic activism, literary representations...)

Set speakers:

1. Prof. Dr. Holger Kersten (Martin Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg), "Send in the clowns': Humor as a tool for political participation"
2. PD Dr. Wieland Schwanebeck (TU Dresden), "Social Assassins and Creepy Clowns: Cringe Humour and the End of the Community of Laughter"

Please send a 250-word abstract and a short biographical statement to:

Michael Louis Moser

Nele Sawallisch

TU Dresden and KU Leuven

JGU Mainz

michael\_louis.moser@tu-dresden.de

sawallis@uni-mainz.de

Works Cited:

Day, Amber. *Satire and Dissent: Interventions in Contemporary Political Debate*.

Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 2011.

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## **20. Im Osten nichts Neues? German American Studies in East and West Germany: A Round Table**

Stefanie Schäfer (Jena), Gabriele Pizarz-Ramirez (Leipzig)

30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, German American studies is conventionally told as a success story. Overviews link the flourishing of academic institutions to cultural diplomacy and reeducation politics (Fluck 2018, Hebel 2008), but tend to ignore the “specific historical, political and cultural conditions” (Fluck 2018, n.p.) of the GDR and its effect on American Studies in East Germany.

In this round table, we would like to zoom in on German American Studies and to ask how the history of the two Germanys has affected the discipline, its historiography, self-perception, and research agendas. We seek to revisit American Studies in East and West Germany in light of debates about the freedom and independence of science and scholarship, the new rise of populism and popular debates about the different attitudes of many East and West Germans towards the (former) superpowers, the US and Russia.

We invite short contributions (10 mins each) on distinct topics which may include, but are not limited to:

- Concepts and representations of US political cultures (democracy, participation, print cultures) in the GDR and FRG
- institutional histories, cultural politics, Wissenschaftsgeschichte in American Studies in East and West Germany
- participation and processes of (literary) canonization and the politics of US popular culture East and West
- reeducation politics and ideologies in West Germany
- the transnational turn in (Western) German American Studies
- German American Studies and European American Studies between East and West
- the epistemologies of race, class, and gender in representations of the US in the GDR and FRG

Please send abstracts and short bio information to both [pizarz@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:pizarz@uni-leipzig.de) and [Schaefer.stefanie@uni-jena.de](mailto:Schaefer.stefanie@uni-jena.de)

Confirmed speakers:

Frank Usbeck (Leipzig), Indianthusiasm as International Solidarity: Native American Imagery, Cultural Politics, and Education in the GDR

Michael Lörch (Mainz), The Founding of the ZAA (Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik) and its Transnational History

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## **21. Suffrage and Beyond: The Struggle for Women’s Equal Rights, 1890 to 1970**

Anja Schüler (Heidelberg), Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson (Augsburg)

The year 2020 marks the centennial of the 19th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which prohibited denying American citizens the vote “on account of sex,” thus finally enabling most

American women to participate fully in the electoral process. The history of female suffrage in the United States is typically remembered as the fulfillment of a women's movement that started with the Seneca Falls convention of 1848. It thus narrowly follows the timeline of elite white women progressives. Recently, historians have challenged this narrative in ways that push our understanding of suffrage into intersectional perspectives, considering the experiences of non-white women and non-elite actors who did not join this mostly middle-class movement or looking at transnational networks. It is also important to note that even though the women's rights movement achieved an important victory one hundred years ago, women's struggle for political, social and economic equality did not end in 1920.

Our workshop seeks to offer fresh perspectives on this struggle, particularly regarding the significance of the 19th Amendment and including transnational exchanges of people and ideas that shaped how the franchise was legislated and experienced.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- international networks and organizations that were important to the success of the women's rights movement
- the role of the temperance movement and/or the National Women's Party for female suffrage in the USA
- the conservative turn supported by some female political activists in the United States as a reaction to the 19th amendment
- The role southern black and/or white women played in the fight for African American civil and voting rights in the 1960s
- the rise and role of female politicians in the United States

Confirmed Speakers:

- Michelle Nickerson, Loyola University Chicago
- Clara Sophie Höhn, University of Augsburg

Please send your abstracts of no more than 250 words and a short biographical sketch to

Anja Schüler (aschueler@hca.uni-heidelberg.de) and

Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson (waldschmidt-nelson@philhist.uni-augsburg.de)

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## **22. Religion and Participation**

Jan Stievermann (Heidelberg)

In 2019, radical Christian pro-life activists attracted international media attention. With their influence on the introduction of strict anti-abortion laws in several US states, they have become emblematic for religiously motivated political participation. Throughout American history, however, religion has often factored into socio-political participation, just as politics have influenced religious participation, from the introduction of the First Amendment, that helped turn religion into a voluntary endeavor, to the Cold War, when church membership was invoked as a force against 'Godless Communism.' This panel aims to explore the dynamic interaction between religion and participation, both within specific religious groups and within society more generally.

The first general area of interest focuses on broader changes in participation throughout American religious history. We thus welcome papers that address narratives of growth and decline in religious movements as well as proposals discussing gender, race, ethnicity, or specific historical constellations that helped to increase, reduce or prevent religious participation. The second general area of interest centers on how religion has shaped social and political participation. Potential papers could thus explore case studies for how specific religious groups have furthered social, political, and economic participation in the US, or have worked as a force of exclusion, preventing people from active participation in society.

Possible areas include but are not limited to:

- Historical development of religious participation among specific demographic groups (women, minorities, etc.)
- Religiously motivated political and/or social participation (women's suffrage, Civil Rights Movements, the Religious Right, etc.)
- Political action with impact on religious participation (Roe v. Wade, Affordable Care Act, etc.)
- Exploration of different forms of religious participation (missionary activity, reform movements, etc.)
- Religious participation during exceptional political/social crises (Cold War, Jim Crow Laws, etc.)

Please send paper proposals (max. 300 words) along with a short CV to Prof. Dr. Jan Stievermann (jstievermann@hca.uni-heidelberg.de).

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