



BOLOGNA
1-4 SEPTEMBER

1776
VISIONS

OF
FREEDOM
2026

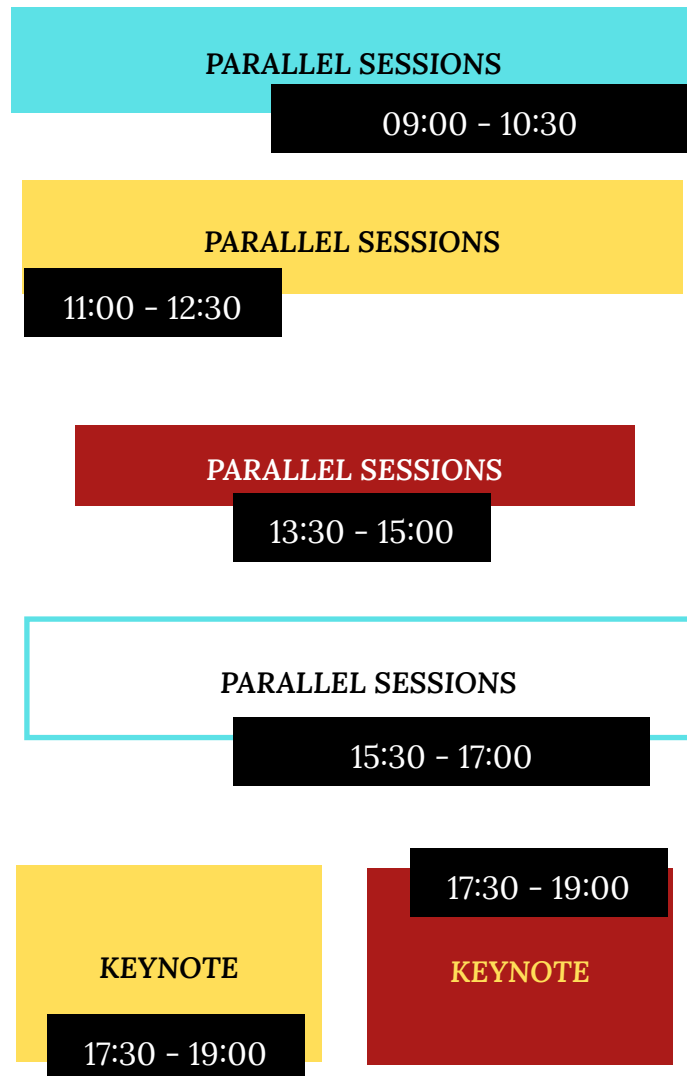
36th Biennial
EAAS Conference

CONFERENCE AT A GLANCE

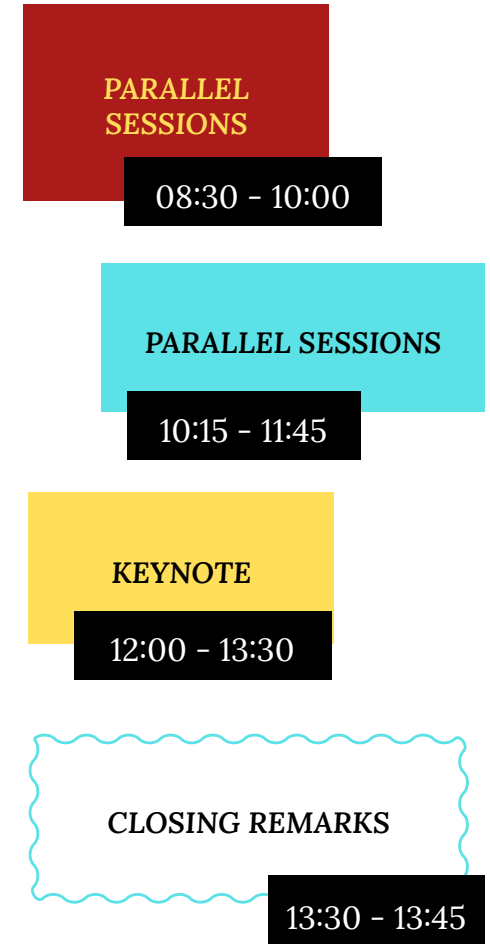
Tuesday 1



Wednesday 2 | Thursday 3



Friday 4



Tuesday, September 1st

DAMSLab - Dipartimento delle Arti
Piazzetta P. P. Pasolini, 5/b

EAAS POSTGRADUATE
AND ECR NETWORK

14:30 - 16:00

Auditorium

REGISTRATION

14:00 - 20:00

WELCOME ADDRESSES,
CONFERENCE OPENING &
EAAS GENERAL MEETING

17:00 - 18:00

EAAS BOARD MEETING

09:30 - 16:00

Sala Seminari

KEYNOTE SPEECH: DESMOND KING

BAKED IN:
POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND THE AMERICAN NATION

CHAIR: RAFFAELLA BARITONO

18:00 - 19:30

WELCOME
COCKTAIL

19:30 - 21:30

Wednesday, September 2nd

09:00
–
10:30

CONTESTED
FREEDOM:
RACE,
SECURITY,
AND THE
CARCERAL
BORDER

FEELING
FREE(DOM):
AFFECTS
AND/OFF
LIBERTY IN US
LITERATURE

“WHY 1963?”:
REIMAGINING
RIGHTS AND
PROTESTS
IN A
WATERSHED
YEAR

MOBILITY IN
CONTEMPORARY
BLACK ATLANTIC
WRITING

WHOSE
FREEDOM,
WHOSE
WEST?

FREEDOM,
UNIVERSITY
AND CRITICAL
THINKING

REFLECTIONS
FROM AMERICAN
LITERATURES:
CLIMATE
CHANGE AND
THE THREAT
TO VISIONS OF
FREEDOM

PATHOGRAPHIES AND
THE POLITICS OF
FREEDOM: WOMEN'S
BODIES, ILLNESS, AND
INEQUALITY

11:00
–
12:30

ALIENATION
AND
FREEDOM AT
MIDCENTURY

PRISONS IN
CALIFORNIA

ATLANTICS:
FREEDOM
NARRATIVES
IN ENTANGLED
WATERS

IN THE SHADOWS
OF SLAVERY:
FREE BLACK
CITIZENSHIP
IN THE UNITED
STATES, 1783-1865

CONTESTED
FREEDOM:
REPRODUCTION,
FAMILY,
AND BODILY
AUTONOMY IN
U.S. HISTORY

PERFORMING
FREEDOM IN
SPACE FROM
CLASSICAL
HOLLYWOOD TO
CONTEMPORARY
CINEMA

SAFE FOR
DEMOCRACY?
AMERICAN
INTERNATIONAL
PERSPECTIVES AND
THE (UN)MAKING
OF THE GLOBAL
ORDER

"FREE FROM DEATH,
FREE FROM EARTH":
POST-PLANETARY
FREEDOM IN THE AGE
OF TECHNOCAPITALIST
AUTHORITARIANISM

ROADS TO
FREEDOM?
CONTROVERSIAL
AUTOMOBILITIES
IN AMERICAN
MODERNISM

12:30
–
13:30

EAAS WOMEN'S NETWORK MEETING

13:30
–
15:00

THE LIFE,
LITERATURE
AND LEGACY
OF LUIS J.
RODRÍGUEZ: IN
THE LONG RUN

FAMILY,
FREEDOM
AND
CONSERVATISM

VISIONS
OF BLACK
FREEDOM:
BORDERS, ART,
AND PRISON
WALLS

ALTERNATIVE
FUTURES: VISIONS
OF FREEDOM IN
THE AMERICAN
LEFT

RELATIONAL
SOVEREIGNTIES:
INDIGENOUS
(RE)VISIONS OF
FREEDOM ACROSS
LAND, BODY AND
IMAGINATION

CONSTRUCTING
NARRATIVES OF
FREEDOM: AMERICAN
EXHIBITS AT HOME
AND ABROAD IN THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY

CONTESTED
VISIONS OF
AMERICAN
FREEDOM IN THE
CIVIL WAR AND
RECONSTRUCTION
ERA

FIGHTING FOR
FREEDOM IN THE
ANTHROPOCENE?
ECOLOGY AND
WARFARE IN
CONTEMPORARY
US CULTURE

MOTHERING
LIBERTY:
MATERNAL
VISIONS OF
FREEDOM IN
AMERICAN
LITERATURE

15:30
–
17:00

IMMERSIVE
LEARNING FOR
SUSTAINABLE
EDUCATION:
THE TREND
PROJECT

EAAS
POETRY
NETWORK

STORIES OF
UNFREEDOM: NEW
APPROACHES TO
THE AMERICAN
SLAVE NARRATIVE IN
THE TWENTY-FIRST
CENTURY

ALTERNATIVE
FUTURES:
VISIONS OF
FREEDOM IN
THE AMERICAN
LEFT

RELATIONAL
SOVEREIGNTIES:
INDIGENOUS
(RE)VISIONS OF
FREEDOM ACROSS
LAND, BODY AND
IMAGINATION

RECLAIMING
FREEDOM
BEYOND
BORDERS

BLACK SOLDIERS,
VISIONS OF
FREEDOM AND
MEMORY IN WORLD
WAR II

TRANSFORMATION
AND
MALFORMATION
OF MOVEMENT
IN AMERICAN
OUTDOOR SPACES

MOTHERING
LIBERTY:
MATERNAL
VISIONS OF
FREEDOM IN
AMERICAN
LITERATURE

17:30
–
19:00

KEYNOTE SPEECH: JORIE GRAHAM
VISIONS OF FREEDOM: JORIE GRAHAM IN CONVERSATION WITH ANTONELLA FRANCONI
CHAIR: PHILIP MCGOWAN

Thursday, September 3rd

09:00
-
10:30

FREEDOM,
ENVIRONMENT
AND ECONOMY

BOUND TO BE
FREE? MARKET
FREEDOM AND
POLITICAL
CONSTRAINTS
AFTER THE
NEOLIBERAL
TURN

THE HAUNTING
LEGACY OF TONI
MORRISON:
CELEBRATING
BLACK FREEDOM
AND THE ETHICS
OF CARE AND
RESISTANCE

VISIONS OF
(UN)FREEDOM:
AFRICANS,
AMERICANS,
AND THE FATE
OF DEMOCRACY
FROM THE AGE OF
REVOLUTIONS TO
THE GILDED AGE

FREEDOM TO BE
ME: STRUGGLES
WITH
STEREOTYPES,
DISSENT, AND
CELEBRATION OF
DIFFERENCE IN
CONTEMPORARY
AMERICAN
WRITING

NATIVE
AMERICAN
MIGRATIONS:
FREE AND
COERCED

MEDIATED
FREEDOMS

FREEDOM
OF CHOICE?
AMERICAN
CHILDREN'S
CONSUMER
CULTURE AND THE
CONTRADICTIONS
OF LIBERTY

SOUTHERN
WOMEN
WRITERS AND
EMANCIPATION
STRATEGIES

11:00
-
12:30

ACADEMIC
MOTHERING/
PARENTING
ROUND TABLE

AMERICAN
STUDIES,
PRESENT
AND FUTURE:
VISIONS FROM
EUROPEAN
JOURNAL
EDITORS

CREATIVE
INSURGENCIES:
REIMAGINING
FREEDOM FROM
BELOW IN LATINX
LITERATURE AND
ART

THE
REVOLUTION
OF 1917 AND
AMERICAN
FREEDOM

FREEDOM OF
SPEECH ACROSS
(POST) DIGITAL
SPACES AND
CONTEMPORARY US
NARRATIVES

UNEXPECTED
BATTLES FOR
LIBERTY: THE
STRUGGLE FOR
FREEDOMS
DURING
WARTIME

MEDIATED
FREEDOMS

VEGAN
READINGS, US
FREEDOMS:
CHattel,
CATTLE,
CAPITAL

VAEMPIRE:
ANTI-COLONIALIST
RHETORIC IN THE
STRUGGLE FOR
FREEDOM

13:30
-
15:00

DEFENDING
ACADEMIC
FREEDOM:
TRANSATLANTIC
PERSPECTIVES
ON AMERICAN
STUDIES

MINOR
REVOLUTIONS:
VIET THANH
NGUYEN
AND THE
UNMAKING
OF AMERICAN
FREEDOM

"DISCOURSES
OF FREEDOM:
HISTORY-
MAKING
SPEECHES,
ESSAYS, AND
MANIFESTOS
IN AMERICAN
LITERATURE"

PAST AND
PRESENT
BOUNDARIES
OF PRISON

CONFRONTING
THE FOURTH
GHOST: VISIONS
AND CRITIQUES OF
TOTALITARIANISM IN
SOUTHERN FICTION

FREEDOM,
MOVEMENT,
AND THEIR
LIMITS FOR
MARGINALIZED
PEOPLE IN THE
AMERICAN
WEST

RE/
GENERATION,
VIOLENCE,
AND AMERICAN
CULTURE
WARS: SETTLER
FREEDOMS IN
YELLOWSTONE

JEWISH
AMERICAN
WRITING AND
THE UNITED
STATES'
REGIMES OF
MIGRATION:
REIMAGINING
NARRATIVES OF
IMMIGRATION

COUNTER-
VISIONS OF
FREEDOM:
CONTEMPORARY
DOCUPOETIC
INTERVENTIONS
IN THE COLONIAL
ARCHIVE

15:30
-
17:00

FUTURE
FREEDOMS
IN SCIENCE
FICTION

A LONG QUEST
FOR FREEDOM
IN AFRICAN
AMERICAN
WRITING

ACADEMIC
WELL-BEING

AGAINST THE
TYRANNY OF
LANGUAGE. THREE
(POST)MODERN
QUESTS FOR LIFE,
LIBERTY, AND
HAPPINESS

1920S-2020S:
VISIONS OF
UNFREEDOM

THE AMERICAN
WEST - A LAND
OF FREEDOM?
REVISIONS OF
THE MYTH

UN|BANNING
BOOKS FOR
YOUNG READERS

VISIONS OF
REPRODUCTIVE
(UN)FREEDOM

17:30
-
19:00

KEYNOTE SPEECH: GIORGIO MARIANI
DO YOU CONDEMN BABO? THINKING OF BENITO CERENO AT A TIME OF GENOCIDE
CHAIR: TBC

Friday, September 4th

08:30
-
10:00

TEACHING
AMERICAN
STUDIES WHEN
FREEDOM IS
UNDER ATTACK

THE
AESTHETICS
AND POLITICS
OF FREEDOM IN
THE ERA OF JIM
CROW

KEYWORDS
FOR
FREEDOM(S) IN
THE U.S.

FREEDOM AND
IDENTITY

FEMINIST
FREEDOMS
AND TWENTY-
FIRST
CENTURY
FASCISM

TRANSCULTURALITY
UNDER NEOLIBERALISM
IN 21ST CENTURY
AMERICAN LITERATURE:
BETWEEN LIBERATION
AND CAPTURE

WHEN THE
WORLD
CLOSES IN
ON YOU:
FREEDOM,
GAMEPLAY,
AND
VIDEOGAMES

A TENUOUS GRASP ON
FREEDOM: COMPETING
IDEAS FOR WOMEN'S
SELF-DETERMINATION

10:15
-
11:45

WESTERING IN/
THE DISCIPLINE;
OR, WHY THE
AMERICAN WEST
MATTERS MORE
THAN EVER

UNMADE AND
REWRITTEN:
COUNTERNARRATIVES
TO DOMINANT
HISTORIES
COUNTERNARRATIVES

ENDURING VISIONS
OF FREEDOM: A
RETROSPECTIVE
OF NINETEENTH-
CENTURY AMERICAN
LITERATURE

EAAS
AMERICAN
STUDIES
NETWORK

CONSTRAINTS
OF FREEDOM IN
AMERICAN CINEMA:
GANGSTERS,
SOLDIERS,
INSTITUTIONS

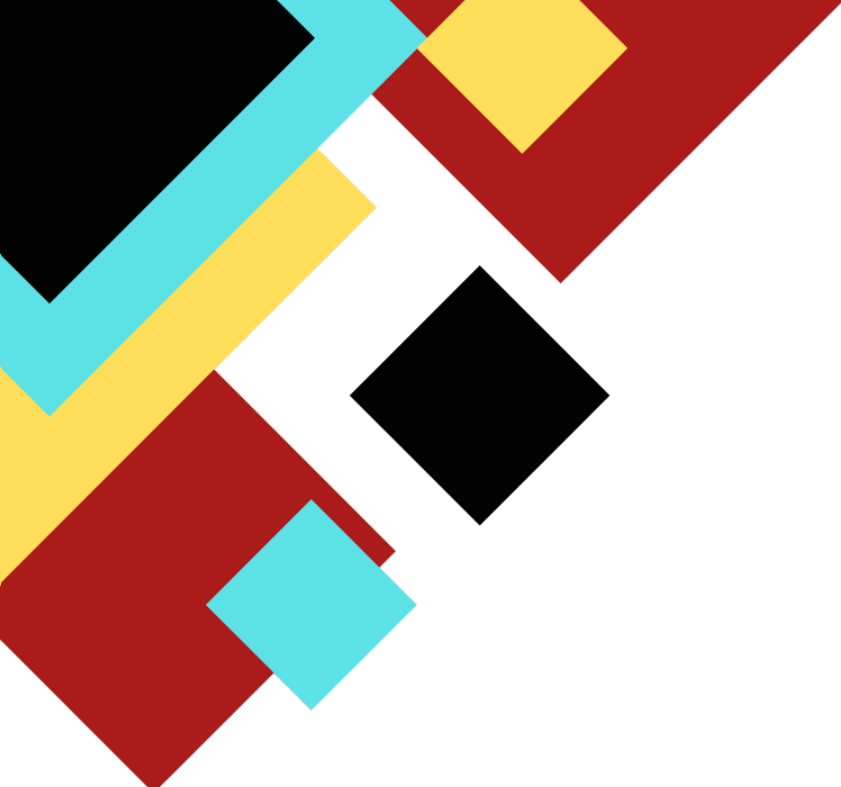
ALTERNATIVE
LOOKS: VISION AND
COUNTER-VISION
IN AMERICAN
POETRY

12:00
-
13:30

KEYNOTE SPEECH: KARSTEN FITZ
**COMMEMORATING THE FIRST MARTYR OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION ACROSS TIME:
THE VISUAL MEMORY OF CRISPUS ATTUCKS**
CHAIR: INGRID GESSNER

CLOSING REMARKS

13:30 - 13:45



KEYNOTE SPEECHES

BAKED IN: POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND THE AMERICAN NATION

Tuesday 01
18:00 - 19:30
AUDITORIUM

KEYNOTE SPEECH

DESMOND KING

CHAIR: RAFFAELLA BARITONO

Desmond King is the Andrew W. Mellon professor of American Government at Nuffield College, Oxford. King was elected to the American Philosophical Society in 2022. He was elected a Member of the National Academy of Sciences in 2025. He received the Bastable Prize (Trinity), the Minar Award (Northwestern), and a Choice “Outstanding Academic Book” 2012 for *Still a House Divided: Race and Politics in Obama’s America* with Rogers M Smith, Princeton University Press. He has held a Major Research Fellowship, Leverhulme Trust 2005-2008 (3 year buy-out) and a Research Readership, British Academy, 2000-2002 (2 year buy-out). He has been elected a Fellow the British Academy (2003), a Member of the Royal Irish Academy (2014) and a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society (2015). He is an Associate Member, Centre d’Etudes Europeennes, Sciences Po, Paris. He is the author over a 100 papers in professional journals in such journals as *American Political Science Review*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, *Comparative Political Studies*, *Du Bois Review*, *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, *Governance*, *Journal of Politics*, *Minerva*, *Past & Present*, *Perspectives on Politics*, *Political Studies*, *Political Research Quarterly*, *Public Administration*, *Theory and Society*, *West European Politics*, and *World Politics*, 7 coedited books and 10 books including *Fed Power: The Federal Reserve and the Great Recession* (with Lawrence R Jacobs (Oxford University, April 2016), *Making Americans: Immigration, Race and the Diverse Democracy* (Harvard University Press, 2001), and *Actively Seeking Work? The Politics of U and Welfare in Britain and the US*, (U of Chicago Press, 1995).

VISIONS OF FREEDOM: JORIE GRAHAM IN CONVERSATION WITH ANTONELLA FRANCINI

Wednesday 02
17:30 - 19:00
AUDITORIUM

KEYNOTE SPEECH

JORIE GRAHAM

CHAIR: PHILIP MCGOWAN

Jorie Graham is the author of numerous collections of poetry, including *Hybrids of Plants and Ghosts* (1980), *Erosion* (1983), *The End of Beauty* (1987), *Region of Unlikeness* (1991), *The Dream of the Unified Field: Selected Poems 1974-1992* (1995) winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry, *Never* (2002), *Sea Change* (2008), *Place* (2012), winner of the Forward Poetry Prize for best collection, *From the New World* (2015), *Fast* (2017), and *Runaway* (2020) among others. She has taught for many years at Harvard University as the Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory, the first woman to be given this position, which was previously held by Seamus Heaney and many other writers dating back to the first Boylston Professor, John Quincy Adams. Born in New York City, Graham was raised and educated in Italy and France. She attended the Sorbonne in Paris, where she studied philosophy, and New York University, where she pursued filmmaking. While in New York, she began writing and studying poetry, and went on to earn an MFA from the Iowa Writer’s Workshop. She later taught at the Writers’ Workshop, leaving to join the faculty at Harvard. When her collection *Place* won the Forward Poetry Prize in 2012, she was the first American woman to receive the UK award. When she was awarded the International Nonino Literary Prize in 2013, she was only the third US recipient since the award was established. In 2017 she was awarded the Wallace Stevens Award from the Academy of American Poets.

DO YOU CONDEMN BABO? THINKING OF BENITO CERENO AT A TIME OF GENOCIDE

Thursday 03
17:30 - 19:00
AUDITORIUM

KEYNOTE SPEECH

GIORGIO MARIANI

CHAIR: TBC

Giorgio Mariani taught, until his recent retirement, Anglo-American literature at the Department of European, American and Intercultural Studies at Sapienza University of Rome, where for many years he coordinated the PhD in Studies in English Language and Literatures. In his career he has focused mostly on 19th-century American literature (in particular Herman Melville and Stephen Crane); he has investigated the relationship between war, violence and literature; he has written extensively on contemporary American Indian literature. He was president of the I.A.S.A. (International American Studies Association) from 2011 to 2015, and then directed its journal, RIAS—The Review of International American Studies, for several years. He is a member of the editorial board of *Ácoma. Rivista internazionale di studi nordamericani* (of which he was co-director from 2001 to 2021). For several years he co-directed the book series “Le Balene” (La Scuola di Pitagora) and “Studies in American Literature and Culture” (Sapienza Università Editrice). He has been a four-time faculty member of the Futures of American Studies Institute, Dartmouth College (2005; 2013; 2015; 2018); a Visiting Professor at the École Normale Supérieure in Lyon (2012); and a several-times Visiting Scholar at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. He has lectured at numerous Italian and foreign universities, including the Université Diderot in Paris, the Université Lumière Lyon 2; the École Normale Supérieure in Lyon; the University of Poznań; the Technische Universität in Dortmund; the University of Mannheim; the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign; Yeshiva University in New York; Haverford College (Pennsylvania); the California Institute of Technology; the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest; the University of Silesia; the University of Timisoara.

COMMEMORATING THE FIRST MARTYR OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION ACROSS TIME: THE VISUAL MEMORY OF CRISPUS ATTUCKS

Friday 04
12:00 - 13:30
AUDITORIUM

KEYNOTE SPEECH

KARSTEN FITZ

CHAIR: INGRID GESSNER

Karsten Fitz is Professor of American Studies / Culture and Media Studies at the University of Passau. He studied American Studies and Political Science at the University of Hannover (M.A., Ph.D.) and at the University of Washington, Seattle. Fitz is the recipient of the Fulbright American Studies Fellowship (2002–03), during which he spent a year at Harvard University and the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts. He completed his ‘Habilitation’ at the University of Regensburg, where he has taught for ten years. His monographic works are *Negotiating History and Culture: Transculturation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* (2001) and *The American Revolution Remembered, 1830s to 1850s: Competing Images and Conflicting Narratives* (2011). He has edited the anthology *Visual Representations of Native Americans: Transnational Contexts and Perspectives* (2012). Together with Birgit Däwes and Sabine Meyer he is the editor of the book series *Routledge Research in Transnational Indigenous Perspectives*, of which he co-edited the first volume, *Twenty-First Century Perspectives on Indigenous Studies: Native North America in (Trans)Motion* (2015). His research on issues of privacy led to the conference volume *Cultures of Privacy: Paradigms, Transformations, Contestations* (2015). His interest in transatlantic cultural exchange inspired the conference volume *Transatlantic Cinema: Productions – Genres – Encounters – Negotiations* (2020). In addition, Fitz has published articles on American popular visual culture, cultural memory, American political culture, and the teaching of American Studies in the EFL-classroom in various journals and conference volumes. Most recently he co-edited (together with Susanne Lachenicht and Volker Depkat) the conference volume *Representations and Uses of the American Revolution in Past and Present* (2025). Fitz has been Vice President of the German Association for American Studies (2017–2020) and is currently on the board of the European Association for American Studies and of the Bavarian American Academy.

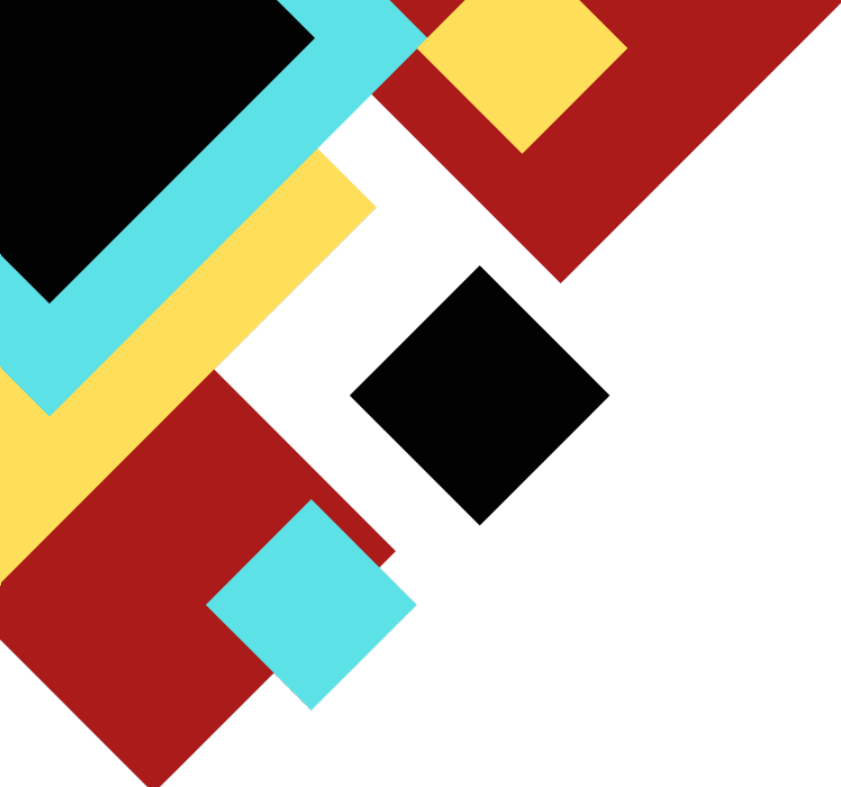


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IN ALPHABETICAL
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DETAILED CONFERENCE PROGRAM

CONTESTED FREEDOM: RACE, SECURITY, AND THE CARCERAL BORDER

Wednesday 02
09:00 - 10:30
SALETTA SEMINARI

Since its founding, the United States has defined itself as a “free country” and a global safe haven for the oppressed, the unfree, or the poor—an ideal famously popularized in Emma Lazarus’ sonnet *The New Colossus*. The freedom to move, however, has always been contested and undermined by exclusion acts, racial quotas, and border regimes. Nineteenth-century nativist sentiments and subsequent policies targeted immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe and Asia; more recently, bans and detention policies have been directed against people from Mexico, Latin America, and Muslim-majority countries. The curtailment of mobility and migration have inextricably been intertwined with and determined by exclusionary perceptions of race, also at the intersection with class, gender, or ability. Despite growing ethnic and racial diversity, the legacies of settler colonialism and chattel slavery continue to define an inherently racialized society and contemporary migration governance, in which the figure of the “migrant” remains racially coded as either “the good immigrant” – “worthy” and “deserving” – or conversely as the “illegal”, opportunistic, “dangerous” or “criminal” alien, who presumably threatens national security, the moral fabric, or the domestic labor market.

Adopting a race-conscious lens, this panel documents and theorizes how the freedom of movement and mobility in the U.S. are inherently racialized. Although the boundaries of Whiteness have gradually expanded to include formerly othered immigrant groups (German, Irish, Jewish), and while laws have adopted a *prima facie* race-neutral language—in what Ibram X. Kendi terms the “progression of racism”—Whiteness remains structurally privileged. Black, Brown, and other non-White racialized migrants increasingly face the punitive realities of criminalization, detention and deportation, as evidenced by current ICE raids. The panel addresses the nexus of racialization, (un)freedom of movement, and state-sanctioned punishment by bringing together studies of migrant imprisonment in literature, the racialized logics of border security and detention, and the contradictions of hospitality in global spectacles such as the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

CHAIR

✦ Grit Grigoleit-Richter, *Universität Passau*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Georgiana Banita, *Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg* - THE WEIGHT OF WATCHTOWERS: THE CAMP AND THE LITERARY IMAGINATION FROM ELLIS ISLAND TO ALLIGATOR ALCATRAZ
- ✦ Grit Grigoleit-Richter, *Universität Passau* - RACIALIZED BORDERS: MIGRANT CARCERALITY IN TEXAS
- ✦ Heike Raphael-Hernandez, *Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg* - THE 2026 FIFA WORLD CUP, THE 2028 SUMMER OLYMPICS, AND THEIR CHALLENGES TO U.S. IMMIGRATION RHETORIC
 - ✦ Isabel Díaz Sánchez, *Universidad de Alicante* - REBORDERING FREEDOM: CONTESTING THE MYTH OF LIBERTY IN US-MEXICO BORDER NARRATIVES

KEYWORDS

RACE, IMMIGRATION, CARCERALITY, BORDER

FEELING FREE(DOM): AFFECTS AND/OF LIBERTY IN US LITERATURE

Wednesday 02
09:00 - 10:30
AULA A

While often thought of primarily as a philosophical, political, and legal concept, freedom as an ideal and as a central promise of US culture has also always been and continues to be powerfully charged on an emotional and affective level. In fact, ideas, imaginations, and contestations around freedom and liberty in the US are crucially interrogated and negotiated primarily through the idea of ‘feeling free’: Mythical constructions of how the US ties the notion of freedom to its national identity, the ways in which personal liberty forms a central part of identity and community formations, or whether something is understood as threatening a particular freedom or liberty is often predominantly a question of feeling, tied to a variety of concomitant emotions that, in turn, orient or attach humans in specific ways toward ‘freedom’ (as an idea, ideal, and promise).

In this panel, we want to interrogate feelings of freedom in US literature, positioning the literary as one of the dominant realms in which US culture interrogates affective proclamations and contestations of liberty. We will pay particular attention to negotiations of gaps between the promises attached to the idea of freedom and experienced realities of unfreedom, as well as to the different forms, genres, modes, and styles that US literature has used to examine these dynamics. Taking our theoretical cue from affect theory, the panel aims to address literary negotiations of freedom(s)—broadly understood—by suggesting to understand freedom as entangled with ‘the promise of happiness’ (Ahmed) and ‘cruel optimism’ (Berlant). As Ahmed notes in reference to the Declaration of Independence, “[h]appiness becomes a question of following rather than finding” if it is understood as a “pursuit [...] augmented as a constitutional right” (32), which aligns the idea of striving for freedom with Berlant’s notion that “the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or a people risks striving”.

In four different case studies, the panel will interrogate specific forms and aesthetics of ‘feeling free’ in US literature; affective counter-constructions and modes of resistance via (a lack of) freedom; feelings surrounding trust, care, solidarity, and other forms of belonging/community as they relate to freedom; and the affordances and (ideological) ambiguities of particular genres and modes in relation to affects of freedom.

CHAIR

- ✦ Annika Schadewaldt, *Universität Leipzig*
- ✦ Stefan Schubert, *Universität Leipzig*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Michael Collins, *King’s College London* - HOW TO BREAK UP WITH AMERICA: TACT, SOCIALITY, AND THE PROBLEMS OF FEELING FREE IN THE WORK OF LYDIA DAVIS
- ✦ Lea Espinoza Garrido, *Freie Universität Berlin* - FROM HARRIET JACOBS TO CATHY PARK HONG: U.S. LIFE WRITING AND THE AFFECTIVE INFRASTRUCTURES OF (UN)FREEDOM AND (DIS) TRUST
- ✦ Katja Kanzler, *Universität Leipzig* - FREEDOM AND CARE IN NK JEMISIN’S GREAT CITIES DUOLOGY
- ✦ Leonie Kratzenstein, *Universität Leipzig* - MONSTROUS BODIES AND STRANGLED FREEDOMS IN GRETCHEN FELKER-MARTIN’S CUCKOO

KEYWORDS

AFFECT, EMOTION, LITERATURE, UNFREEDOM, RESISTANCE

“WHY 1963?": REIMAGINING RIGHTS AND PROTESTS IN A WATERSHED YEAR

Wednesday 02
09:00 - 10:30
AULA B

In *Why We Can't Wait* (1964), Martin Luther King, Jr pondered why 1963 emerged as the revolutionary year for African Americans. 1963 marked a year in which the Black community claimed space to advocate for their freedoms in ways never seen before. Yet, 1963 was not only a pivotal year in the Civil Rights Movement; Americans both within and without the movement began to conceive of new imaginaries in protest cultures and became increasingly conscious of their own positions in minority subgroups, including those defined by gender, religion, and sexuality, as well as race. In the forthcoming volume *Why 1963?: Reimagining Rights and Protests in a Watershed Year* (University Press of Florida), historians working across multiple sub-disciplines broaden the question King posed: what made 1963 a flashpoint year for a multitude of movements and causes? How did various communities transform their understandings of themselves, their culture, and their audiences? And what does this meeting of different junctures reveal to us about conceptions of 'freedom' at this crucial moment of reckoning in American history?

By focusing on the single year of 1963, this panel demonstrates the breadth of diverse historical actors whose ideals and actions were interwoven with the Civil Rights Movement. The kaleidoscopic nature of 1963 - with interconnected shifts at micro and macro levels - indicates the year's distorting and transforming impact on American life. By considering the New Legacies, New Desires, and New Rights, this panel demonstrates how different junctures combine, and new streams of activism converge. Within this one calendar year, we see the culmination of decades of work for some and the start of new traditions for others. Such a perspective allows for a reframing of canonical moments and a recovery of marginalised ones. Yet this approach avoids a narrative of declension; of 1963 as a highpoint of the decade before decline. Rather, considering 1963 attests to multiple thematic consistencies across evolving protest cultures: a shift towards pragmatism, a generational divide, and the articulation of new rhetorics and tactics to achieve differing goals rooted in the nebulous concept of "freedom."

CHAIR

✦ Nick Witham, *University College London*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Emily Brady, *University of Oxford* - "250,000 I'S ARE HERE!": PHOTOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES ON THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON
- ✦ Uta Andrea Balbier, *University of Oxford* - THE RIGHT TO PRAY: WHITE EVANGELICALS, FREEDOM, AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN 1963
- ✦ Megan Hunt, *University of Edinburgh* - JIM CROW AT THE BOX OFFICE: CINEMA, CULTURE, AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN 1963

KEYWORDS

1963, CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, PROTEST, RELIGION, CULTURE

MOBILITY IN CONTEMPORARY BLACK ATLANTIC WRITING

Wednesday 02
09:00 - 10:30
AULA C

This panel explores how contemporary Black Atlantic authors reconceptualize mobility—physical, social, affective, and imaginative—as a site of tension between freedom and constraint. Across diverse geographies and genres, the presenters examine how movement functions not only as displacement or migration but as a political and aesthetic practice shaped by histories of enslavement, segregation, and racialized surveillance. In these contexts, mobility becomes both a measure of exclusion and a mode of resistance—a means of inhabiting history while envisioning liberated futures. The papers engage a range of critical approaches, from ecocritical readings of speculative fiction to analyses of fugitivity, diasporic flânerie, and urban walking. Together, they illuminate how acts of travel, flight, and wandering are continually redefined in the afterlives of the Middle Passage and within contemporary structures of anti-Blackness that regulate global circulation. Through these explorations, the panel foregrounds the complex relationship between movement, belonging, and the Black experience. Drawing on thinkers such as Paul Gilroy, Saidiya Hartman, Fred Moten, and Tina Campt, it asks how Black Atlantic literature maps the possibilities and limits of motion—across borders, oceans, and temporalities. The discussion highlights the interplay between embodied motion and imaginative travel, situating mobility as a key paradigm for reading the poetics and politics of Black life.

CHAIR

- ✦ Anna Pochmara, *Uniwersytet Warszawski*
- ✦ Dorottya Mózes, *Debreceni Egyetem*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Ágnes Zsófia Kovács, *University of Szeged* - A SOUTHWARD JOURNEY FROM FREEDOM TO BONDAGE IN MAT JOHNSON'S PYM
- ✦ Raphaël Lambert, *Kansai University* - BLACK FUGITIVITY AS A PRAXIS OF FREEDOM
- ✦ Dorottya Mózes, *Debreceni Egyetem* - BLACK DIASPORIC FLÂNERIE, ESTRANGEMENT, AND DEPRESSION IN BLACK TRAVEL WRITING
- ✦ Anna Pochmara, *Uniwersytet Warszawski* - WALKING WHILE BLACK: THE URBAN PASTORAL AND RACIAL MOBILITY IN CONTEMPORARY NEW YORK WRITING

KEYWORDS

MOBILITY, BLACK ATLANTIC, FUGIVITY, FLÂNERIE, NEO-SLAVE NARRATIVE

WHOSE FREEDOM, WHOSE WEST?

Wednesday 02
09:00 - 10:30
AULA D

The American West, as exposed in the myriad written and cinematographic representations where it has been described and defined, is the epitome of freedom. Personal freedom, spatial freedom, and even, spiritual freedom. However, as it has been similarly proved in myriad written and cinematographic representations, the American West has also been the epitome of the lack of freedom for many: for Native Americans, for women, for Mexicans, for African-Americans, for queer persons, and for several other non-normative groups.

The papers in this panel will look at how the search for freedom has been represented in different places and times related to the West: how women and queer people have been excluded in this search for freedom in traditional “western” representations, and how they are regaining a new position in contemporary Westerns; how even cowboys were excluded in Quixotic Westerns when progress changed the economy of the West; and how the Western formula was used when it travelled to Brazil to describe the search for freedom of the excluded populations from the Northeast in *cangaceiro* films, *nordesterns* and Brazilian post-Westerns.

CHAIR

✦ Amaia Ibarraran-Bigalondo, *Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Amaia Ibarraran-Bigalondo, *Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea* - FREE IS THE WEST (OR NOT): WESTERNS, WOMEN, QUEERS AND OTHERS
- ✦ Jesús Ángel González, *Universidad de Cantabria* - WHOSE FREEDOM IN BRAZILIAN WESTERNS?: FROM CANGACEIRO FILMS TO CONTEMPORARY POSTWESTERNS.
- ✦ Alfredo Moro, *Universidad de Cantabria* - FREEDOM, FAILED AMERICAN DREAMS AND QUIXOTIC OTHERNESS: REFLECTIONS ON THE EARLY RECEPTION OF DON QUIXOTE DE LA MANCHA IN THE NORTH AMERICAN WEST

KEYWORDS

AMERICAN WEST, FREEDOM, OTHER REPRESENTATIONS, CINEMA, LITERATURE

FREEDOM, UNIVERSITY AND CRITICAL THINKING

Wednesday 02
09:00 - 10:30
AULA 1

This panel examines the intensifying struggle over academic freedom, historical memory, and the politics of knowledge production in the United States amid growing political polarization and democratic uncertainty. Bringing together historical, pedagogical, legal, and cultural analyses, the papers explore how contemporary battles over “political correctness,” curriculum regulation, patriotic education, and institutional control reflect broader conflicts over who may define national identity, historical truth, and the boundaries of acceptable discourse. The panel also addresses the teaching of history as a central battleground in the struggle over democracy and public memory, situating these developments within a broader framework of democratic backsliding and authoritarian governance. Taken together, the papers illuminate how contemporary conflicts over education and historical interpretation are not merely “culture wars,” but fundamental struggles over democratic citizenship, intellectual autonomy, and the future of public knowledge in the United States.

CHAIR

✦ Giulia Crisanti, *Independent Researcher*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Christèle Le Bihan-Colleran, *Université de Poitiers* - FREEDOM UNDER THREAT ON US CAMPUSES: FROM A LEFT-WING TO A RIGHT-WING “POLITICAL CORRECTNESS”?
- ✦ Sandra Tausel, *Leopold-Franzens-Universität Innsbruck* - POLITICS OF ERASURE: THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION’S ATTACK ON REMEMBERING, TEACHING, AND CRITICAL THINKING

KEYWORDS

ACADEMIC FREEDOM, UNIVERSITY

REFLECTIONS FROM AMERICAN LITERATURES: CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE THREAT TO VISIONS OF FREEDOM

Wednesday 02
09:00 - 10:30
AULA 2

This panel examines responses in literature to climate change as a threat to visions of freedom and perhaps to any vision of sustaining the present global civilization/order. The CHAIR's introduction and four presentations reflect ideas introduced in the October 2025 special issue of *American Literatures, Living and Dying in the Anthropocene: Responses in Contemporary Literature from the Western Hemisphere*. Human-engineered climate change, next to nuclear war, is the greatest threat to our species. "The scientific evidence is unequivocal: climate change is a threat to human wellbeing and the health of the planet," the 2022 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report states. The special *American Literatures* issue explores the question: how has contemporary literature responded to a threat so pervasive that its effects are felt around the world while at the same time the individual human psyche suffers from climate anxiety? The panel presenters consider a variety of responses from writers that cohere around the idea that climate change calls for radical new ways of *thinking*. Teresa Botelho's presentation suggests the need to reconsider nature—at least in the United States—from the perspectives of African Americans, whose voices have been removed from the country's dominant environmental narratives. Loredana Filip argues that visual representations in literature have privileged the *visual* for centuries, resulting in a limited view of nature and its subsequent commodification, exemplified in our data-driven, mechanical view of our bodies. David J. Cross examines a reconfiguration of human thought to overcome paralyzing states of despair: a holistic approach recognizing interconnections among the individual, nature, economic and political systems, and even time itself. The presentation will then open to general discussion, with attention to other concepts raised in the special issue of *American Literatures* (copies will be available for attendees).

CHAIR

✦ Brian Railsback, Western Carolina University

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Brian Railsback, Western Carolina University - CAN ONE REVISE QUICKLY ENOUGH? CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE AND A SPECIAL ISSUE OF AMERICAN LITERATURES
- ✦ Teresa Botelho, Universidade Nova de Lisboa - FINDING FREEDOM IN NATURE: REWRITING THE SKY AND THE SOIL IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE
- ✦ Loredana Filip, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg - DIRT UNDER THE FINGERNAILS: FREEDOM AS RESPONSE-ABILITY AND THE SENSORY ETHICS OF THE EVERYDAY IN RICHARD POWERS
- ✦ David John Cross, Universität Stuttgart - THE UNCERTAINTY OF PLANETARY DOMESTICITY: LOUISE ERDRICH'S FUTURE HOME OF THE LIVING GOD.

KEYWORDS

ENVIRONMENT, AMERICAN LITERATURE, ANTHROPOCENE, ECOPHILOSOPHY

PATHOGRAPHIES AND THE POLITICS OF FREEDOM: WOMEN'S BODIES, ILLNESS, AND INEQUALITY

Wednesday 02
09:00 - 10:30
AULA 3

This panel explores how contemporary American illness narratives or pathographies articulate and challenge dominant visions of freedom in the United States. Drawing on the Critical Medical Humanities, we argue that health, illness, and the body are not simply biological realities but deeply social, political, and cultural experiences that shape and are shaped by American ideas of autonomy and citizenship.

From the Declaration of Independence onward, "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" has been celebrated as foundational to national identity. Yet illness and bodily regulation often place individuals outside those ideals, exposing the limits and contradictions of American freedom. Who is free when their body fails, or when the state claims authority over it? How do systemic inequalities in gender, race, class, reproductive rights, and cultural ideals of beauty constrain freedom from pain, freedom of movement, or freedom of choice?

The papers in this panel address these questions through illness narratives across different genres—autobiography, graphic novel, and drama. Together, they examine how women's bodies are disciplined and stigmatized, whether through abortion restrictions, medical interventions, or aesthetic norms that equate beauty with value. By analyzing Lucy Grealy's memoir of disfigurement, Leah Hayes's graphic novel on abortion, and the cycle of monologues *My Body No Choice*, the panel demonstrates how personal narratives become civic interventions, revealing illness and reproductive freedom as contested sites of inequality.

By focusing on critical pathographies, we show how narratives of illness and bodily regulation critique institutional power, medical authority, and structural neglect. Whether confronting reproductive injustice, theatricalizing the politics of abortion, or exposing the tyranny of beauty, these texts illuminate the entanglement of illness and freedom in American culture. Ultimately, the panel argues that illness narratives are not only testimonies of suffering but interventions that expand the very definition of what it means to be "free" in America.

CHAIR

✦ Isabel Durán Giménez-Rico, Universidad Complutense de Madrid

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Francisco José Cortés Vieco, Universidad Complutense de Madrid - LIMITS OF LIBERTY AND VISUALIZING REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM IN LEAH HAYES'S NOT FUNNY HA-HA
- ✦ Noelia Hernando-Real, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid - 'MY BODY NO CHOICE' AND THE DEROGATION OF ROE V. WADE: US WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS AND THE POLITICS OF THE FEMALE BODY
- ✦ Isabel Durán Giménez-Rico, Universidad Complutense de Madrid - LUCY GREALY AND THE LIMITS OF FREEDOM: ILLNESS, BEAUTY, AND BELONGING

KEYWORDS

MEDICAL HUMANITIES, GENDER, ILLNESS, PATHOGRAPHY

ALIENATION AND FREEDOM AT MIDCENTURY

Wednesday 02
11:00 - 12:30
AUDITORIUM

Midcentury scholarship was obsessed with “alienation.” There was even a joke going around that the editors at *Partisan Review* had special keys installed on their typewriters with the word already spelled-out, so their contributors could save time writing about their favorite theme. Alienation may seem like the opposite of freedom, but it can also be understood as its negative expression. When conformity is perceived as the major threat to freedom, then being alienated from society is one way to be true to yourself. Alienation became popular when freedom began to seem like the privilege of outsiders. Those who ran afoul of McCarthy, those skeptical of advertising and TV, those who dropped out of consumer society: these alienated individuals were supposed to be the guardians of what Isaiah Berlin called “freedom from,” even if they did not have the “freedom to” live the lifestyles made possible by postwar affluency. But even the claim that alienation is a form of freedom must be questioned. Indeed, the term “alienation” was so trendy—an early example of academic jargon—that it inadvertently suggested a kind of intellectual lockstep as “dissident” intellectuals swelled the ranks of the expanding university system. Even worse: alienation might signal intellectual lockstep, but also self-indulgence or self-deception, as a number of the intellectuals complaining about their own (affected) alienation ignored the actual alienation experienced by systematically marginalized groups who had legitimate claims to make, but little possibility—inside the academy or out—to make them. Taking these paradoxes as its cue, this panel will explore the relation of freedom to alienation in postwar US-American writing and scholarship, analyzing the meaning of the overused term, its shelf-life, its intellectual limitations and legacy, and what its rise and fall as a kind of academic battle cry tells us about the impact of the cold war, the growth of universities, and the significance of intellectual trends in the United States in the years following WWII.

CHAIR

✦ Andrew Gross, *Georg-August Universität Göttingen*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Philip McGowan, *Queen's University Belfast* - “THE LOST, THE OUTCAST, THE OVERCOME, THE EFFACED, THE RUINED”: SAUL BELLOW’S THE VICTIM (1947) AND REGIMES OF AMERICAN ALIENATION
- ✦ Karin Hoepker, *Universität Konstanz* - MID-20TH CENTURY ALIENATION: CONSTRUCTIONS OF CONFORMITY AND THE ‘ORGANIZATION MAN
- ✦ Andrew Gross, *Georg-August Universität Göttingen* - ALIENATION AND THE END OF NARRATIVE IN BELLOW’S DANGLING MAN
- ✦ Sebastian Groß, *Georg-August Universität Göttingen* - ALIENATION AS A PRINCIPLE OF OBJECTIVISM: THE IDEOLOGY OF FORM IN AYN RAND’S THE FOUNTAINHEAD

KEYWORDS

ALIENATION, COLD WAR, CONFORMISM, INDIVIDUALISM, FREEDOM

PRISONS IN CALIFORNIA

Wednesday 02
11:00 - 12:30
SALETTA SEMINARI

The earliest form of incarceration in California was reportedly the “Euphemia”, a ninety-foot ship that was converted into a floating jail in 1850. Inmates spent their days working in chain gangs on the shore, but at night they were crammed below the ship’s decks. The severely overcrowded and unsanitary conditions eventually necessitated a solution, which came in 1852 with the construction of San Quentin State Prison, a foundational event in the history of the Californian Prison System (Delgado, 1981). This panel offers a critical exploration and analysis of the complexities within California’s carceral system, a structure historically rooted in the exploitation of poor and marginalized communities. Since the Gold Rush – a transformative process that led to the establishment of the Californian Prison State System (Nash 1998) – to the internment of Japanese Americans in the detention centers during World War II and the rise of the prison industrial complex in the second half of the twentieth century, with the expansion of correctional facilities, the state’s approach to incarceration has consistently reflected racial, social, and economic inequalities. This dynamic has further discriminated minority communities and the reinforcement of a system that prioritized punishment over rehabilitation. The systemic failure to rehabilitate individuals, coupled with its devastating impact on prisoners’ mental health, has critically underscored the urgent need for reform, a necessity extensively advocated for by scholars such as Angela Davis. This panel brings together voices from three crucial perspectives: individuals with direct experience of imprisonment, authors who have fictionalized or reflected on the experience, and activists dedicated to combating unjust incarceration. The core aim of this discussion is to illuminate the literary testimonies of the jail experience, examining how these narratives function as a profound social experience, a memory to be processed, and a battlefield for claiming fundamental rights.

CHAIR

- ✦ Elisa Bordin, *Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia*
- ✦ Nicolangelo Becce, *Università Roma Tre*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Elisa Bordin, *Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia* - JACK LONDON’S THE STAR ROVER (1915): A DENUNCIATION OF THE DEATH PENALTY THROUGH TIME AND SPACE
- ✦ Nicolangelo Becce, *Università Roma Tre* - RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN JAPANESE AMERICAN INCARCERATION STORIES: THE CASE OF MANZANAR
- ✦ Małgorzata Jarmołowicz-Dziekońska, *Uniwersytet w Białymstoku* - FREEDOM BELONGS TO THE STRONG: SHATTERED LIBERTY AND JAPANESE-AMERICAN INTERNMENT THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE INTERNEES
- ✦ Vincenzo Bavaro, *Università di Napoli “L’Orientale”* - ANGELA DAVIS AND THE RADICAL IMAGINATION OF ABOLITION: READING ARE PRISONS OBSOLETE? WITHIN CALIFORNIA’S CARCERAL LANDSCAPE
- ✦ Erica De Sutter Summerville, *Los Angeles Valley College* - GENDERED VIOLENCE IN CALIFORNIA’S ICE DETENTION FACILITIES

KEYWORDS

PRISON, CALIFORNIA

ATLANTICS: FREEDOM NARRATIVES IN ENTANGLED WATERS

Wednesday 02
11:00 - 12:30
AULA A

Paul Gilroy famously reimagined the Atlantic Ocean not as a void, but as a space of entangled mobility, memory, and creolization – we believe the same can be said about other water geographies. Recently, scholars have engaged comparable systems of Black textualities. *The Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders, and Citizenship* (Gabriele Proglia et al. 2021) situates itself “in the wake of the Black Atlantic” (5), honoring Paul Gilroy and Christina Sharpe in one breath. Black Atlantic scholars of the caliber of Gilroy, Wole Soyinka, Ella Shohat and others have turned their attention to Black Mediterranean experiences in “The Black in Mediterranean Blue” (2021), a special issue edited by Alessandra di Maio.

This new work shows how not only oceans, but also seas, lakes, and rivers have been crossed by trajectories of hope and despair, enslavement and freedom, mobility and perpetual fixity. Suicide by drowning itself has been addressed, perhaps problematically, as the ultimate form of escape from oppressive systems such as the slave ship in the Middle Passage, or domestic confinement in Kate Chopin’s *The Awakening*.

We are interested in the way bodies of water become connected through histories of colonialism, slavery, migrancy, and forced mobility, but also marked by comparable textualities and punctuated with literary convergences. The panel revisits the Atlantic canon placing water entanglements at its core. By laying emphasis on Black lives, intersecting mobilities, embodied practices of being-on-water, submerged archives, and aesthetics of fluidity, speakers in this panel imagine ways to open up canonic Atlantic authors such as Olaudah Equiano and Herman Melville to new, water-bound readings, bring into relief the role of waterways in texts of enslavement and escape, and map literary kinships between water geographies. Our panel seeks to compare freedom narratives that emerge from water and encourages comparative research into in oceanic, maritime, and riverine archives, both tangible and intangible.

Papers in this panel connect freedom and water in the following areas, and beyond: Historical and contemporary Black Atlantic texts --- The materiality of water --- The Atlantic canon --- Comparative oceanic studies --- Entangled water literacies --- Entangled mobilities of selves and texts --- Water-bound literary genres

CHAIR

✠ Elena Furlanetto, *Universität Duisburg-Essen*

SPEAKERS

✠ Astrid Haas, *Universitetet i Bergen* - OLAUDAH EQUIANO’S INTERESTING NARRATIVE AS A MARITIME MEMOIR

✠ Oluwadunni Talabi, *Universität Bremen* - COLONIAL NECROPOLITICS AND LIQUID POTENTIALITIES IN 19TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

✠ Erin Forbes, *University of Bristol* - LIBERTY BY LAND OR SEA: WILLIAM AND ELLEN CRAFT’S RUNNING A THOUSAND MILES FOR FREEDOM

✠ Sonia Di Loreto, *Università di Torino* & Elena Furlanetto, *Universität Duisburg-Essen* - BLACK ATLANTIC, BLACK MEDITERRANEAN

KEYWORDS

ATLANTIC STUDIES, NINETEENTH CENTURY, TRANSATLANTIC LITERATURE, COMPARATIVE OCEANIC STUDIES, BLACK ATLANTIC

IN THE SHADOWS OF SLAVERY: FREE BLACK CITIZENSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES, 1783-1865

Wednesday 02
11:00 - 12:30
AULA B

In the period from the American Revolution through the Civil War, practical and ideological understandings of citizenship and democracy were heavily influenced by the pressing issue of Black freedom. Whereas all of the northern states prohibited slavery between 1777 and 1804—slowly converting their slave populations into free Black populations—the southern states briefly increased manumissions—bolstering free Black communities within their borders—but subsequently redoubled their commitment to slavery, expanding it into the southwestern frontier. As the nation became bifurcated, with one half of the union committed to some version of Black “freedom” and the other half to slavery, disputes within states across the country arose regarding the rights and legal personhood of African Americans who were either legally free (through birth, manumission, or emancipation) or who were legally enslaved but had escaped to free soil. These disputes not only played a significant role in leading the US down the road to civil war in 1861, but they indeed helped the shape the course of that very war, in particular with respect to the status of “contrabands” (refugees from slavery) who reached Union lines.

How were racial landscapes of citizenship and democracy in antebellum and wartime America characterized, and how did free Black populations in various states and regions navigate such landscapes? This panel explores the answers to these questions from a comparative perspective, revealing how various states in the early republic (north and south, east and west) developed different approaches to democracy, based on the ways in which local communities understood and experienced free Black citizenship. Free Black populations, in turn, developed different strategies of survival that helped them navigate the very different landscapes of freedom in which they moved and resided, even in states in which various rights and privileges associated with citizenship were explicitly circumscribed or denied them—strategies that they would later employ during the Civil War as well. In short, this panel examines and underscores the spectrum of citizenship and democracy in 19th-century America by focusing on how these concepts related to free African Americans across time and space, both in theory and in practice.

CHAIR

✠ Damian Pargas, *Universiteit Leiden*

SPEAKERS

✠ Bálint Honos, *Universiteit Leiden* / *Roosevelt Institute for American Studies* - FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM: THE SPATIAL CONTESTATION OF BLACK CITIZENSHIP IN ANTEBELLUM CALIFORNIA

✠ Femke Fakkeldij, *Roosevelt Institute for American Studies* - FREE BLACK LITERARY SOCIETIES AND THE GENDERED POLITICS OF RESPECTABILITY IN THE ANTEBELLUM NORTH

✠ Natalie Joy, *Northern Illinois University* - ‘OF AN UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND SINFUL COLOR’: BLACK ABOLITIONISTS, NATIVE AMERICAN ANCESTRY, AND US CITIZENSHIP IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY

✠ Laura Gillespie, *Liverpool John Moores University* - LABORING FOR FREEDOM: BLACK AGENCY AND LABOR IN “CONTRABAND” CAMPS DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

KEYWORDS

SLAVERY, AFRICAN AMERICANS, NATIVE AMERICANS, CIVIL WAR, ANTEBELLUM

CONTESTED FREEDOM: REPRODUCTION, FAMILY, AND BODILY AUTONOMY IN U.S. HISTORY

Wednesday 02
11:00 - 12:30
AULA C

This panel explores the persistent conflict between freedom and constraint in reproduction, reproductive control, and family formation in the United States from the early twentieth century to the 2010s. Across diverse historical contexts, the definition of reproductive freedom and family has been continually contested, often revealing discriminatory undercurrents tied to race, class, gender, and ability. Panelists show how experts and activists set boundaries in unexpected ways and locations. What constituted constraint was sometimes in the beholder's eyes, and the panel explores how ideas of reproductive and family freedom could be at once co-opted and oppositional. In the early twentieth century, gynaecologists advanced medical theories that privileged the white, heteronormative family at the expense of general reproductive freedom. The preoccupation with promoting the fertility of white, middle-class women placed constraints on all women's ability to seek care for non-pregnancy-related health complaints. As the first paper analyzes, prioritization of fertility not only narrowed the research agenda but also served to enforce the racialized two-sex and gender binary. Decades later, during the turbulent 1960s and 1970s, the U.S. became the epicenter for a debate on population control. The push for birth control was framed, on one hand, as a tool for women's liberation. On the other hand, a powerful, utilitarian view—fueled by Malthusian and environmental fears—gained traction. Analyzing archival collections, the second paper investigates how the population control movement advocated for societal control, viewing individual liberties as secondary to the existential threat of overpopulation. The tension between freedom and constraint continued into the closing decades of the twentieth century within the queer families' movement. Facing legal vulnerability, LGBTQ+ activists pursued acceptance by adhering to US hegemonic norms—presenting themselves as devoted couples focused on intensive parenting. While activist efforts and popular culture (like *Modern Family*) generated inclusion for certain married queer households, this acceptance came at a cost. The third paper compares these representations to less popular, more diverse portrayals and concludes by asking if this quest for recognition is truly a form of freedom or a constraint—a subtle acquiescence to heteronormative standards that marginalizes the alternative tradition of the “chosen family.”

CHAIR

✦ Jonathan Bell, *University College London*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Emma Day, *University College London* - CONTESTING REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY GYNECOLOGY
- ✦ Bruno Walter Renato Toscano, *Università Ca' Foscari Venezia* - “WE MUST HAVE POPULATION CONTROL AT HOME”: FREEDOM AND COERCION IN THE U.S. (AND THE WORLD) POPULATION DEBATE (1960S-1970S)
- ✦ Kirsten Swinth, *Fordham University* - “LOVE MAKES A FAMILY”: FREEDOM AND CONSTRAINT IN QUEER FAMILIES' QUEST FOR INCLUSION
- ✦ Aleksandra Kuroś, *Uniwersytet Jagielloński* - FREEDOM FRAMED: THE SUPREME COURT AND THE CONTRACTION OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY IN CONTEMPORARY GENDER JURISPRUDENCE
- ✦ Silvia Guselli, *Università di Roma “La Sapienza”* - “YEAH, WELCOME TO AMERICA, LAND OF THE FREE”. “HOME OF THE SICK BASTARDS”: CHILD MARRIAGE AND THE PERILS OF UNRESTRAINED LIBERTY IN AMERICAN CULTURE.

KEYWORDS

REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM, HISTORY OF MEDICINE IN THE UNITED STATES, POPULATION CONTROL, QUEER FAMILIES, FREEDOM

PERFORMING FREEDOM IN SPACE FROM CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD TO CONTEMPORARY CINEMA

Wednesday 02
11:00 - 12:30
AULA D

The nature and ideology of the notion of freedom have been a constant preoccupation in the history of U.S. cinema from its beginnings in silent cinema through the periods of classical and New Hollywood to 21st-century films. The general desire to modernize social thinking was the backbone of the ideology promoted by Hollywood in the classical era, when a transnational concept of taste based on morally inoffensive, ideologically neutral messages revolved around wide concepts of democracy, tolerance, and freedom. In the following historical phases, specific genres, constructions of mise en scène, filmic space, and performing traditions have contributed to what we might describe as the stylistics of “American” freedom.

This panel offers a formal approach to the study of such a cinematic configuration, namely, the analysis of “performance in/of space”, that is, the way in which actors' performances and mise en scène combine to produce meanings in films. Pesce articulates a theoretical framework re-examining a long tradition of film analysis that treats human figures as inseparable from their environment, drawing on acting styles and the meanings attached to the star persona in contemporary Hollywood. *One Battle After Another* (2025) reveals how the interface between performance and mise-en-scène functions as a privileged vehicle for conveying stratified cultural conceptions of freedom. Deleyto crosses the Atlantic to explore how the close interconnection between performance and space speaks to national and transnational notions of freedom within present-day ideas of Europe in *Before Midnight* (2013). In this case, certain types of acting combine with the use of real locations to construct a filmic space that speaks, from a hybrid American-European perspective, to debates around the present and the future of the EU. Salvi examines the ambivalences of the nation's founding ideals, observing how Humphrey Bogart's performance in *Casablanca* (1942) constructs a concept of freedom for its turbulent times. While Bogart embodies the national ideology of individualism, Rick's Bar represents a cosmopolitan view that challenges the notion of unlimited freedom. The internal dynamics between space and character reveal how the film reverses the traditional treatment of the primacy of the individual over the environment.

CHAIR

✦ Michele Fadda, *Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Sara Pesce, *Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna* - ONE BATTLE AFTER ANOTHER. LAYERED ARTICULATIONS OF AMERICAN FREEDOM THROUGH SPACE AND PERFORMANCE.
- ✦ Celestino Deleyto, *Universidad de Zaragoza* - PERFORMING THE MEDITERRANEAN: THE ACTOR, THE LOOK, SPACE AND PLACE IN *BEFORE MIDNIGHT*
- ✦ Costanza Salvi, *Independent Researcher* - HUMPHREY BOGART AND RICK'S CAFÉ AMERICAIN: A PARADIGM TO READ AMERICAN FREEDOM IN *CASABLANCA* (MICHAEL CURTIZ 1942)
- ✦ Pablo Gómez Muñoz, *Universidad de Zaragoza* - TRAJECTORIES OF FREEDOM? THE INTERSECTION OF BODIES AND SPACES IN *VILLENEUVE'S DUNE* (2021) AND *DUNE: PART TWO* (2024)

KEYWORDS

SPACE, PERFORMANCE, FREEDOM, CONTEMPORARY CINEMA, CLASSICAL HOLLYWOOD

SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY? AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES AND THE (UN) MAKING OF THE GLOBAL ORDER

Wednesday 02
11:00 - 12:30
AULA 1

The panel investigates the international and transnational dimensions of U.S. political history and thought, tracing how debates over international projection and global power were articulated across different periods and at multiple levels of intellectual and political life. In particular, it examines how core concepts of American political vocabulary – “freedom,” “democracy,” and, following the First World War and the Wilsonian moment, “SELF-DETERMINATION” – were deployed and contested in relation to the colonial and semi-colonial world. Both imperial apologists and anti-imperialist activists engaged in these debates, in ways that resonate with Ian Tyrrell and Jay Sexton’s formulation of anti-imperialism in American history as, in many instances, the “empire’s twin.”

The panel addresses these issues by focusing on moments of global redefinition of power, such as the collapse of the Ottoman, Tsarist, and German empires after World War I, the anticolonial revolutions that swept much of the world in the second half of the twentieth century, and the conflicts of the Cold War era. These historical conjunctures highlight how the affirmation of U.S. imperial ambitions both capitalized on and responded to the decline or opposition of other world powers. Adopting varied chronological frameworks and scales of analysis, the papers examine how U.S.-based actors across distinct periods registered and responded to these epochal transformations. Government officials, political activists, philanthropic enterprises, and academic institutions alike bore witness to the making and unmaking of international order, grappling with its implications as they sought in different ways to shape, oppose, or justify new imbalances of power. In doing so, they often invoked the paradox of a world “safe for democracy” pursued through imperial means.

Through this focus, the panel sheds light on the material and ideological contradictions that shaped American political debate during the era of U.S. ascendance and consolidation on the world stage. Thus, it enriches our understanding of international and transnational history by showing how U.S. actors framed their ideas and strategies in global terms while remaining deeply rooted in national political traditions.

CHAIR

✦ Kate Dossett, *British Association for American Studies*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Emanuele Nidi, *Università di Napoli Federico II* - W.E.B. DU BOIS AND THE BLACK RECONSTRUCTION OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT
- ✦ Sarah Dunstan, *University of Glasgow* - “THE STATE OF AFRICA”: ANNA ARNOLD HEDGEMAN, PAULI MURRAY, AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF PANAFRICANISM.
- ✦ Oli Charbonneau, *University of Glasgow* - OWNERSHIP AND EVASION: RECOVERING EMPIRE AT THE MOHONK MOUNTAIN HOUSE
- ✦ Daniel Scroop, *University of Glasgow* - WILLIAM E. LEUCHTENBURG, HISTORY AS NATIONAL SYNTHESIS, AND THE TRANSNATIONAL PROJECTION OF US POWER

KEYWORDS

EMPIRE, INTERNATIONALISM, TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY, ANTICOLONIALISM, WORLD ORDER

“FREE FROM DEATH, FREE FROM EARTH”: POST-PLANETARY FREEDOM IN THE AGE OF TECHNOCAPITALIST AUTHORITARIANISM

Wednesday 02
11:00 - 12:30
AULA 2

The rise of technocapitalist authoritarianism in the North American context is marked by the promise of creating a technoliberal future in which humanity is “free from death, free from Earth, free from gravity [...] and free from international regulation” (Musk qtd. In Carruth, *Novel Ecologies*). This vision of freedom of cosmic proportions is quite obviously linked to Elon Musk’s and the entire “broligarchy’s” space venturing efforts and their promise that literally abandoning Earth allows humanity to transcend the category of the human, solve our anthropogenic polycrisis, pursue capitalism beyond terrestrial limitations, and even achieve immortality (cf. Ganser, cf. Rubenstein). The right-wing withdrawal from the idea of a jointly inhabited world (cf. Latour), which is in entangled in eugenics and capitalist feudalism, is not, however, only directed towards envisioning a future beyond our planet but is also aimed at systematically “freeing” humanity from its planetary embeddedness in the present (cf. Mühlhoff 90; cf. Temmen; cf. Ganser).

This panel explores how the notion of human futurity as “post-planetary” (cf. Tabas 64) is founded, as Musk himself elaborates in the abovementioned quote parodying Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms Speech” (ironically articulated in response to the rise of fascism in the Third Reich), on the unraveling of scientific standards and ethics (“free from gravity”), the authoritarian erosion of laws and regulations to unleash neoliberalism (“free from regulations”) and eugenical transhumanist visions of a digitalized humanity that transgresses biological boundaries (“free from death”) (cf. Rubenstein 4; Mühlhoff 89). Our panelists also ask pertinent questions about how to envision post-planetary otherwise i.e., in ways that reimagines planetary relations not through the lens of escape, abandonment, or simple expansion, but rather as renewed responsibility for our planetary entanglements in light of current challenges. Drawing on perspectives from cultural studies, ecocriticism, gender studies, post-colonial studies, and mobility studies, our panelists critically interrogate the reproduction and negotiation of as well as resistance to this POST-PLANETARY vision across science, literature, culture, and technology and how it relates to the messy discourse of “freedom” in the North American and specifically US context.

CHAIR

- ✦ Claire Cazajous-Augé, *Université Toulouse-Jean-Jaurès*
- ✦ Jens Temmen, *Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Maxine Broich, *Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt* - “HUMANS LEFT THEIR PLANET NOT AS ONE, BUT IN FRAGMENTS”: PLANETARY EXODUS AND THE MAKING OF HODGEPODGE HUMANITY IN BECKY CHAMBERS’ THE LONG WAY TO A SMALL, ANGRY PLANET.
- ✦ Brad Tabas, *ÉNSTA / Institute Polytechnique de Paris* - ON MAKING A VIOLENT AND REPULSIVE PLANET: MARS, ASTROCOLONIALISM, AND FRONTIER MYTH.
- ✦ Alexandra Ganser, *Universität Wien* - CONQUEST V. (POST-)PLANETARY CARE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ASTROFUTURISMS
- ✦ Judith Rauscher, *Universität zu Köln* - FEMALE FUTURITY AND THE PITFALLS OF ECOFASCIST POST-PLANETARITY IN THE WORK OF KATHERINE V. FORREST

KEYWORDS

TECHNOCAPITALISM, AUTHORITARIANISM, POST-PLANETARITY, SECOND SPACE AGE

ROADS TO FREEDOM? CONTROVERSIAL AUTOMOBILITIES IN AMERICAN MODERNISM

Wednesday 02
11:00 - 12:30
AULA 3

A highly idealistic rhetoric of freedom, doubled by visions of a better and brighter future, generally endorsed the arrival of the automobile at the dawn of the “American century.” Yet among all the technological innovations of modernity, the automobile was one that most significantly complicated pre-existent notions of freedom at the crossroads of different cultural discourses, mentalities, and ideologies. An alluring, yet by no means unproblematic promise of autonomy and renewal, this newly-gained form of freedom on the road was not free from hidden constraints, downsides, and biases casting a shadow over the “novel and thrilling experience” (Merriman: 2012) of automobility in the modern era.

By looking at American modernist literature, we trace such controversial aspects of automobility with regard to environmental issues, social equality, gender and racial identity. We argue that modernist American literature constituted a key venue for the discussion of problematic entanglements that still appear controversial today: Tensions between rapid technological development and environmental concern, but also questions of access, privilege, participation, democracy, and justice still fuel contemporary debates around automobility. Our panel points out that such persistent controversies are already present in the writings of canonic modernist writers (Sinclair Lewis, F. Scott Fitzgerald, W. C. Williams, William Faulkner), as well as in the works of more marginalized authors (Jessie Redmon Fauset, Wallace Thurman). We envisage literature about early automobility as a lens that allows us to address early twentieth-century implications of freedom in the relationship between: the environmental experience and the human body --- physical mobility and class expectations --- modern modes of vision and manifestations of desire --- consumerism and racial discrimination.

Our analysis will therefore show how modernist American literature both consolidated and critiqued visions of freedom inherent in mainstream discourses around early automobility.

CHAIR

✠ Pascal Ehrlich, *Universität Konstanz*

SPEAKERS

- ✠ Timo Müller, *Universität Konstanz* - FREE AIR? AUTOMOBILE AESTHETICS AND THE EXPOSED BODY IN THE MODERNIST NOVEL
- ✠ Frances Rowbottom, *Heriot-Watt University* - ASPIRATIONS OF AUTOMOBILITY IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S SOUTH
- ✠ Otilia Teodorescu-Stadler, *Universität Konstanz* - “IN PASSING WITH MY MIND”: AUTOMOBILITY AND DESIRE IN W. C. WILLIAMS' EARLY POETRY
 - ✠ Samson Thozar, *University of Manchester* - AUTOMOBILITY AND SOCIAL DIVISION IN THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

KEYWORDS

FREEDOM, AUTOMOBILITY, AMERICAN, MODERNISM, CONTROVERSIAL

EAAS WOMEN'S NETWORK MEETING

Wednesday 02
12:30 - 13:30

The mission of the EAAS Women's Network is to facilitate contact among EAAS members interested in subjects and issues dealing with women and gender. It seeks to enhance cooperation among European Americanists by establishing a network of scholars with common research interests. It also encourages collaboration on projects, and works towards organizing parallel lectures, workshops, panel discussions, roundtables, performances, exhibits, and keynote addresses at EAAS meetings, with the end goal of increasing the visibility of women and women's and gender issues.

This meeting serves to connect existing and new members of the Women's Network; update attendees on upcoming events and the Women's Network's activities over the past two years; and facilitate conversation on the needs and desires of EAAS members interested in women's and gender studies. Everyone is welcome!

Chairs

- ✠ Anna Kurowicka, *Uniwersytet Warszawski*
- ✠ Abigail Fagan, *Leibniz Universität Hannover*

Further Steering Committee Members

- ✠ Christelle Ha Soon-Lahaye, *University Rouen Normandie*
- ✠ Nina De Bettin Padolin, *Universität Graz*
- ✠ Laura de la Parra Fernández, *Universidad Complutense de Madrid*
- ✠ Anne-Marie Evans, *York St John University*

THE LIFE, LITERATURE AND LEGACY OF LUIS J. RODRÍGUEZ: IN THE LONG RUN

Wednesday 02
13:30 - 15:00
AUDITORIUM

This panel involves five contributors to the recently-published anthology, *The Life, Literature and Legacy of Luis J. Rodríguez: In the Long Run* (Edinburgh University Press, 2025), co-edited by Josephine Metcalf (Hull University) and Ben Olguín (University of California, Santa Barbara). This 250,000-word volume includes 37 essays, testimonial reflections, and verse by activists, scholars, academics, and artists from a dozen countries. As we write this panel abstract, Rodríguez himself has just turned 70, an author who has established himself as a prominent Latinx poet and memoirist, perhaps most well-known for *Always Running – La Vida Loca; Gang Days in LA* (1993), which was recently republished as a 30th anniversary edition. His literary merit and accolades are intertwined with his activist work: he is preoccupied with any form of marginalization and constantly seeks collective approaches to empowerment that has led him into prisons across the world and even into politics with two gubernatorial elections in California. Both Rodríguez's writings and his activism push for freedom from inequality, exploitation, poverty, police violence and discrimination. Just as bell hooks spoke about 'education as the practice of freedom', Rodríguez regularly speaks about the need for 'connected and imaginative teachers' who may be found in a range of locations beyond the traditional classroom. In more recent years, Rodríguez's work has taken him ever further down the Red Road, whereby his struggle for freedom has become embedded in his role as a scribe of the sacred spiral of life. Thus, these four papers seek to highlight the wide range of Rodríguez's activities, thinking in particular about his work in European contexts, his recently established archives, his foundations in Marxist politics, and his push for a new understanding of masculinity. In the conference papers across this panel, we explore a range of Rodríguez's life and work from his earliest years to the present, including his renowned writings as well as less-known activities.

CHAIR

✦ Nicholas McGuinn, *University of York*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Amanda Naylor, *University of York* & Nicholas McGuinn, *University of York* - TEACHING GLOBAL IMMIGRATION; LUIS J. RODRÍGUEZ, NEMACHTILLI (THE SPIRIT OF LEARNING) AND THE GERMAN SCHOOL CURRICULUM
- ✦ Josephine Metcalf, *University of Hull* - RE-ENCOUNTERING RODRÍGUEZ; IT CALLS YOU BACK AND DRAWS YOU IN—THE PERSONAL PAPERS OF LUIS J. RODRÍGUEZ
- ✦ Amaia Ibarraran-Bigalondo, *Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea* - BECOMING A 'NEW MAN'; EVOLVING NOTIONS OF CHICANO MASCULINITY IN LUIS J. RODRÍGUEZ'S THE REPUBLIC OF EAST LA

KEYWORDS

LUIS J RODRIGUEZ

FAMILY, FREEDOM AND CONSERVATISM

Wednesday 02
13:30 - 15:00
SALETTA SEMINARI

This panel investigates how “freedom” has been mobilized, contested, and redefined within contemporary American conservatism across political rhetoric, legal doctrine, gender ideology, and sexual politics. Rather than treating freedom as a stable or self-evident value, the contributions demonstrate how it functions as a deeply contested conceptual terrain through which struggles over family, authority, and social norms are articulated. Together, the papers trace how conservative thought has increasingly linked freedom to competing visions of moral order, from libertarian individualism to the defense of traditional gender hierarchies and religious liberty claims. The panel shows that contemporary conservatism constructs freedom not as a singular principle but as a field of competing claims—between individual autonomy and moral order, religious liberty and civil equality, sexual SELF-DETERMINATION and normative family structures. By placing political rhetoric, legal struggles, and feminist theory in dialogue, the contributions reveal how “freedom” has become a central yet unstable concept through which the boundaries of family, citizenship, and social legitimacy are continuously negotiated in the United States.

CHAIR

✦ Elisabetta Vezzosi, *Università di Trieste*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Alf Tomas Toennessen, *Universitetet i Agder* - THE REPUBLICAN PARTY AND RHETORIC OF FREEDOM
- ✦ Eglantine Zatout, *Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3* - TWO VISIONS OF FREEDOM ON FAMILY VALUES
- ✦ Christen Bryson, *Université Sorbonne-Nouvelle* - IN DEFENSE OF THE HOUSEWIFE: FROM FAMILY VALUES TO PARENTAL RIGHTS
- ✦ Zésar Arranz Conte, *Universidad de Zaragoza* - REVISITING THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM IN BARRY GOLDWATER'S 1964 CAMPAIGN: MORE LIBERTARIAN THAN CONSERVATIVE
- ✦ Joanna Szymaniak, *Uniwersytet Warszawski* - "YES. NO. MAYBE. I DON'T KNOW. CAN YOU REPEAT THE QUESTION?": RETHINKING AMERICAN NOTION OF SEXUAL FREEDOM IN THE POST-METOO THEORIES OF CONSENT

KEYWORDS

FAMILY, CONSERVATISM

VISIONS OF BLACK FREEDOM: BORDERS, ART, AND PRISON WALLS

Wednesday 02
13:30 - 15:00
AULA A

This panel explores how Black voices have revealed the persistent flawed design of the promise of freedom and equality by dominant ideologies, and have pushed back against the many borders drawn by U.S. systemic perceptions of containment. Instead, the nation's 'Visions of Freedom' are reappropriated by those excluded from it, criticised, and reconfigured. Ranging from enslavement and incarceration to artistic expression and heritage, the panel's four papers pave the way for an alternative which fundamentally challenges the systems that seek to immobilise, contain, or isolate Black life within racially charged cartographic, institutional, and cultural borders.

The first paper focuses on literary texts by and about Black women who sought freedom in the 19th century. It challenges conventional mappings of the journey North to 'freedom' against the static coordinates of the Underground Railroad, proposing instead a cartography that reconfigures fixed political borders. The second paper explores how Ted Joans's art and poetry further expose the colonial limitations of Eurocentric approaches, specifically in the representation of Black art in museums and collections. It discusses Joans's argument for alternative modes rooted in African traditions to be used in localising and preserving Black heritage. The panel then turns to the more overt borders - those of U.S. carceral systems, with a paper on Angela Davis and Assata Shakur's autobiographies. The paper positions the texts as seminal counter-narratives that informed critiques of systemic carcerality, especially within Black feminist abolitionist movements. Building on a conversation between Chester Himes and Walter Mosley's texts, the fourth paper formulates literary iterations of the Black U.S. convict and ex-convict; it examines further the delineation of spaces of freedom versus those of 'containment' against a racially charged and at times, absurd, backdrop of the U.S. carceral landscape.

Overall, this panel contributes to the wider conversation around 'Visions of Freedom' by proposing alternative configurations of its lines across borders, culture, and prison walls. By turning to art, poetry, narratives, fiction, and autobiographies, the panel demonstrates how Black voices have consistently reappropriated the meaning of American freedom, challenged its spatial understandings, and expanded it to include a pathway towards liberation.

CHAIR

✦ Bruno Walter Renato Toscano, *Università Ca' Foscari Venezia*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Nadine Barakat, *University of Edinburgh* - RECONFIGURING THE MAP: BLACK WOMEN'S NARRATIVES AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF FREEDOM-SEEKING
- ✦ Anna De Vivo, *University of Cambridge* - SPACE AND CONTAINMENT IN TED JOANS' ART COLLECTIONS.
- ✦ Arianna Parisi, *London School of Economics and Political Science* - ANTI-CARCERAL CRITIQUES IN ANGELA DAVIS'S AND ASSATA SHAKUR'S AUTOBIOGRAPHIES, 1974-1987
- ✦ Keith Hughes, *University of Edinburgh* - THE CONVICT/EX-CONVICT AS THE LOAD-BEARING SUBJECT IN SOME WORKS BY CHESTER HIMES AND WALTER MOSLEY

KEYWORDS

ABOLITION, BLACK GEOGRAPHIES, BLACK HERITAGE, BLACK FEMINISM, BLACK STUDIES

ALTERNATIVE FUTURES: VISIONS OF FREEDOM IN THE AMERICAN LEFT

Session 1

Wednesday 02
13:30 - 15:00
AULA B

This panel explores ideas of freedom among workers, trade unionists, radicals and intellectuals of the American Left (broadly conceived). What does it mean to be free? Is the United States delivering on its promise to be "the land of the free"? Answers to these questions animate our six presentations.

Our panel presents a multitude of themes and approaches, spanning labor history, history of political thought, cultural and intellectual history. Through this range of points of view, a problematized and shifting notion of freedom emerges.

Far from the shiny ideals of the Declaration of Independence, one of our case studies reveals "freedom" as synonymous with enslavement— a potent denunciation of the abysmal working conditions endured by some workers in the nineteenth century (Stanley). The lines between free and unfree labor also blur in another case study, which examines textile manufacturers sponsored by slaveholders in the 1850s (Sell). Notions of "freedom" likewise resonate through music and song, shaped by memory and resistance in the antifascist movement (Waldron), and can be traced through the long history of American radicalism, focusing on the Declaration of Independence and its legacy (Costaguta). The US Left features its own contradictory understandings of "freedom," with public services invoked without consideration for their cost (Giordano Drake). According to C.L.R. James, "freedom" is a "struggle for happiness" emerging in the everyday practices of workers, blacks and women against the social - racial and sexual - conditions imposed by the welfare state organized around the Fordist factory (Battistini).

In *Karl Marx in America* (University of Chicago Press, 2025), Andrew Hartman argues that "Marx gained purchase in American life because he offered a powerful theory of freedom— one that doubled as a map of an alternative American future." (7) Whether inspired by Marx or not, the imagination of an "alternative future" lies at the heart of the multitude of interpretations, critiques and explorations of "freedom" that our panel seeks to investigate.

CHAIR

✦ Lorenzo Costaguta, *University of Bristol*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Zachary Sell, *University of Notre Dame* - SLAVERY'S FACTORY: TEXTILE MANUFACTURING AND SLAVERY EXPANSION IN THE MIDWESTERN UNITED STATES
- ✦ Janine Giordano Drake, *Indiana University* - THE IMPLICIT MORAL PHILOSOPHY OF TAX REVOLTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN LEFT
- ✦ Matthew Stanley, *University of Arkansas* - "VOLUNTARY SLAVES": CONTRACT, COMPETITION, COERCION, AND THE MEANING OF "FREE LABOR" IN THE ILLINOIS COAL FIELDS

KEYWORDS

LEFT, FREE AND UNFREE LABOR, SLAVERY, POPULAR CULTURE, LABOR HISTORY

RELATIONAL SOVEREIGNTIES: INDIGENOUS (RE)VISIONS OF FREEDOM ACROSS LAND, BODY AND IMAGINATION

Session 1

Wednesday 02
13:30 - 15:00
AULA C

What does it mean to speak of freedom in a world founded on unfreedom? The conference theme—Visions of Freedom—invites reflection on how the very notion of liberty, which is central to U.S. nationhood, has been imagined, pursued, and betrayed. Modernity has conceived freedom as separation, as articulated in the autonomous subject, the sovereign state, or the unbounded frontier. This settler colonial logic is articulated through dispossession, enclosure, and extraction. Recognizing that the meanings and contradictions of liberty can only be understood through their entanglement with colonial history, this double panel intervenes in the debate from the perspective of Indigenous studies to foreground intellectual traditions that unsettle the conceptual foundations of freedom itself.

The panel brings together a group of Indigenous studies scholars—some established, others emerging—from a variety of European universities. Its main objective is to engage Indigenous creativity as a site of theoretical encounter and to argue that freedom can and should be reimagined through Indigenous philosophies of relation. The settler-colonial paradigm emphasizes autonomy, ownership, and mastery. Against this, the panel offers a redefinition of freedom as the capacity to sustain reciprocal and responsible relations with land, community, and the more-than-human world. This project centers on relational sovereignty, which encompasses Indigenous theories of freedom that conceive sovereignty as interdependence rather than control.

From a variety of approaches that include literary criticism, visual culture, cognitive studies, Indigenous philosophy, and decolonial theory, the papers examine how Indigenous writers and artists articulate these concepts through narrative, poetry, conceptual art, and life writing. Together, they offer new visions of freedom that reveal its historical exclusions while reimagining its ethical and ecological possibilities. The first session explores artistic, ecological, and affective redefinitions of freedoms. The second examines freedom as struggle within oppressive systems—religious, medical, psychological. Together, they suggest that relational sovereignty is not a metaphor but a framework for thinking freedom otherwise—as care, continuity and participation in shared worlds.

CHAIR

✦ Silvia Martínez-Falquina, *Universidad de Zaragoza*

SPEAKERS

✦ David Stirrup, *University of York* - PROTOCOL. PLAYERS ARE EXPECTED TO RESPECT THE INTEGRITY OF THE CIRCLE”: DECOLONIAL BOARD GAMES AND SOVEREIGN AESTHETICS IN BETH PIATOTE’S WINDIN!

✦ Aitana Monzon, *Universidad de Zaragoza* - LOVE MOVED STONES: VISUAL SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE MORE-THAN-HUMAN IN LOUISE ERDRICH’S IN/ACTIVE POETICS

✦ Elena Cortés Farrujia, *Universitat de Barcelona* - (LAND)ESCAPING “MANIFESTALGIA”: RE-INDIGENIZING IMAGINATION

✦ Silvia Martínez-Falquina, *Universidad de Zaragoza* - REIMAGINING FREEDOM: RESONANCE AND MINO-BIMAADIZIWIN IN MARCIE RENDON’S WHERE THEY LAST SAW HER

KEYWORDS

RELATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY, INDIGENOUS AESTHETICS, DECOLONIAL IMAGINATION, RECIPROCITY

CONSTRUCTING NARRATIVES OF FREEDOM: AMERICAN EXHIBITS AT HOME AND ABROAD IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Wednesday 02
13:30 - 15:00
AULA D

Exhibits not only provide a platform for further dialogue and transcultural exchange, but organisers also use them to peddle narratives. U.S. agents and institutions have long relied on exhibits to present what they understand as American norms, values and ideas to domestic and foreign audiences. Across the twentieth century, notions of freedom underpinned these displays. What the conception of this idea entailed, however, changed according to the location of exhibitions, the intended audience demographic, and geopolitical issues. In some cases, such as the New York and San Francisco expositions of 1939, U.S. government-affiliated exhibits presented a vision of democratic Pan-American freedom to combat Nazi German and Fascist Italian propaganda in the western hemisphere. In others, such as 1950s and early 1960s south-east Asia, Cold War concerns resulted in exhibits framing American military interventions against perceived Sino-Soviet territorial incursions as national security-driven attempt to preserve individual freedoms. In others still, like in Iran, curators framed freedom in purely economic terms to underline the benefits of American-led rural development projects.

This panel accordingly examines how U.S. diplomats, officials, and curators constructed and peddled ideas of freedom in exhibits. Focusing on cases in the United States, South-East Asia, and Iran, the papers illustrate the concept’s malleability, specifically how notions of freedom U.S. displays espoused shifted according to the setting. In so doing, the panel aims to (I) chart the development of how American policymakers conceived and presented concepts of freedom to publics at home and abroad; (II) highlight concurrent overarching themes across exhibits; and (III) reflect upon how audiences perceived or understood these articulations of freedom.

The papers proffer a new interpretation to the study of American exhibits and exhibitions. Whereas works usually focus on displays in isolation, this panel’s comparative reflections enable the highlighting and identification of hitherto overlooked overarching themes to domestic and foreign audiences. Works, moreover, have refrained from interrogating curatorial representations of freedom which underpinned many exhibits, with histories underlining how mid-twentieth century exhibits reflected, and exacerbated, technological developments and Cold War concerns.

CHAIR

✦ Gaetano Di Tommaso, *Roosevelt Institute for American Studies*

SPEAKERS

✦ James Fortuna, *Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen* - ¡SALUDOS AMIGOS! HEMISPHERIC SECURITY AND PAN-AMERICAN IDENTITY AT THE WORLD’S FAIRS OF 1939

✦ Emilia Sánchez González, *Université du Luxembourg* - EXHIBITING FREEDOM: U.S. CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND THE GLOBAL TOUR OF THE FAMILY OF MAN

✦ Darius Wainwright, *University of Bristol* - EXHIBITING FREEDOM? THE UNITED STATES INFORMATION SERVICE AND IRAN, 1953-68

KEYWORDS

EXHIBITS, CONCEPTS OF FREEDOM, TWENTIETH CENTURY

CONTESTED VISIONS OF AMERICAN FREEDOM IN THE CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION ERA

Wednesday 02
13:30 - 15:00
AULA 1

James McPherson titled his history of the American Civil War *Battle Cry of Freedom*. He chose the title from George Frederick Root's popular Civil War song of the same name. The song of course called Americans to "rally around the flag" and proclaimed: "The Union forever, hurrah! Boys, hurrah!" Yet, as Christian McWhorter noted, the song became popular and powerful because it linked the Union with ending slavery. Welcoming all "to our numbers" who were "loyal, true and brave" the song welcomed African Americans concluding "although he may be poor, he shall never be a slave." The song became so popular that the Confederate side adapted their own version calling to "rally 'round their Bonnie flag" with: "'To the tyrants never yield!' Shout, shout the battle cry of Freedom!" Historians like McPherson have long recognized the dissonance between US and Confederate definitions of freedom. Union victory, however, meant, as President Abraham Lincoln put it in the Gettysburg Address, "a new birth of freedom," expressed best perhaps in the War and Reconstruction constitutional amendments (13th, 14th and 15th) ending chattel slavery and proclaiming, "equal protection of the laws." This panel complicates the view of the Civil War as purely the triumph of freedom. The lines between freedom and slavery remained blurred, especially in how certain Americans envisioned this "new birth." Ideas of freedom, its extent and its limits, remained contested even as racial slavery collapsed. This panel does so by examining three groups of Americans deeply affected by the war and its aftermath; Confederate whites, African Americans, and immigrant Americans. For ex-Confederates, above all else, they still sought to preserve their control over the labor they had once owned, whatever ideological and legal defeats their racialised vision of freedom suffered. For African Americans legal freedom did not necessarily mean freedom to prosper as they sought to build new lives after slavery. And, for immigrant Americans, they had not necessarily become, as Christian Samito put it, "Americans under fire," during the Civil War. They too had to struggle with the new meanings of freedom for what it meant to be American.

CHAIR

✦ John Quist, *Shippensburg University*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Anders Bo Rasmussen, *Syddansk Universitet* - EMBATTLED MEANINGS OF FREEDOM AMONG IMMIGRANTS IN MISSOURI
- ✦ David Gleeson, *Northumbria University* - 'I SEE TODAY THE FIRST COTTON BLOOM IN CORNUCOPIA': PRESERVING SLAVERY IN THE ERA OF EMANCIPATION.
- ✦ Amy Murrell Taylor, *University of Kentucky* - ENVISIONING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FREEDOM AFTER THE U.S. CIVIL WAR

KEYWORDS

CIVIL WAR, RECONSTRUCTION, FREEDOM

FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM IN THE ANTHROPOCENE? ECOLOGY AND WARFARE IN CONTEMPORARY US CULTURE

Wednesday 02
13:30 - 15:00
AULA 2

This panel seeks to examine some of the interconnections between US imperial warfare – often waged in the name of freedom – and ecology through the lens of recent literary and cultural representations. The panel engages with the conference theme by revealing the sometimes conflicting discourses of freedom that emerge from the entanglements between war and ecology. It does so by focusing on what Elisabeth Anker has termed ugly freedoms, including freedom as legitimization for military action and freedom as climate destruction.

Apart from the environmental effects of armed conflict, the panel equally explores what Pierre Charbonnier has recently termed "war ecology," by which he means a constellation in which ecology itself has come to be used as a weapon. Drawing on ecocritical theory, the blue humanities, and critical military studies, the individual contributions cover topics ranging from biowarfare in recent pandemic fiction, water as a weapon of mass destruction, and the intricate interconnections between petroculture and the military.

CHAIR

✦ Katharina Gerund, *Universität Zürich*

COMMENTATOR

✦ Ingrid Gessner, *Pädagogische Hochschule Vorarlberg*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Katharina Gerund, *Universität Zürich* - FROM ARAMCO KID TO NAVY SPOUSE: PETROCULTURE AND MILITARY LIFE IN RACHEL STARNES' MEMOIR *THE WAR AT HOME* (2016)
- ✦ Frank Mehring, *Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen* - AQUATIC BATTLEFIELDS: WATER, WAR, AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGINATION
- ✦ Michael Boyden, *Université de Fribourg-Universität Freiburg* - "WE ARE GOING TO SAY THAT WE DID THIS TO OURSELVES." BIOWAR, VIRAL SOVEREIGNTY, AND PLANETARY HEALTH IN RECENT PANDEMIC FICTION

KEYWORDS

CRITICAL MILITARY STUDIES, ECOCRITICISM, BLUE HUMANITIES, WAR ECOLOGY, PANDEMIC IMAGINARIES

MOTHERING LIBERTY: MATERNAL VISIONS OF FREEDOM IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Session 1

Wednesday 02
13:30 - 15:00
AULA 3

In July 1848 a group of abolitionist and suffragist women led by Elizabeth Cady Staton met at Seneca Falls, New York, to elaborate and sign the groundbreaking document *Declaration of Sentiments*. Following the *Declaration of Independence* structure, the text starts with the self-evident truth “that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The resolutions derived from this claim for women’s rights and freedom in a “history of mankind” that, at that moment, was “the history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her,” created the foundational text for the future suffragist movement in the United States and the pursuit of women’s freedom in every social stratum. In her work *Of Woman Born* (1986), Adrienne Rich recuperates Elizabeth Cady Staton’s thoughts about “the burdens of mothering her sons” and motherhood (208) to discuss the need to liberate the idea of motherhood from its relationship to male ideology. The institution of motherhood controlled by both the patriarchal and colonialist systems has always deprived women of their freedom to experience and exercise mothering as a way to control not only the maternal thinking but especially the maternal body. Women’s freedom and its limitations have always been a fundamental topic in the construction of the maternal experience, the maternal space and consequently crucial for matrifocal narratives as it conditions women’s gender identity. Also, the maternal experience of freedom changes its literary representations when engaged in the context of other matrilineal or matricentric cultures such as Native American or many African American communities, among others, whose relational understandings of maternal freedom clash against those of colonialist/mainstream America. The intention of this panel is to discuss the maternal visions of freedom in American literature from an intersectional perspective since the 19th century until nowadays. Thus, this panel will study the evolution of motherhood and mothering experiences in literature in relation to women’s freedom and as a space in which gender, class, age and race issues change the perception and as a narrative and political space in which gender, class, age, ethnicity, and sexuality, significantly change our perception of the matrifocal experience.

CHAIR

✠ María Laura Arce Álvarez, *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid*

SPEAKERS

- ✠ Eulalia Piñero Gil, *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid* - KATE CHOPIN’S “DÉSIRÉE’S BABY” AND THE EXPERIENCE OF IMMIGRATION AND TRANSRACIAL MOTHERHOOD IN THE ANTEBELLUM AMERICAN SOUTH
- ✠ Ana Fernández-Caparrós, *Universitat de València* - VISIONS OF (LIMITED) FREEDOM: GROUNDED MOTHERS ON THE TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY AMERICAN STAGE
- ✠ María Laura Arce Álvarez, *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid* - RECOLONIZING THE MATERNAL BODY: MATRIFOCAI NARRATIVES OF EXCLUSION IN JOANNE RAMOS’ THE FARM

KEYWORDS

MATRIFOCAI NARRATIVES, MATERNAL STUDIES, FEMINIST AND QUEER THEORY, INTERSECTIONALITY

IMMERSIVE LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION: THE TREND PROJECT

Wednesday 02
15:30 - 17:00
AUDITORIUM

This session presents TRENd (Teaching Resilience and Environmental Democracy), an Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnership that develops immersive teaching approaches for higher education by combining Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), critical mapping, and virtual/extended reality (VR/XR). Bringing together partners from Europe and the United States, TRENd explores how these methods can strengthen environmental awareness, intercultural communication, democratic engagement, and resilience in a time of accelerating socio-ecological crisis and environmental misinformation.

The session examines how virtual exchange can foster transnational dialogue on sustainability challenges, how critical mapping can reveal power relations and contested environmental narratives, and how VR/XR can support place-based, experiential engagement with environmental change and community responses. It also reflects on curriculum design, assessment, accessibility and inclusion, ethics, and staff development. Operating primarily at a transatlantic level, TRENd offers a scalable model for integrating immersive learning into education for sustainable development by connecting pedagogy, technology, and civic agency.

SPEAKERS

- ✠ Angela Santese, *Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna*
- ✠ Dario Fazzi, *Universiteit Leiden*
- ✠ Gaetano Di Tommaso, *Roosevelt Institute for American Studies*



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Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or Stichting Nuffic. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. Project Number: 2025-1-NL01-KA220-HED-000355762

EAAS POETRY NETWORK MEETING

Wednesday 02
15:30 - 17:00
SALETTA SEMINARI

European Association of American Studies Poetry Network

The Poetry Network brings together academics and postgraduates from across Europe and further afield with the aim of deepening our readings, knowledge, and understanding of North American poetry. The network engages with work from Early American poets to the present day, from print cultures to digital contexts. In doing so, we seek to map and re-map significant and neglected legacies within literary history, thereby tracing new forms of inclusion. We understand our work to renew the vital role poetry plays in the study of North American culture, society, politics and aesthetics. At its core, the Poetry Network offers space for scholars across Europe to reflect more deeply on shared intellectual practices and our responsibility as educators.

We are committed to facilitating cross-institutional collaborations as they evolve. Since 2022, the group has been meeting on a monthly basis to close read poems and pursue collective idea exchange, which is carried to biennial meetings of the EAAS in the form of roundtables and panel discussions. As a result we also share our various pedagogies with the aim of negotiating best practices.

CHAIR

✠ Lucy Cheseldine, *University of York*

EAAS Poetry Network

STORIES OF UNFREEDOM: NEW APPROACHES TO THE AMERICAN SLAVE NARRATIVE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Wednesday 02
15:30 - 17:00
AULA A

How to study and teach the slave narrative—a genre central to American negotiations of freedom and unfreedom—at the nation’s semiquincentennial? This panel explores new approaches to the American slave narrative that honor foundational scholarship while insisting on the need for methodological, theoretical, and pedagogical innovation. John W. Blassingame’s pioneering work of recovery (*The Slave Community*; *Slave Testimony*) and Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s editorial and interpretive canon-building (*The Classic Slave Narratives*; *The Slave’s Narrative*) established indispensable premises: centering firsthand testimony, historicizing voice, and attending to rhetorical strategy. Twenty-first century scholarship is moving beyond these “classical” approaches by broadening the archive (including letters, court testimonies, WPA interviews, pension files, legal records, material traces), by examining the slave narrative within a literary ecology shaped by a variety of genres (essays, novels, novellas, poetry, and drama), by mapping it against new geographies (the American West or the Caribbean), and by placing it within the global context of slavery archives in European empires. Interdisciplinary insights (gender and sexuality studies, environmental and landscape history, media studies and book history, translation studies, the history of emotions, memory studies, legal history, Atlantic and hemispheric studies) as well as new methodological experiments (performance?attentive readings, digital mapping of circulation, reparative public pedagogy) provide the backdrop for the panel. The panel’s four papers discuss and extend these innovations. Paper 1 assesses the most recent developments in slave?narrative scholarship. Paper 2 offers an emotional history of nineteenth-century slave correspondences and freedom suits, recovering affective registers and juridical testimony often elided by canonical slave narratives. Paper 3 examines the role of slavery in contemporary comedy, tracing how comedic forms negotiate memory, and commodification in popular culture. Paper 4 explores pedagogies that teach the slave narrative alongside fiction and drama, and argues for innovative curricula that cultivate empathetic literacy and performance?based critique. Comments by Prof. Claire Parfait, co-editor of the French „Slave Narratives“ series, will bring together the various insights suggested by the papers and underline perspectives for the future.

CHAIR

- ✠ Marie-Jeanne Rossignol, *Université Paris-Cité*
- ✠ Hannah Spahn, *Freie Universität Berlin*

COMMENTATOR

- ✠ Claire Parfait, *Université Sorbonne-Paris-Nord*

SPEAKERS

- ✠ Michaël Roy, *Université Paris-Cité* - (RE)VISIONS OF THE SLAVE NARRATIVE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
- ✠ Laura Martin, *Université Toulouse-Jean-Jaurès* - REFRAMING LIBERTY: ENSLAVED WOMEN’S EMOTIONAL RESISTANCE IN THEIR CORRESPONDENCE
- ✠ Nele Sawallisch, *Universität Trier* - FROM “WASHINGTON’S DREAM TO “SLAVERY, WE’RE SORRY”: COMEDIC NEGOTIATIONS OF THE AMERICAN PARADOX
- ✠ Claire Bourhis-Mariotti, *Université Paris 8* - VOIX D’ESCLAVES/VOICE(S) OF THE ENSLAVED”: SLAVE NARRATIVES AS TOOLS FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH, PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION

KEYWORDS

SLAVE NARRATIVES, HISTORIOGRAPHY, EMOTIONS, COMEDY, PEDAGOGY

ALTERNATIVE FUTURES: VISIONS OF FREEDOM IN THE AMERICAN LEFT

Session 2

Wednesday 02
15:30 - 17:00
AULA B

This panel explores ideas of freedom among workers, trade unionists, radicals and intellectuals of the American Left (broadly conceived). What does it mean to be free? Is the United States delivering on its promise to be “the land of the free”? Answers to these questions animate our six presentations. Our panel presents a multitude of themes and approaches, spanning labor history, history of political thought, cultural and intellectual history. Through this range of points of view, a problematized and shifting notion of freedom emerges. Far from the shiny ideals of the Declaration of Independence, one of our case studies reveals “freedom” as synonymous with enslavement— a potent denunciation of the abysmal working conditions endured by some workers in the nineteenth century (Stanley). The lines between free and unfree labor also blur in another case study, which examines textile manufacturers sponsored by slaveholders in the 1850s (Sell). Notions of “freedom” likewise resonate through music and song, shaped by memory and resistance in the antifascist movement (Waldron), and can be traced through the long history of American radicalism, focusing on the Declaration of Independence and its legacy (Costaguta). The US Left features its own contradictory understandings of “freedom,” with public services invoked without consideration for their cost (Giordano Drake). According to C.L.R. James, “freedom” is a “struggle for happiness” emerging in the everyday practices of workers, blacks and women against the social – racial and sexual – conditions imposed by the welfare state organized around the Fordist factory (Battistini). In *Karl Marx in America* (University of Chicago Press, 2025), Andrew Hartman argues that “Marx gained purchase in American life because he offered a powerful theory of freedom— one that doubled as a map of an alternative American future.” Whether inspired by Marx or not, the imagination of an “alternative future” lies at the heart of the multitude of interpretations, critiques and explorations of “freedom” that our panel seeks to investigate.

CHAIR

✦ Janine Giordano Drake, *Indiana University*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Caroline Waldron, *University of Dayton* - FIGHT SONGS AND FREEDOM: MUSIC AND MEMORY OF ANTIFASCIST RESISTANCE IN THE MID-20TH CENTURY
- ✦ Matteo Battistini, *Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna* - FREEDOM DOES NOT EXIST: THE STRUGGLE FOR HAPPINESS IN THE AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT OF CLR JAMES
- ✦ Lorenzo Costaguta, *University of Bristol* - THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND THE AMERICAN LEFT, 1776-2026
 - ✦ Gül Varlı Karaarslan, *Başkent Üniversitesi* - ARCHIVING FREEDOM: THE PERFORMATIVE SELF AND GENDERED RESISTANCE ASSATA SHAKUR'S ASSATA: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

KEYWORDS

LEFT, FREE AND UNFREE LABOR, SLAVERY, POPULAR CULTURE, LABOR HISTORY

RELATIONAL SOVEREIGNTIES: INDIGENOUS (RE)VISIONS OF FREEDOM ACROSS LAND, BODY AND IMAGINATION

Session 2

Wednesday 02
15:30 - 17:00
AULA C

What does it mean to speak of freedom in a world founded on unfreedom? The conference theme—Visions of Freedom—invites reflection on how the very notion of liberty, which is central to U.S. nationhood, has been imagined, pursued and betrayed. Modernity has conceived freedom as separation, as articulated in the autonomous subject, the sovereign state, the unbounded frontier. This settler colonial logic is articulated through dispossession, enclosure and extraction. Recognizing that the meanings and contradictions of liberty can only be understood through their entanglement with colonial history, this double panel intervenes in the debate from the perspective of Indigenous studies to foreground intellectual traditions that unsettle the conceptual foundations of freedom itself. The panel brings together a group of Indigenous studies scholars—some established, others emerging—from a variety of European universities. Its main objective is to engage Indigenous creativity as a site of theoretical encounter and argue that freedom can and should be reimagined through Indigenous philosophies of relation. The settler-colonial paradigm emphasizes autonomy, ownership, and mastery. Against this, the panel offers a redefinition of freedom as the capacity to sustain reciprocal and responsible relations with land, community, and the more-than-human world. This project centers on relational sovereignty, which encompasses Indigenous theories of freedom that conceive sovereignty as interdependence rather than control. From a variety of approaches that include literary criticism, visual culture, cognitive studies, Indigenous philosophy and decolonial theory, the papers examine how Indigenous writers and artists articulate these concepts through narrative, poetry, conceptual art, and life writing. Together, they offer new visions of freedom that reveal its historical exclusions while reimagining its ethical and ecological possibilities. The first session explores artistic, ecological, and affective redefinitions of freedoms. The second examines freedom as struggle within oppressive systems—religious, medical, psychological. Together, they suggest that relational sovereignty is not a metaphor but a framework for thinking freedom otherwise—as care, continuity and participation in shared worlds.

CHAIR

✦ Silvia Martínez-Falquina, *Universidad de Zaragoza*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Deborah Madsen, *Université de Genève* - INDIGENOUS FREEDOM IN THE SHADOW OF US CHRISTIAN ZIONISM: WILLIAM APRESS AND THE “LOST TRIBES OF ISRAEL”
- ✦ Joanna Ziarkowska, *Uniwersytet Warszawski* - ASSIMILATING INDIANS: SIOUX SAN SUN, A TB SANATORIUM PAPER, AND THE TRADITION OF OFF-RESERVATION BOARDING SCHOOL PERIODICALS.
- ✦ Rosa Segarra Montero, *Universitat de València* - READING BODY DYSMORPHIC DISORDER: A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO COGNITIVE VULNERABILITY AND EMBODIED SIMULATION IN INDIGENOUS NON-FICTION
- ✦ Nicole Koenigsknecht, *Universität Zürich* - “FREEDOM FROM WHAT?”—RUPTURING COLONIAL CONTAINMENT IN/THROUGH NOOPIMING: THE CURE FOR WHITE LADIES

KEYWORDS

INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY, SETTLER COLONIALISM, DECOLONIAL IMAGINATION, RESISTANCE, RECIPROCITY

RECLAIMING FREEDOM BEYOND BORDERS: ETHNICITY, GENDER, AND ECONOMY IN ASIAN AMERICAN CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Wednesday 02
15:30 - 17:00
AULA D

Under EAAS 2026's "Visions of Freedom" umbrella, this panel interrogates how Asian American cultural production contests, redefines, and expands the meaning of "American freedom" by contesting the racial, gendered, and economic boundaries of American identity. We interrogate the myths of American liberty, often conceptualised as a universal, inherent right, and expose the structural and discursive forces that limit its reach. Moving beyond a simple diagnosis of exclusion, we examine how Asian American novels, poetry, film, and television reimagine freedom as a dynamic process of self-authorship, affective expression, and resistance within systems of racial capitalism and cultural hierarchy.

Paper 1 (Liu), examining Charles Yu's award-winning novel, *Interior Chinatown* (2020), argues that Yu uses a second-person, screenplay format to expose the racialised limits of Asian American representation and employs a narrative shift to model the reclamation of discursive agency. Paper 2 (Jin) traces the poetic liberation of Chinese American poet Shen Rui, exploring how American confessionalism and global influences empowered her to move beyond Confucian aesthetics and achieve the freedom to lyricise female experience. Paper 3 (Chang) compares *Chan is Missing* (1982) and *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) to show how Asian American film visualises fragmentation and multiplicity to reject a singular, static identity. Paper 4 (Liu), focusing on Chinese American novels and media cultural production, critically reflects on the precarious nature of meritocracy and Chinese Americanness manifested in the form of economic (un)freedom. These papers reveal how Asian American cultural productions confront imposed constraints through challenging the rigid, hierarchical gaze of Hollywood, asserting their own complexity against demands for homogeneity and conformity, forging new poetic modes unburdened by external tradition, or exposing the persistence of racialised constraint under capitalism. Through our multi-genre examination of freedom as a contested ethnic right, this panel foregrounds Asian American cultural production as a critical site for reimagining and expanding what it means to be free in the twenty-first-century United States.

CHAIR

✦ Ruth Maxey, *University of Nottingham*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Shuyue Liu, *University of Nottingham* - "MORE THAN KUNG FU GUY": CONTESTING THE RACIALISED LIMITS OF AMERICAN FREEDOM IN INTERIOR CHINATOWN
- ✦ Rose Chang, *Carnegie Mellon University* - THE (IN)VISIBLE AND FRAGMENTED ASIAN/AMERICAN IN CHAN IS MISSING AND EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT ONCE
- ✦ Gail Kehan Liu, *Temple University* - HE UNPROMISING ECONOMIC FREEDOM: (POST-) NEOLIBERALISMIN CONTEMPORARYCHINESE AMERICAN CULTURAL PRODUCTION
- ✦ Defne Tutan, *Başkent Üniversitesi* - FREEDOM FROM THE "ORIENTAL": CHINESE AMERICAN REPRESENTATIONS IN AMERICAN FILMS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

KEYWORDS

ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES, ASIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE, ASIAN AMERICAN FILM, REPRESENTATION, FREEDOM

BLACK SOLDIERS, VISIONS OF FREEDOM AND MEMORY IN WORLD WAR II

Wednesday 02
15:30 - 17:00
AULA 1

This panel brings together three scholars from three different countries to examine Black soldiers and their visions of freedom in World War II both on the home front and overseas. The three presentations combine various elements of the African American experience of the war, from the domestic struggles surrounding their contributions to the war effort, to the experiences of Black GIs abroad, to the significance of their memories in terms of the "long" civil rights movement. Dr. John A. Kirk (presenter #1 and panel CHAIR) looks at a clash between Black soldiers and white southern law enforcement and civilians in Arkansas in August 1941 as a lens through which to examine how various constituencies in the United States sought to reconcile the inherent contradictions and complications of mobilizing a Jim Crow army to fight a war for freedom and democracy. Dr. Christian O'Connell (presenter #2) dissects the relatively unknown symbolic ceremony of returning the ashes of Christopher Columbus to the Italian city of Genoa in 1945 by Black soldiers of the Ninety-Second Infantry Division. This event was representative of the various ways in which Black Americans experienced being in Italy during the war, and how their transnational experiences helped to shape certain visions and memories of freedom in the long term. Dr. Simona Tobia (presenter #3) focuses on Black soldiers who were taken as prisoners of war in World War II and their experiences of incarceration. Drawing upon extensive oral history interviews with Black veterans, Tobia demonstrates the impact of POW experiences on Black identity and collective memories of the war. Together, the papers offer multidimensional and kaleidoscopic insight into the experiences of Black soldiers in World War II, shaped by different approaches, methodologies and subject matter.

CHAIR

✦ John Kirk, *University of Arkansas at Little Rock*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ John Kirk, *University of Arkansas at Little Rock* - BLACK SOLDIERS AND THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM IN WORLD WAR II: THE 94TH ENGINEERS, THE NAACP, AND THE "ARKANSAS INCIDENT"
- ✦ Christian O'Connell, *University of Gloucestershire* - BRINGING COLUMBUS HOME: BUFFALO SOLDIERS AND ASPIRATIONS OF FREEDOM IN ITALY AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II
- ✦ Simona Tobia, *Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour (UPPA)* - "I WAS SCARED AS HELL, YOU KNOW...": AFRICAN AMERICAN POWS AND THE SHAPING AND RESHAPING OF WORLD WAR II MEMORIES OF INCARCERATION AND FREEDOM

KEYWORDS

FREEDOM, MEMORY, AFRICAN AMERICAN, CIVIL RIGHTS, WORLD WAR II

TRANSFORMATION AND MALFORMATION OF MOVEMENT IN AMERICAN OUTDOOR SPACES

Wednesday 02
15:30 - 17:00
AULA 2

Movement and mobility, literal and figurative, are a hallmark of the American mindset. Though the Constitution does not explicitly state movement as a fundamental right, freedom of movement between states has been upheld through several court cases over several decades. Attached to the idea of freedom of movement is freedom of assembly and of speech, all in the First Amendment. Expectations of being outdoors, whether in a city park, a national park, or one's own garden, is inherent in the idea of being American, bolstered in no small part by the creation of the National Park system, with its stated purpose to "provide enjoyment" of the space for "future generations" (U.S.C., title 16, sec. 1). By extrapolation, digital literary space is assumed to be open to all-comers: it is perhaps the ultimate space for freedoms of (metaphorical) movement and speech, given its potential fluidity for and theoretical inclusion of multiple creators and audiences. The National Endowment for the Humanities, certainly a site of potential funding for some literary artists, recently complied with an Executive order to "remove "support for . . . diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) initiatives and activities" (<https://www.neh.gov/executive-orders>). The policing- often quite literal- of movement and mobility, of who is invited into publishing spaces- of people of vulnerable communities is at an all-time high, from threats to academic and publishing freedoms, to people of color being detained by ICE agents, to Black people being threatened for tending their personal outdoor gardens. This panel consists of papers that explore what is at stake when we interrogate the tensions between these putative freedoms and the lived realities of members of vulnerable communities who enter into outdoor spaces, literal or figurative, including: the spaces of electronic literature, where we find an under-representation of African American authors; the idea of city parks as refuge and as social experiments in control of city inhabitants; the garden as refuge from and resistance to policing; and the garden as allegory for cultivation of fascistic control and violence that belies attempts to use garden spaces as sites of renewal.

CHAIR

✦ Katherine Lynes, *Union College*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Katherine Lynes, *Union College* - "A POLICEMAN HE WANTED ME / TO BEHAVE": GARDENS AND HOME IN BLACK ECOPOETICS
- ✦ Mauro Carassai, *California State University, Northridge* - PERMEABLE WALLS, EXCLUSIVE ZONES: RETHINKING DIGITAL LITERARY GEOGRAPHIES
- ✦ Renata Morresi, *Università di Padova* - THE NAZI IN THE GARDEN: FROM IDYLIC SPACE TO HETEROTOPIC VISION IN THE AMERICAN IMAGINATION
- ✦ Brando Francesco Bonsanti, *Università Roma Tre* - AN EXPLOITED LAND: ECOCRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DENISE GIARDINA'S STORMING HEAVEN AND THE UNQUIET EARTH

KEYWORDS

MOVEMENT, TRANSFORMATION, VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES, OUTDOORS

MOTHERING LIBERTY: MATERNAL VISIONS OF FREEDOM IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Session 2

Wednesday 02
15:30 - 17:00
AULA 3

In July 1848 a group of abolitionist and suffragist women led by Elizabeth Cady Staton met at Seneca Falls, New York, to elaborate and sign the groundbreaking document *Declaration of Sentiments*. Following the *Declaration of Independence* structure, the text starts with the self-evident truth "that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The resolutions derived from this claim for women's rights and freedom in a "history of mankind" that, at that moment, was "the history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her," created the foundational text for the future suffragist movement in the United States and the pursuit of women's freedom in every social stratum. In her work *Of Woman Born* (1986), Adrienne Rich recuperates Elizabeth Cady Staton's thoughts about "the burdens of mothering her sons" and motherhood (208) to discuss the need to liberate the idea of motherhood from its relationship to male ideology. The institution of motherhood controlled by both the patriarchal and colonialist systems has always deprived women of their freedom to experience and exercise mothering as a way to control not only the maternal thinking but especially the maternal body. Women's freedom and its limitations have always been a fundamental topic in the construction of the maternal experience, the maternal space and consequently crucial for matrifocal narratives as it conditions women's gender identity. Also, the maternal experience of freedom changes its literary representations when engaged in the context of other matrilineal or matricentric cultures such as Native American or many African American communities, among others, whose relational understandings of maternal freedom clash against those of colonialist/mainstream America. The intention of this panel is to discuss the maternal visions of freedom in American literature from an intersectional perspective since the 19th century until nowadays. Thus, this panel will study the evolution of motherhood and mothering experiences in literature in relation to women's freedom and as a space in which gender, class, age and race issues change the perception and as a narrative and political space in which gender, class, age, ethnicity, and sexuality, significantly change our perception of the matrifocal experience.

CHAIR

✦ Anna M. Brígido-Corachán, *Universitat de València*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Gala Arias Rubio, *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid* - 'WE WILL BE YOUR MOTHERS, YOUR SISTERS, YOUR DAUGHTERS.' MOTHERHOOD, SLAVERY AND LIBERATION IN FOUR WAYS TO FORGIVENESS (1995) BY URSULA K. LE GUIN
- ✦ Anna M. Brígido-Corachán, *Universitat de València* - POETS, WARRIORS, MOTHERS: FLUID BECOMING, EMBODIED SOVEREIGNTY, AND INTERGENERATIONAL HEALING IN CONTEMPORARY NATIVE AMERICAN POETRY
- ✦ Lucía Aréjula Muñoz, *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid* - THE QUEER MOTHERING VISION: DETRANSITION BABY AND ITS TESTING OF THE LIMITS OF FREEDOM
- ✦ Foteini Toliou, *Aristotéleio Panepistímio Thessaloníkīs* - SEXUAL FREEDOM AND AFFECTIVE CITIZENSHIP FOR JAMAICAN IMMIGRANT MOTHERS IN NEW YORK CITY IN NICOLE DENNIS-BENN'S NOVEL PATSY (2019)

KEYWORDS

MATRIFOCAI NARRATIVES, MATERNAL STUDIES, FEMINIST AND QUEER THEORY, INTERSECTIONALITY

FREEDOM, ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY

Thursday 03
09:00 - 10:30
AUDITORIUM

This panel interrogates how competing notions of freedom are negotiated at the intersection of environmental crisis, political economy, and more-than-human life. Across theological, literary, and ecological frameworks, the contributions collectively challenge dominant liberal and capitalist assumptions that equate freedom with human control, economic expansion, or individual choice, instead exploring relational, contested, and often paradoxical forms of liberation. Together, the papers propose that freedom in the Anthropocene cannot be understood apart from ecological interdependence and contested economic orders. Whether through theological dispute, hydrological entanglement, or fictional refusal, the panel rethinks freedom not as domination or withdrawal, but as a situated practice of responsibility within more-than-human worlds.

CHAIR

✦ Dario Fazzi, *Universiteit Leiden*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Melanie Gish, *Hochschule Heilbronn* - DOMINION VS. SERVANTHOOD: COMPETING EVANGELICAL VISIONS OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
- ✦ Anna Maria Karczewska, *Uniwersytet w Białymstoku* - FREEDOM AND RIVERS: COLONIAL CAPTURE AND ECOLOGICAL LIBERATION OF THE COLORADO RIVER

KEYWORDS

ENVIRONMENT, ECOLOGY

BOUND TO BE FREE? MARKET FREEDOM AND POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS AFTER THE NEOLIBERAL TURN

Thursday 03
09:00 - 10:30
SALETTA SEMINARI

In 2005, historian David Harvey titled the first chapter of his *A brief history of neoliberalism* with “Freedom’s just another word...” The reference, an incomplete lyric taken from Janis Joplin’s song *Me and Bobby McGee* actually reads “freedom’s just another word for nothing left to lose” and acts as an introduction for one of the concepts at the very core of neoliberal thought. The idea that individual freedom is guaranteed, almost embedded, in the freedom of the market is the centerpiece of the ideology that took over the United States and the world at large since the end of the 1970s.

Whether it be freedom from market constraints or from the excessive power of governmental institutions, whether brought forward by the liberalization of international markets or the adoption of a favorable rhetoric, neoliberal economic policies were frequently tied back to this core concept. The aim of this panel is to go back to the start of neoliberalism to further explore the connection between freedom and the economic policies that were implemented in the US, from the Reagan Administration to the present one.

Miriam Bettamin’s paper, centering on the Federal Reserve and the attempt to reform it in the early 80s, touches on the theme of central bank accountability and independence from other governmental institutions.

Moving forward to the late 80s and the G.H.W. Bush administration, the contribution from Alice Zamai explores how the US government handled a perceived threat to American economic freedom at the dawn of the global age.

Finally, Edward Knudsen’s contribution presents a comparative analysis of the different narratives on free trade and protectionism adopted by the various Presidential Administrations, from the 1980s to the present.

Overall, the panel will offer an unusual and diversified point of view on the age of ultimate US economic freedom. Moving past the beaten path of domestic deregulation, it will focus instead on how economic freedom translated and still translates to US economic institutions and to the country’s role as the global economic leader.

CHAIR

✦ Flavia Canestrini, *European University Institute*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Miriam Bettamin, *Università di Torino* - ACCOUNTABLE TO WHOM? FAILED ATTEMPTS TO REFORM THE FEDERAL RESERVE IN THE EARLY 1980S
- ✦ Alice Zamai, *European University Institute* - A FOREIGNER IN A FOREIGN MARKET. UNITED STATES’ PERCEPTIONS AND REACTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY’S SECOND BANKING DIRECTIVE (1988-1990)
- ✦ Edward Knudsen, *University of Oxford* - BOUND TO BE FREE? VISIONS OF CONSTRAINT AND LIBERTY IN US TRADE POLICY DEBATE, 1981-PRESENT

KEYWORDS

MARKET FREEDOM, NEOLIBERALISM, FREE TRADE, CENTRAL BANK INDIPENDENCE, 1980S

THE HAUNTING LEGACY OF TONI MORRISON: CELEBRATING BLACK FREEDOM AND THE ETHICS OF CARE AND RESISTANCE

Thursday 03
09:00 - 10:30
AULA A

In *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida introduces the notion of hauntology to describe a legacy or inheritance that is never settled and fully closed. This panel explores the legacy of Toni Morrison, not as something fixed or completed, but as a living presence that carries both responsibility and spectral force. Morrison's fiction has, undoubtedly, become crucial to understand the inner workings of both the complex and enduring legacy of plantation slavery and the counterdiscourse of freedom and hope that substantiates the resistance movement African Americans have led from the birth of the nation. Her powerful contributions to the rewriting of American official historiography effectively underline the perpetuation of racist, sexist and class-biased prejudice as engraved on black bodies, but also the possibility for empowerment and self-expression. We argue that American literature and culture remain haunted by Morrison, the first African American woman to challenge the literary canon and to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993. Nowadays, her multifaceted and rich legacy offers a much-needed ethics of care and resistance that continues to inspire younger generations of writers globally.

In Morrison's literary universe the discourse of freedom is intimately tied to notions of mobility and space which figure prominently in her novels, as she relentlessly reveals the multiple ways in which black bodies are denied the freedom to traverse or inhabit spaces, but also how African Americans have historically claimed their right to mobility and self-definition against systemic racialized surveillance in order to survive and thrive. Other related topics include the intersections of race, gender, and class, the appropriation and reinterpretation of the motif of the journey and wandering, the problematic relationship to home/homeland, the medicalization of race, and racialized neurodivergence and medical experimentation, among others. In the chosen novels Morrison heralds a celebration of the importance of African American collective efforts to resist dominant ideological tenets by proclaiming the validity of communal care and self-affirmation. And her legacy goes on.

CHAIR

- ✦ Ewa Barbara Luczak, Uniwersytet Warszawski
- ✦ Paola Nardi, Università di Genova

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Paola Anna Nardi, Università di Genova - SUBVERSION AND RESISTANCE: TONI MORRISON'S REINTERPRETATION OF THE AMERICAN ROAD JOURNEY TRADITION IN PARADISE
- ✦ Ewa Barbara Luczak, Uniwersytet Warszawski - WANDERING, NEURODIVERSITY AND RACIAL SURVEILLANCE: BETWEEN MORRISON'S SULA AND JUNOT DIAZ'S THE BRIEF WONDROUS LIFE OF OSCAR WAO
- ✦ Anna Ferrari, Università di Roma "La Sapienza" - BANNING TONI MORRISON: READING THE TRILOGY IN THE TRUMP ERA

KEYWORDS

LEGACY, TONI MORRISON, BLACK FREEDOM, ETHICS OF CARE AND RESISTANCE

VISIONS OF (UN)FREEDOM: AFRICANS, AMERICANS, AND THE FATE OF DEMOCRACY FROM THE AGE OF REVOLUTIONS TO THE GILDED AGE

Thursday 03
09:00 - 10:30
AULA B

Inspired by the American Revolution's rhetoric, free people of color struggled to make the United States into a "more perfect union" over its first century. These efforts threatened white male elites who created a nation "for the people" rather than one run "by the people". Although rooted in anti-monarchical, anti-colonial political ideology, what emerged over the course of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a politically corrupt system rooted in clientelism that undermined African Americans, and other minorities' quest for equality and first-class citizenship. In the South, the dominant political and economic élites developed an excluding idea of democracy. Yet, disenfranchised and oppressed people contested these anti-democratic tendencies, and, in so doing, pushed the boundaries of citizenship beyond the founders' limited imaginations.

To explore this history, our panel focuses on two competing visions of American freedom and (un)freedom that shaped nation-state development in the long 19th Century. On the one hand, it considers the oppressive structural tendencies that, since the Constitution of Philadelphia, were perpetuated by political élites both at national and local levels. On the other hand, it examines the way people of color repurposed this vision of freedom within a transnational perspective. Through a case study of Georgia planters' politics in the Gilded Age, one paper will consider the anti-democratic and patriarchal-paternalistic worldview of white élites that emerged within U.S. democratic administrations during the Long 19th Century. The other two papers will show how people of color reinterpreted American Revolutionary ideology to further their political ends and contested the oppressive structural tendencies of white political élites from the nation's founding through the Antebellum era.

By challenging the memorialization of the American Revolution as the brainchild of "brilliant" white "founding fathers," these papers explore the historical moments/movements that challenged the anti-democratic strand of the racist US political ideology and administrative practices, which perpetuated white supremacy.

CHAIR

- ✦ Claire Bourhis-Mariotti, Université Paris 8

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Ronald Angelo Johnson, Baylor University - THE ENTANGLEMENT OF RACE AND FREEDOM IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
- ✦ Ousmane Power-Greene, Clark University - "THE LOVE OF LIBERTY BROUGHT US HERE": RECONSIDERING LIBERIA'S INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT IN THE SHADOW OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
- ✦ Cristina Bon, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore - THE CONTROVERSIAL IDEA OF DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN HISTORY: GEORGIA PLANTERS' POLITICS IN THE GILDED AGE

KEYWORDS

AFRICANS, AFRICAN-AMERICANS, HAITI, LIBERIA, DEMOCRACY

FREEDOM TO BE ME: STRUGGLES WITH STEREOTYPES, DISSENT, AND CELEBRATION OF DIFFERENCE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN WRITING

Thursday 03
09:00 - 10:30
AULA C

The meaning of freedom plays a major role in both community's and person's self-identification and development as it involves basic aspects of relationship with self, group, community, and more generally, nation, and humankind. Since its beginnings, American literature has been concerned with self-definition, the complexities of national identity, cultural diversity, power dynamics, and racial and social inequality. The papers will explore how some of these issues are addressed in contemporary American writing analyzing the changes that have taken places in the artistic, ethical and aesthetical approaches over recent decades and examining the proscriptive norms established by the dominant group versus minority groups and various forms of dissent challenging the ethos of equality of the American Dream. Like their predecessors, contemporary authors celebrate difference, plurality, and heterogeneity defying the animosities of the past and emphasizing the connection between various phenomena that underlie human experience. The books under discussion show the importance of self-knowledge for self-empowerment of both a group and a person, which is inherently linked to the freedom of thought as well as the freedom of expression. Commenting on individualism as one of the American values, the writers discuss it in terms of individualism vs. community that is often based on conformity to the existing social structure and show how the system tries to suppress the voices of dissent.

CHAIR

✦ Yuri Stulov, *Independent Researcher*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Natalia Vysotska, *Kyivskyi natsionalnyi linhvistychnyi universytet* - "AGAINST THE SEA OF TROUBLE": BLACK HAMLET'S QUEST FOR INNER FREEDOM IN JAMES IJAMES' PLAY FAT HAM
- ✦ Yuri Stulov, *Independent Researcher* - E.L.DOCTOROW'S NOVEL "THE BOOK OF DANIEL".AS A REFLECTION ON US POLITICAL TURMOIL OF THE 1940S-1970S
- ✦ Irina Kudriavtseva, *Biellaruski dziaŕžaŭny ũniviersitet zamieŕnych moŭ* - POLYPHONY OF VOICES AND CELEBRATION OF DIFFERENCE IN FLASH FICTION AMERICA: 73 VERY SHORT STORIES
- ✦ Olga Nesmelova, *Kazanskii federalnyi Suniversitet* & Zhanna Konovalova, *Kazanskii federalnyi Suniversitet* - RETHINKING THE AMERICAN DREAM AND FREEDOM IN AMERICAN LITERARY NONFICTION IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY

KEYWORDS

FREEDOM, RACE, INEQUALITY, DISSENT, THE AMERICAN DREAM

NATIVE AMERICAN MIGRATIONS: FREE AND COERCED

Thursday 03
09:00 - 10:30
AULA D

"It's a free country," is often used to describe the United States of America, but free for whom? Freedoms, some currently under attack, have long been debated in a country built upon the backs of enslaved and Indigenous peoples. Indeed, what does freedom mean for Native American peoples, the original inhabitants of the North American continent, under United States colonialism? As distinct political entities, Native Americans were considered citizens of their nations, later clarified by Chief Justice Marshall as "domestic dependent nations," but not of the United States, and ineligible for the rights and privileges bestowed upon citizens until Congress forced citizenship upon them with the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act. Freedom is even more contentious when one considers the long history of forced and involuntary migrations, separations from families, incarceration, internment on reservations, and government programs (relocation). But Native peoples, like others, also moved voluntarily. Migration and movement, free and coerced, provide a lens to demonstrate how colonialism structured the movement of Indigenous peoples and vice versa. From fleeing village sites to avoid massacres, to forced removals, to runaway students deserting federal custody, and voluntary relocations for economic, environmental, cultural, and leisurely pursuits, Native peoples have always and continue to deploy movement as strategies of survival and resistance.

This panel investigates three migrations to illustrate the themes of agency, resistance, and survival of Native peoples in what is today the United States. In chronological order, Kabl Wilkinson (Citizen Potawatomi Nation) uses the lesser-known Northern Removals to trace the erosion of the social, cultural, and political organization of Potawatomi communities. Benjamin Madley writes about Cherokee miners in the California Gold Rush. They were migrants twice over. US Removal Policy pushed most Cherokee people from the Southeastern United States to new homes in Arkansas and Oklahoma. When news of California gold reached Arkansas and Oklahoma, many Cherokees undertook a second overland odyssey. Preston McBride will present on a lesser-known, but perhaps the largest, forced migration in Native American history, ushering upwards of 250,000 students away from their families and communities to schools designed to destroy their cultures and communities.

CHAIR

✦ Paul Rosier, *Villanova University*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Kabl Wilkerson, *Harvard University* - FROM IRA TO IRA: INDIAN REMOVAL AND INDIAN REORGANIZATION AS IMPERIAL CALL AND RESPONSE
- ✦ Benjamin Madley, *University of California, Los Angeles* - "WHAT A STRUGGLE FOR GOLD!": CHEROKEES IN THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH, 1848-1860
- ✦ Preston McBride, *Pomona College* - "FAMILY SEPARATIONS: NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN IN THE UNITED STATES' INDIAN BOARDING SCHOOL SYSTEM"

KEYWORDS

NATIVE AMERICAN, MIGRATION, FORCED REMOVAL, BOARDING SCHOOL, GOLD RUSH

MEDIATED FREEDOMS

Session 1

Thursday 03
09:00 - 10:30
AULA 1

The two panels proposed in this document, united under the overarching theme of “Freedom, Communication, Media,” form part of the EAAS Digital Studies Network. Since the dawn of the twenty-first century, America’s image—both within and beyond its borders—has been shaped through an ever-expanding array of media channels. This development marks not only the transition to real-time media coverage of critical events but also the emergence of a digitally mediated reality. Such a transition recalls Manuel Castells’s seminal study *The Rise of the Network Society*, which examines the construction of a global reality “oriented towards technological development, that is toward the accumulation of knowledge and towards higher levels of complexity in information processing” (17). Immersed in a twenty-first century world attuned to information channeled and filtered through media networks, we can observe a gradual shift toward mediated forms of human agency, as well as new modes of conceptualizing and articulating freedom. This shift inevitably influences the ways in which democracy is practiced in a reality governed by distributed and ubiquitous media power. It underscores the centrality of digital studies as a critical field for analyzing the complex interplay between technological infrastructures, media ecologies, and cultural practices, and for interrogating how these dynamics reshape power relations, modes of communication, and democratic engagement in the digital age.

The proposed panels aim to explore: the various manifestations of individual and collective media-induced in promoting and articulating human rights as an expression of freedom --- the impact of media and social platforms on public activism --- the role of digitized archives in visualizing past literary and historical struggles for freedom --- the communication of current socio-cultural and political issues through literary, cultural, digital, and artistic production --- the risks and paradoxes of media-driven manifestations of freedom and digitally distributed democracy --- the intersections of human subjectivity, memory, and digital media --- creative freedom in media representations, including how narrative forms and genres engage with technological, cultural, and social imaginaries.

CHAIR

- ✦ Stefan Leonhard Brandt, *Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz*
- ✦ Frank Mehring, *Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello, *Salem State University* - “DIGITAL NATIVES, DIGITAL ARCHIVES AND JUSTICE AFTER 250 YEARS: FROM HASHTAGS TO AGENTS OF CHANGE”
- ✦ Rachel Moore, *The Current* - “‘IT OFTEN RHYMES’: ART CONVERSATIONS WITH US HISTORY”
- ✦ Tatiani Rapatzikou, *Aristotéleio Panepistímio Thessalonikís* - “‘DIGITAL NEGOTIATIONS OF FREEDOM: SAMANTHA GORMAN AND DANNY CANNIZZARO’S PRY (2014)’”
- ✦ Vasileios Delioglani, *Aristotéleio Panepistímio Thessalonikís* - “DATA RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS”: DIGITAL DEMOCRACY, FREEDOM, AND DATA POLITICS IN AMERICAN SPECULATIVE FICTION AND CONTEMPORARY MEDIA
- ✦ Oscar Winberg, *Turun yliopisto* - UNFAIR AND IMBALANCED: BROADCASTERS, BALANCE, AND THE BATTLES OVER CBS NEWS IN THE 1970S

KEYWORDS

DIGITAL ARCHIVES, E-LIT, SURVEILLANCE, DATA RIGHTS, ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY, INTERACTIVE FICTION EMPOWERMENT, SOLIDARITY DISCOURSE, ART AND US HISTORY

FREEDOM OF CHOICE? AMERICAN CHILDREN’S CONSUMER CULTURE AND THE CONTRADICTIONS OF LIBERTY

Thursday 03
09:00 - 10:30
AULA 2

This panel approaches children’s media and material culture through the interdisciplinary lens of American Studies, interrogating how “freedom” operates as both an ideological construct and a market logic in late capitalist culture. Across four case studies—from MTV-inspired cartoons and LEGO’s marketing, to post-Communist consumer culture and Disney’s multicultural branding—the papers explore how toys and media promise limitless possibility while implicitly constraining children’s identities and worldviews. Together, they examine how the rhetoric of freedom can function as a mechanism of consumer socialization, making participation in capitalism feel synonymous with autonomy itself.

The panel begins by considering how the deregulation of American children’s television in the 1980s fused entertainment and advertising. MTV-inspired children’s programming blurred boundaries between cultural participation and consumer identity. Children learned that individuality could be performed through commodities available at the local mall, with freedom reframed as the ability to buy and display licensed merchandise and subcultural brands. LEGO’s evolving marketing campaigns across the same decades extend this logic, revealing how the company’s invitation to “build anything” came to rest on gender segmentation and consumer targeting.

The analysis then moves transnationally, showing how American ideals of creative freedom circulated abroad. In post-Communist Romania, the influx of Western toys, pop music, and global branding reframed liberty as consumption, teaching a generation of youth that belonging in the modern world depended on purchasing power. Finally, Disney’s twenty-first-century celebration of Latinx identity packages cultural pride and familial resilience within corporate narratives that commodify diversity for global audiences.

Viewed together, these papers illuminate how the American language of freedom—rooted in SELF-DETERMINATION and opportunity—has been transformed into a consumer ideology shaping both domestic and transnational childhoods. By reading toys and media as cultural texts, the panel reveals freedom itself as a branded ideal: one that invites participation while reaffirming the hierarchies of gender, class, and geography.

CHAIR

- ✦ Laura Wilson, *University of St Andrews*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Stevie Berberick, *Washington & Jefferson College* - STRANGE PLAYMATES: CHILDREN’S CARTOONS, MTV, AND SUBCULTURAL SELF-EXPRESSION AT THE MALL
- ✦ Rebecca C. Hains, *Salem State University* - TOYING WITH GENDER: BRAND EVOLUTION IN LEGO’S MARKETING AND CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF PLAY
- ✦ Vlad Sirbu, *University of California, Riverside* - THE WESTERN TEMPEST: FROM PLAYGROUND TO THE PASSPORT OFFICE
- ✦ Emily Aguilo-Perez, *West Chester University* - LATINIFAD: BRANDING LATINIDAD AND THE ILLUSION OF CHOICE IN DISNEY’S CHILDREN’S MEDIA

KEYWORDS

CHILDREN’S CULTURE, POPULAR CULTURE, CONSUMER CULTURE, IDEOLOGY, IDENTITY

SOUTHERN WOMEN WRITERS AND EMANCIPATION STRATEGIES

Thursday 03
09:00 - 10:30
AULA 3

Critics of Southern literature generally agree on there being three major periods when classifying it—the Antebellum period, the Renaissance and the Post-Renaissance—but calling for simplification, it is often the Old v. New South dichotomy that is retained. In its early days, Southern fiction focused mainly on space, the region's flora and fauna; then, defenders of the Southern way of life took center stage before more moderate writing about the South's "mystery and manners" started to emerge and is still strong nowadays. The theme of this year's EAAS conference, "1776—2026: Visions of Freedom" could have led Southern Studies scholars to explore the journey of enslaved people from bondage to freedom but we decided that focusing more specifically on women's emancipatory strategies would enable us to reflect upon other, lesser-known voices that have often been silenced. Riché Richardson's 2021 Emancipation's Daughters: Reimagining Black Femininity and the National Body provides a useful framework to reflect upon African American responses to emancipation up to now, while Patricia Yaeger's 1988 monograph, Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing, offers a stimulating theoretical starting point to discuss the ways writers depict women's experiences. Contributors will explore early or more recent examples of such strategies, delving into works by a variety of writers in order to see how things have changed in the transition between the Old and the New South.

CHAIR

- ✦ Hana Ulmanova, *Univerzita Karlova*
- ✦ Gerald Preher, *Université d'Artois*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Emma Harlet, *Université Bordeaux Montaigne / University of Louisiana at Lafayette* - BAYOUS AND RIVERS: WOMEN, WATER, AND LIMINALITY IN LOUISIANA LITERATURE
- ✦ Hana Ulmanova, *Univerzita Karlova* - BEYOND THE DICHOTOMIES: RE-READING KATE CHOPIN'S "THE STORM"
- ✦ Clara Juncker, *Syddansk Universitet* - RICE AND RECONSTRUCTION: EMANCIPATION STRATEGIES IN ELIZABETH W. ALLSTON PRINGLE'S A WOMAN RICE PLANTER (1914)
- ✦ Marcel Arbeit, *Metropolitní univerzita Praha* - MARTHA LACY HALL: A FEMINIST AGAINST HER OWN WILL

KEYWORDS

EMANCIPATION, WOMEN WRITERS, GENDER, FEMINISM

ACADEMIC MOTHERING/ PARENTING ROUND TABLE

Thursday 03
11:00 - 12:30
AUDITORIUM

The ambiguity of this round table's title, "mothering/parenting," reflects the ambivalent perception of parenting within academia as well as the uncomfortable position of mothering within feminist scholarship. As a patriarchal institution, academia generally casts those who occupy its lecture halls, classrooms, and offices as separate from the nurturing roles of parenthood. Mothering is frequently conflated with feminism's larger debate about motherhood's role within the patriarchy, as such the experience of mothering is often neglected, sidelined, and discounted within feminist discussions. The Women's Network is interested in opening up a dialogue about how motherhood matters, how the reproductive work women and people with uteruses do affects them as they engage in professional work. The participants will be approaching "parenting/mothering" from two perspectives: first, the ways in which we engage in mentoring and nurturing in our academic work and second, the ways in which our lives as parents/mothers affect our work as researchers, professors, and intellectuals.

CHAIR

- ✦ Christen Bryson, *Université Sorbonne-Nouvelle*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Fulvia Sarnelli, *Università di Napoli "L'Orientale"*
- ✦ Abigail Fagan, *Leibniz Universität Hannover*
- ✦ Izabella Kimak, *Uniwersytet Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej*,

KEYWORDS

MOTHERING, MOTHERHOOD, WORK-LIFE BALANCE, PATRIARCHY, WORKPLACE

EAAS WOMEN'S NETWORK

AMERICAN STUDIES, PRESENT AND FUTURE: VISIONS FROM EUROPEAN JOURNAL EDITORS

Thursday 03
11:00 - 12:30
SALETTA SEMINARI

This panel brings together editors from American Studies journals in France, Italy, Turkey and the UK to consider the state of the field in Europe. What are the challenges faced by and opportunities for European scholars of the United States in the present moment, and how are these being articulated in our field's journals?

The second Trump administration has brought with it chilling attacks on academic freedom and academic institutions in the United States, including, but not limited to, the limiting and revoking of visas for international students, calls for universities to discipline or terminate the contracts of staff who are critical of the administration, and cuts to the funding of institutions who refuse to comply with its demands. It is, of course, too simplistic to frame Europe as a bastion of scholarly freedom, in contrast to an increasingly authoritarian United States: many European institutions and scholars also find themselves facing challenges of declining student enrolments, economic constraints, and the hostile rhetoric and actions of the populist right. Nevertheless, it is a timely moment to consider whether there are certain strands within or versions of the project of American Studies that are more possible in Europe – as a result of particular intellectual traditions and forms of training, trans-national and comparative perspectives, conceptions of academic community and labour, and critical and physical distance from the United States itself.

The editors on this panel represent journals that are both grounded in particular national academic traditions, and committed to fostering conversation and community across scholars and students in Europe. Their talks will consider how their publications speak to the state of the field in American Studies. They will also address the ways in which the intellectual priorities, histories, and structures of their journals shape the visions of and for American Studies that are articulated within them. Looking towards the future, how can European journals – individually and as a group – preserve and grow themselves as a space for the critical interrogation of the histories, cultures, and politics of the United States, for scholars in Europe and in the rest of the world?

CHAIR

✦ Katie McGettigan, Royal Holloway - University of London

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Nisa Harika Güzel Köşker, Ankara Üniversitesi - AMERICAN STUDIES IN TURKEY AND THE JOURNAL OF AMERICAN STUDIES OF TURKEY (JAST)
- ✦ Monica Manolescu, Université de Strasbourg - TRANSATLANTICA: FRENCH PERSPECTIVES ON AMERICAN STUDIES
- ✦ Marco Petrelli, Università di Pisa - JAM IT! (JOURNAL OF AMERICAN STUDIES IN ITALY): STANDARDS, IMPROVISATION, AND THE EDITORIAL COMMONS
- ✦ Will Norman, University of Kent - THE TEMPORALITIES OF AMERICAN STUDIES PUBLISHING AND SCHOLARSHIP

KEYWORDS

AMERICAN STUDIES, PUBLISHING, STATE OF THE FIELD, TRANSNATIONAL, JOURNAL EDITING

CREATIVE INSURGENCIES: REIMAGINING FREEDOM FROM BELOW IN LATINX LITERATURE AND ART

Thursday 03
11:00 - 12:30
AULA A

This panel explores evolving conceptions of freedom in U.S. literature and art, foregrounding Latinx writers and artists who reimagine liberty not as a state-sanctioned right, but as a bottom-up, micropolitical practice rooted in collective survival, care, and resistance. Rather than invoking institutionalized liberal individualism or the mythic promise of American freedom—once symbolized by the Statue of Liberty and Emma Lazarus's "The New Colossus"—these works confront the exclusions and violences that fracture that ideal. In the face of racialized policing, deportation regimes, and authoritarian resurgence the artists and authors featured here reclaim freedom from below: as a lived, relational, and insurgent force. Each contribution in this panel resists fixed categories and embraces formal experimentation as a strategy of liberation. Genre hybridity becomes a tool for unbinding dominant narratives and enacting freedom through aesthetic rupture and political intervention. These works displace abstract, universalist notions of liberty with situated, embodied practices that emerge from the margins through care, solidarity, and creative reconstitution. Set in a post-apocalyptic time, Amalia L. Ortiz's *The Canción Cannibal Cabaret and Other Songs* (2019) fuses protest song and speculative narrative into a decolonial manifesto, staging freedom as insurgent and performative—a praxis of survival and resurgence that rises from the ruins of neoliberalism and patriarchy. Tanya Aguiñiga's *Metabolizing the Border* (2020) transforms the U.S.–Mexico border from a site of exclusion into a space of ethical encounter. Through participatory performance, Aguiñiga enacts gestures of conviviality and co-creation, proposing freedom as an affective, embodied practice that resists the logic of division. ire'ne lara silva's "Flesh to Bone" and "Hibiscus Tacos" (2021) deploy the fantastic to transmute violence into healing, asserting that freedom is forged through relational care and the reimagining of broken bodies and communities. Giannina Braschi's *Putinoika* (2024) blends epic drama, satire, and multilingual poetics to dismantle colonial entanglements and envision existential unbinding. Written during the Trump era, Braschi's work challenges readers to conceive of freedom as creative resistance—linguistic, political, and radically imaginative. Together, these works articulate freedom not as a static entitlement, but as a dynamic, insurgent process of unmaking and remaking—of borders, bodies, and languages. Rejecting the constraints of genre and the exclusions of the democratic ideal, in their hands, freedom becomes a verb: a micropolitical act of resistance, transformation, and radical care that insists on renewal from below.

CHAIR

✦ Esther Álvarez-López, Universidá d'Uviéu

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Esther Álvarez-López, Universidá d'Uviéu - INSURGENT AESTHETICS: PERFORMING FREEDOM AND DECOLONIAL IMAGINATION IN AMALIA ORTIZ'S PUNK ROCK OPERA
- ✦ Cristina Garrigós, Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia - THE LIBERATION OF WIRES: CREATIVE RESISTANCE, POWER, AND FREEDOM IN GIANNINA BRASCHI'S PUTINOIKA
- ✦ Maria Antonia Oliver, Universitat Pompeu Fabra - DEATH, HEALING, AND LIBERTY IN IRE'NE LARA SILVA'S 'FLESH TO BONE' AND 'HIBISCUS TACOS'
- ✦ Beatrice Colina, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia - ARTICULATING FREEDOM: SPEECH AND SUBJECTIVITY IN GLORIA ANZALDÚA'S BORDERLANDS THEORY

KEYWORDS

LATINX LITERATURE AND ART, FREEDOM FROM BELOW, AESTHETIC RUPTURE, CREATIVE RECONSTITUTION, RESISTANCE

THE REVOLUTION OF 1917 AND AMERICAN FREEDOM

Thursday 03
11:00 - 12:30
AULA B

This panel examines how the Russian Revolution of 1917 reshaped American debates about freedom, democracy, and political legitimacy throughout the twentieth century. Rather than treating “freedom” as a stable ideological category, the contributions explore its continual redefinition across journalism, political rhetoric, and transatlantic intellectual exchange, revealing how competing models of liberal and revolutionary liberty emerged in response to war, inequality, and global political upheaval. The panel argues that the Revolution of 1917 functioned not only as a geopolitical rupture but also as a lasting epistemological challenge to American self-understandings of freedom. Across journalism, political discourse, and diasporic intellectual exchange, “freedom” emerges as a contested and unstable concept, continually reshaped through encounters with Soviet ideology and its global reception.

CHAIR

✦ Federico Chiaricati, *Università di Trieste*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Sara Prieto, *Universidad de Alicante* - REIMAGINING FREEDOM: AMERICAN JOURNALISTS AND THE SOVIET REVOLUTION OF 1917
- ✦ Loredana Bercuci-Murariu, *Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara* - “A WONDERLAND”: THE REPRESENTATION OF THE USSR IN THE ALICE CHILDRESS PAPERS
- ✦ Pavla Veselá, *Univerzita Karlova* - REVOLUTION IN EXILE

KEYWORDS

1917, RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

FREEDOM OF SPEECH ACROSS (POST) DIGITAL SPACES AND CONTEMPORARY US NARRATIVES

Thursday 03
11:00 - 12:30
AULA C

Digital spaces take up a consistent part of our contemporary everyday life. The pervasiveness of the digital is so prominent that scholars define it as “banal” (Dinnen 2018) or delineate it within the “post-digital” to highlight practices characterized by ontological hybridity (Jordan 2021). It is on social media and other digital platforms that events are discussed, opinions are exchanged, and storytelling has bloomed. These digital practices often trigger self-reflexive debates about what can/should be said online and what shouldn’t/couldn’t. Particularly in the United States, public discourse such as the debate around the so-called “woke” culture has kindled on social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter) and has been examined in contemporary literary texts.

This panel looks at how contemporary US narratives have been interrogating the limits and the affordances of digital platforms with regards to freedom of speech and on how these limits circle back into the texts’ formal choices. Exploring novels, short stories, digital platforms, and comics, the papers in this panel ask: how does literature stage the ethical tensions raised by catfishing and, more generally, lying online? What formal literary strategies are employed to convey freedom of speech online in recent literary productions? Within a social media landscape that “does not simply entail ‘post-truthfulness’” but the erosion of “the relevance of an authentic source while the distinction between the original and alteration is simultaneously being blurred” (Roine 2024, 113), how do contemporary US narratives test their own limits and offer new ways to express authenticity? How does post-postmodernist US fiction mirror the new signposts of fictionality online and what does this say about the state of the First Amendment?

CHAIR

✦ Simona Adinolfi, *JLU Giessen*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Simona Adinolfi, *JLU Giessen*
- ✦ Virginia Pignagnoli, *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*
- ✦ Andrea Pitozzi, *Università di Bergamo*

KEYWORDS

FREEDOM OF SPEECH, FREEDOM AND DIGITAL MEDIA, (POST)DIGITAL FICTION, CONTEMPORARY U.S. NARRATIVES

UNEXPECTED BATTLES FOR LIBERTY: THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOMS DURING WARTIME

Thursday 03
11:00 - 12:30
AULA D

Writers about America often wish to find struggles for freedom that lead steadily toward a better, freer time. But in reality, struggles for freedom are rarely so simply. Instead, freedom was negotiated, contested, won, lost, given, and taken away. One group winning new rights might mean someone else losing some form of freedom or privilege. Nowhere is this more apparent than during wartime. This panel examines the various and unexpected ways that wartime struggles shaped freedom in American history. W. Fitzhugh Brundage will discuss how Civil War prisoners of war and the fight over who deserved the title (and rights) of prisoner of war reshaped Americans understanding of Citizenship. Laura Sandy will look at how overseers (some free and some enslaved) negotiated loyalty and various “visions of freedom” during the American Revolution. Shae Smith Cox will demonstrate how African American soldiers and veterans used badges, flags, and uniforms to empowered them as they assert their right to various freedoms during and in the aftermath of war. Catherine Clinton will detail how women of various races understood freedom during the Civil War. Individually examining how freedom was approached by prisoners of war, African American Soldiers, overseers of slavery, and women are themselves interesting. Bringing them together and putting them in conversation shows that freedom was rarely as simply as having it or not. With four papers from leading scholars of the American South each examining how freedom and war interplay leads to a wide range of potential approaches to studying history. It promises to be an amazing panel that touch on a variety of topics requested by organizers including militarism, slavery, women, gender and the commemoration of freedom.

CHAIR

✦ Elijah Gaddis, *Auburn University*

COMMENTER

✦ Adam Domby, *Auburn University*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ William Fitzhugh Brundage, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* - PRISONERS FOR FREEDOM: CAPTIVITY AND RETALIATION IN THE CIVIL WAR
- ✦ Laura Sandy, *University of Liverpool* - OVERSEERS OF SLAVERY AND A “PREDATORY WAR”: FREEDOM, CONFLICT, AND DIVIDED LOYALTIES DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
- ✦ Shae Smith Cox, *Texas A&M University* - “AN EMBLEM OF LIBERTY”: THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS AND VETERANS
- ✦ Catherine Clinton, *University of Texas in San Antonio / Queen's University Belfast* - REVOLUTIONS IN BLACK AND WHITE: WOMEN AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

KEYWORDS

FREEDOM, AMERICA, CIVIL WAR, REVOLUTION

MEDIATED FREEDOMS

Session 2

Thursday 03
11:00 - 12:30
AULA 1

The two panels proposed in this document, united under the overarching theme of “Freedom, Communication, Media,” form part of the EAAS Digital Studies Network. Since the dawn of the twenty-first century, America’s image—both within and beyond its borders—has been shaped through an ever-expanding array of media channels. This development marks not only the transition to real-time media coverage of critical events but also the emergence of a digitally mediated reality. Such a transition recalls Manuel Castells’s seminal study *The Rise of the Network Society*, which examines the construction of a global reality “oriented towards technological development, that is toward the accumulation of knowledge and towards higher levels of complexity in information processing” (17). Immersed in a twenty-first century world attuned to information channeled and filtered through media networks, we can observe a gradual shift toward mediated forms of human agency, as well as new modes of conceptualizing and articulating freedom. This shift inevitably influences the ways in which democracy is practiced in a reality governed by distributed and ubiquitous media power. It underscores the centrality of digital studies as a critical field for analyzing the complex interplay between technological infrastructures, media ecologies, and cultural practices, and for interrogating how these dynamics reshape power relations, modes of communication, and democratic engagement in the digital age. The proposed panels aim to explore: the various manifestations of individual and collective media-induced in promoting and articulating human rights as an expression of freedom --- the impact of media and social platforms on public activism --- the role of digitized archives in visualizing past literary and historical struggles for freedom --- the communication of current socio-cultural and political issues through literary, cultural, digital, and artistic production --- the risks and paradoxes of media-driven manifestations of freedom and digitally distributed democracy --- the intersections of human subjectivity, memory, and digital media --- creative freedom in media representations, including how narrative forms and genres engage with technological, cultural, and social imaginaries.

CHAIR

- ✦ Tatiani Rapatzikou, *Aristotéleio Panepistímio Thessaloníkīs*
- ✦ Frank Mehring, *Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Maria Giannouli, *Aristotéleio Panepistímio Thessaloníkīs* - DATAFIED LIVES AND SOCIAL SCORING: INTERMEDIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF SURVEILLANCE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CULTURE
- ✦ Thomas van Gaalen, *Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen* - CORPUS ANALYSIS FROM BELOW? CHARTING SOLIDARITY DISCOURSE IN THE INTERWAR CARIBBEAN
- ✦ Gaetano Di Tommaso, *Roosevelt Institute for American Studies* - EXPANDING ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY THROUGH VIRTUAL EXCHANGES: FREEDOMS, FRAMEWORKS, AND FUTURES IN TRANSNATIONAL DIGITAL EDUCATION
- ✦ Evgenia Kleidona, *Aristotéleio Panepistímio Thessaloníkīs* - RESISTING NORMS, EMPOWERING SELVES THROUGH DIGITAL MEDIA: HOW TWINE GAVE VOICE TO QUEER EXPERIENCE
- ✦ Mats Carlsson, *Stockholms universitet* - FREEDOM, MEDIA, COMMUNICATION: IMAGE AND VIDEO PROVENANCE IN THE AGE OF GENERATIVE AI

KEYWORDS

DIGITAL ARCHIVES, E-LIT, SURVEILLANCE, DATA RIGHTS, ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY, INTERACTIVE FICTION EMPOWERMENT, SOLIDARITY DISCOURSE, ART AND US HISTORY

VEGAN READINGS, US FREEDOMS: CHATTEL, CATTLE, CAPITAL

Thursday 03
11:00 - 12:30
AULA 2

The EAAS 2026 CFP quotes Angela Davis's question about freedom in America: "How do we imagine a democracy that does not thrive on ... racism, that does not thrive on homophobia, that is not based on the rights of capitalist corporations to plunder the world's economic and social and physical environments?" As a practicing vegan, Davis elsewhere connects the quotidian act of eating, and mindless unawareness of the suffering that brings meat to the table, to the entire capitalist industrial system of production that must be challenged in favor of respect for the freedoms of all sentient beings. This panel draws on the etymological commonalities of "capital," "chattel," and "cattle" that stem from the Latin caput (head), and evoke the derivation of wealth and property from the commodified lives of other-than-human beings. By decentering "the human," vegan readings challenge dominant discourses of freedom, proposing that until all beings are free then no beings are truly free. Critical Vegan Studies is a transversal intervention that draws on Critical Race Theory and cuts across recent developments such as the "Animal Turn," the "Affective Turn," Green Humanities, Sustainability Studies, Critical Plant Studies, and Human-Animal Studies. Vegan Studies has much to offer the discipline of American Studies, involving as it does the same emphasis on rights – and the freedoms brought by the exercise of those rights – that characterize the foundational documents of US national formation. Benjamin Franklin's decision to adopt a radical vegetarian diet harmonized individual freedom of choice with emergent US national values of self-reliance, frugality, temperance, alongside patriotism, and civic engagement. These values rely on a discourse of human rights and the freedom to exercise those rights that intersects with a long history of ethical vegan activism. In this (double) panel we explore the importance of rights and freedoms as a legacy of the foundational ideals of the US Republic through vegan readings of a range of historical and contemporary cultural engagements with these questions. Presenters explore the borders of freedom in a society that normalizes the exploitation of the other-than-human, probing the ethics of personal freedoms to choose in such contexts as plantation enslavement and industrial meat production, and questioning the ultimate possibility of American freedom in the physical and discursive environments of stolen and colonized lives.

CHAIR

✦ Deborah Madsen, *Université de Genève*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Deborah Madsen, *Université de Genève* - SEEDING THE US REPUBLIC: VEGANISM, FREEDOMS, AND US NATIONAL CHARACTER
- ✦ Sune Borkfelt, *Aarhus Universitet* - "TO MAKE MANKIND INTO SAUSAGES": HUMAN FREEDOM AND MEATY TEXTS IN THE VEGAN LENS
- ✦ Yağmur Su Kolsal, *Universität Münster* - CAVEMEN AND FLEXITARIANS: RHETORICAL USES OF FREEDOM IN SUSTAINABILITY DISCOURSES, CONSERVATIVE REFUSAL AND ETHICAL VEGANISM
- ✦ Aïcha Bouchelaghem, *Université de Genève* - [M]Y MAMA'S FLESH IS SOFT AS PIG STOMACH": VEGAN PROJECTIONS OF FREEDOM IN JESMYN WARD'S LET US DESCEND
 - ✦ Burak Sezer, *Technische Universität Dortmund* - THE PLAGUE OF CATTLE: A VEGAN READING OF JOHN EDGAR WIDEMAN'S THE CATTLE KILLING
 - ✦ Ho'esta Mo'e'hahne, *University of California, Los Angeles* - "INFINITY THAT REACHES TO THE STARS": INDIGENOUS COSMOLOGIES, PLANT PEOPLES, AND RELATIONAL WORLDING

KEYWORDS

CRITICAL VEGAN STUDIES, FREEDOMS, SPECIESISM, LITERATURE, RACE

VAEMPIRE: ANTI-COLONIALIST RHETORIC IN THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

Thursday 03
11:00 - 12:30
AULA 3

Our panel seeks to explore, in diverse ways and through multimedial material, the concept of "vaempire"—a neologism put forth to depict the pernicious, exploitative and culturally mutating influence exerted upon a native culture by the encroaching colonizer one. Although the image of the vampire has been used extensively in the past in the context of postcolonial identity articulation, especially in readings of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* or in Latin American "postcolonial gothic," it has primarily been established as a reflection of colonialist fears about the possibility of "reverse colonization" and contamination through matriculation on the part of the colonized Other, or as an appropriation of the concept by the colonized for purposes of subversion and resistance (as, for example, in Christina Artenie's 2015 *Dracula Invades England* or the 2012 collection *Transnational and Postcolonial Vampires* edited by Tabish Khair and Johan Höglund). "Vaempire" seeks to reverse this reversal back to its source, articulating a colonizer image that can be used as a weapon in the native struggle for freedom, both physical and cultural. The infectious, unassimilable and parasitic nature of the vampire reflects both the danger of (cultural) erosion and irreversible mutation as well as the seductive element in the process of incorporation of the native nation/group into a larger, more powerful, supposedly "civilized" imperial culture, a dual gesture well exemplified by the hard- and soft-power politics of the USA. Once conceptualized thus, the colonized can claim both legitimation and means to overthrow this vampiric dominion, yet simultaneously be mindful of the caveat (implicit in both gothic and postcolonial thinking) that the return to a situation of former "purity" is impossible, and one must learn to live with the (cultural) bite-marks and the experience of horror—the pinnacle of which may be having to appropriate the vaempire's means to end the vaempire. The papers comprising the panel explore manifestations of the vaempire in U.S. culture, in terms of both its global relations and its internal domestic clashes, as these are encoded for public consumption in a variety of popular culture texts, namely comics, film, and fiction. Although there is a teen fantasy fiction novel series by Thomas Winship bearing the same title (and possibly a Vaempire.com board game by Uazzo Perpetual Games), this was not known to us at the time of the inception of the term, which ran a parallel and unrelated course.

CHAIR

✦ Christina Dokou, *Ethnikó kai Kapodistriakó Panepistímio Athinón*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Christina Dokou, *Ethnikó kai Kapodistriakó Panepistímio Athinón* - MORE THAN ONE WAYS TO SKIN A...VAEMPIRE: EMILY CARROLL'S WHEN I ARRIVED AT THE CASTLE
- ✦ Katie Googe, *Purdue University* - VAMPIRISM ALONG THE COLOR LINE: P. DJÈLÍ CLARK'S RING SHOUT AND THE JIM CROW VAMPIRE
- ✦ Tomáš Pospíšil, *Masarykova univerzita* - RESISTING THE VAEMPIRE: BLACK MUSIC, COLONIAL POWER, AND CULTURAL SURVIVAL IN RYAN COOGLER'S SINNERS
- ✦ Maria Vara, *Anōtātī Scholī Kalón Technón* - GOTHIC AESTHETICS AND THE FALL OF THE VAEMPIRE IN THE HUNGER (1983)

KEYWORDS

VAMPIRE, EMPIRE, COLONIALISM/IMPERIALISM, (GRAPHIC) LITERATURE, FILM

DEFENDING ACADEMIC FREEDOM: TRANSATLANTIC PERSPECTIVES ON AMERICAN STUDIES

Thursday 03
13:30 - 15:00
AUDITORIUM

Hosted by Andrea Carosso, President of AISNA, this roundtable brings together Alex Lubin, outgoing President of the ASA, and Ingrid Gessner, President of the EAAS. The session examines mounting challenges to academic freedom and their impact on transatlantic collaboration in American Studies. More broadly, the panel reflects on how we “do” American Studies at a time when the very notion of freedom is under attack, both within and beyond the United States.

CHAIR

✦ Andrea Carosso, *Università di Torino*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Alex Lubin, *American Studies Association*
- ✦ Ingrid Gessner, *Pädagogische Hochschule Vorarlberg*

KEYWORDS

ACADEMIC FREEDOM; TRANSATLANTIC COLLABORATION; HIGHER EDUCATION; DEMOCRACY; SCHOLARLY NETWORKS; PUBLIC HUMANITIES

EAAS

MINOR REVOLUTIONS: VIET THANH NGUYEN AND THE UNMAKING OF AMERICAN FREEDOM

Thursday 03
13:30 - 15:00
SALETTA SEMINARI

Through a hybrid voice that fuses criticism and storytelling, Vietnamese American writer and scholar Viet Thanh Nguyen rethinks “freedom” from the vantage point of the refugee, exposing how U.S. myths of liberty rest on racialised borders, heroic self-making, imperial histories and selective memory. In the *Harvard Norton Lectures*, collected as *To Save and to Destroy* (2024), Nguyen develops this vision by theorizing “writing as an other” and “being minor” as ethical and creative acts of resistance.

Taking these lectures as our point of departure, we argue that Nguyen embraces refugee subjectivity as a transformative position from which to reimagine freedom—not as a possession of rights within the nation-state, but as a relational, hybrid, and contested practice emerging from histories of violence and border crossing. His figure of the minor—“unimportant, casually dismissed, [...], vulnerable to danger, in need of protection” (Nguyen 73)—is crucial to unravel the “linear optimism of American myth-making” (64). In conversation with Wendy Brown’s account of neoliberal reason (where “liberty and equality are recalibrated from political to economic” and “freedom talk” masks market logics that sort migrants’ rights (42)), Judith Shklar’s “liberalism of fear” (freedom as protection from abuse and intimidation (21)), and Eric Foner’s analysis of freedom as a contested and exclusionary ideal (14), we read Nguyen’s fiction, memoir, and essays to show how contemporary democracies manufacture unfreedom while proclaiming liberty. Drawing on postcolonial and diaspora studies, memory and trauma studies, and American studies on liberty and its exclusions, we will address four questions: 1) How does hybridity enable a more inclusive, pluralistic vision of freedom? --- 2) What forms of freedom emerge when personal and collective memories confront hegemonic war narratives? --- 3) How does Nguyen critique heroic immigrant narratives and imagine freedom beyond state borders? --- 4) How do Nguyen’s formal innovations—hybrid genres, nonlinear structures, surrealism—constitute a mode of freedom? In sum, we ground a literary account of how Nguyen’s representation of transnational trauma and border crossing generate new, ethically charged visions of freedom and how his “minor” stance makes those visions thinkable.

CHAIR

✦ Cristina Pivodori, *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ David Owen, *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* - DRIVERS, DETOURS, AND DETONATIONS: UNFREEDOM AND MASCULINITY IN “SOMEONE ELSE BESIDES YOU” (THE REFUGEES, 2017)
- ✦ Nicholas Spengler, *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* - SYMPATHY FOR “NOTHING”: DOUBLENES AND FREEDOM IN VIET THANH NGUYEN’S THE SYMPATHIZER (2015)
- ✦ Cristina Pivodori, *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* - GHOSTS OF FREEDOM: JUST MEMORY IN VIET THANH NGUYEN’S “BLACK-EYED WOMAN” (THE REFUGEES, 2017)
- ✦ Andrew Monnickendam, *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* - BEYOND AMERICAN MEMORIES: VIET THU NGUYEN, BAO NINH, AND DONG THU HUONG

KEYWORDS

FREEDOM AND UNFREEDOM, REFUGEE SUBJECTIVITY, POSTMEMORY AND TRAUMA, HYBRIDITY AND MINOR LITERATURE, AMERICAN MYTH AND NEOLIBERALISM

DISCOURSES OF FREEDOM: HISTORY-MAKING SPEECHES, ESSAYS, AND MANIFESTOS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Thursday 03
13:30 - 15:00
AULA A

This panel investigates how speeches, discourses, and oratorical interventions have shaped, challenged, and redefined narratives of freedom in the United States and beyond. It examines the rhetorical and literary strategies employed by three prominent intellectual figures whose work has significantly questioned and expanded the meaning of freedom in American history.

By engaging with thinkers whose work spans over two centuries, the panel underscores how freedom has always been a contested terrain—both politically and rhetorically—and how its status as an empty signifier requires continuous political and discursive resignification. International panelists will explore the evolving relationship between rhetoric, resistance, and national identity: from Douglass's reimagining of American ideals, to Allen's theorization of Black oratorical authority, to the introduction of Malcolm X's political philosophy on Italian radio in 1968 as a catalyst for postcolonial, Marxist internationalism.

Ultimately, the panel invites reflection on how literary forms of public address contribute to civic life and democratic transformation—and how historical voices continue to echo in contemporary struggles for equity and liberation.

CHAIR

- ✦ Maria Cristina Iuli, *Università del Piemonte Orientale "Amedeo Avogadro"*
- ✦ Maria Giulia Fabi, *Università di Ferrara*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ John Ernest, *University of Delaware* - IMPOSSIBLE ORATORY: WILLIAM G. ALLEN AND THE CONDITIONS OF ELOQUENCE
- ✦ Barbara Foley, *Rutgers University-Newark* - FREDERICK DOUGLASS AND THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION: THEN AND NOW
- ✦ Maria Cristina Iuli, *Università del Piemonte Orientale "Amedeo Avogadro"* - FREEDOM WAVES: MALCOLM X IN ITALIAN MEDIA, 1960-1990
- ✦ Suzanne Enzerink, *Universität St.Gallen* - DEBATING CONSPIRACIES: W.E.B DU BOIS AGAINST THE GLOBAL TIDE OF RACIAL PSEUDOSCIENCE

KEYWORDS

WILLIAM ALLEN; FREDRICK DOUGLASS; MALCOLM X; RHETORIC; FREEDOM

PAST AND PRESENT BOUNDARIES OF PRISON

Thursday 03
13:30 - 15:00
AULA B

This panel examines how prisons are constituted not only through walls and legal frameworks, but through shifting spatial, temporal, ecological, and ideological boundaries that extend far beyond the carceral site itself. Bringing together historical, contemporary, and theoretical perspectives, the panel interrogates how imprisonment operates as a flexible system of control while also generating forms of resistance, political imagination, and abolitionist thought. Taken together, the panel argues that prison boundaries are never fixed: they are ecological, spatial, political, and imaginative. From protected wetlands repurposed as detention sites, to the forced mobility of incarcerated activists, to abolitionist redefinitions of freedom itself, the contributions collectively demonstrate how carcerality operates across scales and how it is continuously contested through law, activism, and radical thought.

CHAIR

Matteo Pretelli, *Università di Napoli "L'Orientale"*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Sanna Lehtinen, *Helsingin yliopisto* - ALLIGATOR ALCATRAZ AND THE PARADOXES OF FREEDOM: LEGAL STRUGGLES OVER THE EVERGLADES
- ✦ Nicole Haring, *Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz* - CARCERAL IMAGINARIES: BELONGING, FREEDOM, AND ABOLITION DEMOCRACY

KEYWORDS

PRISONS, LEGAL SYSTEM, BOUNDARIES

CONFRONTING THE FOURTH GHOST: VISIONS AND CRITIQUES OF TOTALITARIANISM IN SOUTHERN FICTION

Thursday 03
13:30 - 15:00
AULA C

Long before fascism and totalitarianism became global terms, the slaveholding society of the American South depended on an absolute racial hierarchy that can be understood as a proto-fascist order. After abolition, the ideology of a “master race” entitled to authoritarian control persisted through Jim Crow laws, disenfranchisement, and racial terror. Southern white mythology continued to idealize place and racial purity with a fervor resembling the Nazis’ celebration of “blood and soil.” During the 1930s and 1940s, a lot of discourse connected southern racial practices to those of Nazi Germany. The rise of European fascism inspired critiques of Jim Crow as a form of domestic totalitarianism. Lillian Smith, like Martin Luther King Jr. after her, explicitly compared Jim Crow to Nazism, reframing the South in global authoritarian terms. She fiercely opposed the hierarchical and authoritarian order idealized by the Southern Agrarians, warning white southerners that their racism mirrored the ideology of the Nazis. Smith compared the lynching of Black Americans to the atrocities of the Nazi camps and argued that her native South was as totalitarian as Germany, both being “fascinated by the unquestioned authority of White Supremacy” and dominated by an “authoritarian mythic mind” driven by “primitive myths of blood and sex and race.” Smith identified three “ghost relationships” that white southerners refused to acknowledge: between white men and Black women; between white fathers and their Black children; and between white children and their Black mammies. Building on her insight, Robert Brinkmeyer, in his seminal study *The Fourth Ghost: White Southern Writers and European Fascism*, identified a fourth and unacknowledged specter haunting the white South—the specter of European fascism itself. Southern literature has long confronted and resisted this “totalitarian virus” and the authoritarian power that deforms both communities and individual psyches. The grotesque imagery and haunted landscapes of Southern Gothic fiction expose minds and societies colonized by authoritarian logic. William Faulkner and Flannery O’Connor dramatize the afterlives of slavery’s authoritarian structures—manifested in religious fanaticism, piety, and moral hypocrisy—that deform their characters and communities. Black southern writers have profoundly documented the experience of living under this authoritarian racial order. The slave narratives of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs exposed the plantation as a totalitarian space of death from which escape signified both freedom and survival. Richard Wright’s fiction underscores the psychic and social damage wrought by systemic racial control. In contemporary literature, Jesmyn Ward continues this lineage by confronting authoritarianism through depictions of carceral legacies and state violence that perpetuate the totalitarian heritage of slavery. This panel will explore the presence of the “fourth ghost” in the fiction of Carson McCullers, William Faulkner, and Jesmyn Ward, examining how their works expose and critique the enduring totalitarian tendencies embedded within southern culture and consciousness.

CHAIR

✦ Constante González Groba, *Universidade de Santiago de Compostela*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Constante González Groba, *Universidade de Santiago de Compostela* - CARSON MCCULLERS’S THE HEART IS A LONELY HUNTER: “AN IRONIC PARABLE OF FASCISM
- ✦ Elena Miriam Dobre, *Universitat de les Illes Balears* - “ONLY THROUGH THE BLOOD OF OUR MEN”: FAULKNER, FASCISM, AND SOUTHERN DECLINE
- ✦ Michał Choński, *Uniwersytet Jagielloński* - THE RHETORIC OF VIOLENCE – THE HYPERBOLIC LANGUAGE OF WILLIAM FAULKNER’S “DRY SEPTEMBER” AND ITS CONTEMPORARY RECEPTION
- ✦ Frédérique Spill, *Université de Picardie Jules Verne* - OVERPOWERING WHITENESS, RESISTING BLACKNESS: JESMYN WARD’S APPROPRIATION OF THE NEO-SLAVE NARRATIVE IN LET US DESCEND

KEYWORDS

SOUTH, TOTALITARIANISM, MCCULLERS, FAULKNER, WARD

FREEDOM, MOVEMENT, AND THEIR LIMITS FOR MARGINALIZED PEOPLE IN THE AMERICAN WEST

Thursday 03
13:30 - 15:00
AULA D

At its inception, the United States expressed principles of SELF-DETERMINATION that much of the world had never seen at the time. As a result, many Americans have spoken of the exceptional nature of their freedom and the opportunities it provided for liberty, democracy, and individual success. Yet, as the call for papers also suggests, the articulation of freedom in the United States has long been limited by exclusions based on Indigeneity, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. No region has embodied these tensions more than the American West, a place of multiple diasporas. The once dominant narrative of the frontier perfectly embodied idealized concepts of liberty – at least for white settlers who might find opportunity in the region’s vast expanses. Dime novels, movies and maps expressed the illusion of freedom to observers around the world and across the decades. At the same time, throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the policies of the state and the culture of settler and straight society worked to dispossess, marginalize, or even erase certain communities. This panel includes four leading scholars of the American West who challenge traditional visions of the West. Across four papers, we contemplate the structures that policed and restricted the movement of different marginalized communities. We also consider the ways in which members of those communities resisted, often attempting to claim the West’s offer of individual opportunity through migration and the assertion of cultural identities, often repurposing the tools of the settler state. And we consider the persistent contradictions between myth and reality by discovering those places and means by which certain groups – Latinos, Indigenous peoples, Mormons, and queers – expressed their freedom.

CHAIR

✦ Kathleen Brosnan, *University of Oklahoma*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Kathleen Brosnan, *University of Oklahoma* - MAPPING MIGRATION AND IDENTITY AMONG INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND MORMONS
- ✦ Mary E. Mendoza, *Penn State University* - RACIAL BIAS AND STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE: POLICING LATINOS IN THE AMERICAN WEST
- ✦ Jennifer Holland, *University of Oklahoma* - AIDS TOWN: RURAL PEOPLE WITH HIV/AIDS AND MOBILITY IN TEXAS, 1981-1992
- ✦ Amy Scott, *Bradley University* - QUEER MOBILITY AND THE TRANSNATIONAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE GAY GAMES: URBAN ORIGINS OF LGBTQ FREEDOM IN THE AMERICAN WEST, 1982-1998
- ✦ Daniele Curci, *Università di Siena* - VISIONS OF AMERICA, VISIONS OF FREEDOM, REDEFINING THE POLITICAL SPACE: THE CONTESTED LEGACY OF WOODY GUTHRIE BETWEEN NATIVE AMERICANS AND MEXICAN-AMERICAN CONGRESSIONAL CLAIMS

KEYWORDS

WEST, MOVEMENT, LATINO, INDIGENOUS, QUEER

RE/GENERATION, VIOLENCE, AND AMERICAN CULTURE WARS: SETTLER FREEDOMS IN YELLOWSTONE

Thursday 03
13:30 - 15:00
AULA 1

This panel critically examines the representations of freedom and (settler) violence in Taylor Sheridan's hit series *Yellowstone* and its prequels *1923* and *1883*. From Elsa Dutton's "going native" against better knowledge in *1883*, E5 ("Freedom has fangs, and it sunk them into me") to John Dutton's white man's burden in *Yellowstone*, concepts of freedom are written all over *Yellowstone* and its spinoffs: it stages freedom as property rights, self-defense, and local sovereignty, but also as Indigenous SELF-DETERMINATION, corporate 'freedom to operate', and the open range imagined against fences, laws, vegetarian protesters, and federal oversight.

Our panel takes its cue from Richard Slotkin's mythology of the American West as combination of the "need for conquest to establish the nation" and of the economic myth of American capitalist superabundance (Gerund, Paul, and Slotkin). We are specifically interested in contributing an interdisciplinary American Studies perspective on *Yellowstone* that addresses the "branding" (Sperling) of the Western homeland as American sentimental genealogy. The contributions to our panel seek to connect Slotkin's insights to the series' revival and marketing of the Western mythology through a multi-generational settlement narrative that chronicles the history of the Dutton family. We discuss the show's genre aesthetics as "neo Western drama" (Knoetze and Fourie)—its landscapes and settler extractivist takeover of Indigenous territory, its rituals of work and codes of loyalty, alongside its genre borrowings from Western film iconographies and classical *Heimatfilm* tropes. With an eye to the dimensions of domestic and political violence in (and in connection with) Sheridan's series, we seek to address its difficult cultural standing in the present moment as "prestige television [...] conservative fantasy liberals should watch" (McMillan Cottom).

CHAIR

- ✦ Stefanie Schäfer, *Universität Mannheim*
- ✦ Birgit Däwes, *Europa-Universität Flensburg*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Brigitte Georgi-Findlay, *Technische Universität Dresden* - THE LAND BEFORE HER: VISIONS OF FREEDOM ON THE OVERLAND JOURNEY IN 1883
- ✦ Paweł Pyrka, *Uniwersytet SWPS* - DISMANTLING AND DREAMING: TOWARD A MYTHOLOGY OF INDIGENOUS RENEWAL IN THE YELLOWSTONE UNIVERSE
- ✦ Kathleen Loock, *Leibniz Universität Hannover* - BACKWARDS INTO THE WEST: SERIAL TEMPORALITIES, SETTLER FREEDOMS, AND THE LOGIC OF THE YELLOWSTONE PREQUELS
- ✦ Ralph Poole, *Universität Salzburg* - SOUNDING THE HOMELAND: MUSIC, MYTH, AND AFFECTIVE SPACE IN YELLOWSTONE AS AN AMERICAN HEIMATFILM

KEYWORDS

YELLOWSTONE, WESTERN MYTH, INDIGENOUS CULTURE, VIOLENCE, POPULAR CULTURE

JEWISH AMERICAN WRITING AND THE UNITED STATES' REGIMES OF MIGRATION: REIMAGINING NARRATIVES OF IMMIGRATION

Thursday 03
13:30 - 15:00
AULA 2

The category of 'the refugee' offers an alternative to easy narratives of immigrant assimilation and ethnic essentialism, focusing attention not on received ideas about various immigrant groups arrival and success but on the ways in which the United States' border regime restricts freedom of movement and shapes citizenship. Jewish American literature has often been understood as paradigmatic of so-called 'successful' immigrant arrival, understood as representing what Benjamin Schreier calls the "breakthrough narrative," the arrival of Jewish Americans into mainstream economic and cultural success, and therefore providing an exemplary model for groups such as Asian Americans.[1] This, however, ignores both more recent Jewish immigration to the United States – in particular, from the former Soviet

Union and Warsaw Pact countries – and earlier forms of Jewish immigration which do not fit into this framework, such as those escaping the Holocaust or from areas outside Eastern and Central Europe. Close attention to these alternative narratives of migration highlights the entanglement of Jewish American arrival in the US with the various legal, economic, and racial regimes associated with immigration to the United States. Far from a clearly defined and monolithic story of Jewish arrival underpinning an essentialised Jewish American identity, these narratives allow for reading Jewish American literature in dialogue with other literatures that engage with the complex overlapping categories of the immigrant, the migrant, and the refugee. These include more contemporary works by Latina/o or South East Asian writers who have experienced the US's restrictive migration regimes, as well as overlaps suppressed by the prevailing narrative, such as continuities between African American slave testimony, accounts from Holocaust survivors, and testimony by refugees from more recent conflicts, including Ukraine (2022–2025) and the Gaza War (2023–2025).

This panel will therefore give attention to the category of the refugee, and the migration regimes associated with it, as a way to reconceptualise the ways in which Jewish American literature is understood in relation to crucial questions of race, identity, and citizenship in a moment in which these are central to the narratives of an authoritarian US government focused on policing their borders in new and violent ways.

CHAIR

- ✦ Federico Gabriele Ferretti, *Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Bryan Cheyette, *University of Reading* - BEYOND THE AMERICANIZATION OF TESTIMONY
- ✦ Karolina Krasuska, *Uniwersytet Warszawski* - LOCATING SOVIET-BORN WRITING IN THE US IN THE AMERICAN LITERARY FIELD: TOWARD A MATERIALIST CRITIQUE
- ✦ Nicolas Turner, *Universiteit Leiden* - THE UNIVERSITY AND REGIMES OF MIGRATION IN GARY SHTAYNGART'S ABSURDISTAN (2006): ACADEMICS, BORDERS, AND REFUGEES

KEYWORDS

JEWISH, AMERICAN, MIGRATION, REFUGEE, WRITING

COUNTER-VISIONS OF FREEDOM: CONTEMPORARY DOCUPOETIC INTERVENTIONS IN THE COLONIAL ARCHIVE

Thursday 03
13:30 - 15:00
AULA 3

'Counter-Visions of Freedom' explores recent work by four contemporary poets – Margo Tamez, Anthony Cody, Layli Long Soldier and Jordan Abel – to interrogate the limits of American freedom and the rhetoric of democracy in the US cultural imaginary from colonial times to the present. Using insight from decolonial criticism, we will probe the ways in which their poetries peel back the celebratory veneer of American freedom to reveal the violences and erasures beneath. Whilst Tamez's *Father/Genocide* (2021) layers Indigenous testimony, personal memory and archival material to redefine freedom as survival, Cody's *Borderland Apocrypha* (2020) exposes the "horroristic" violence of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands that resulted from American expansionism and denied freedom, whereas Layli Long Soldier's *Whereas* (2017) and Jordan Abel's *Empty Spaces* (2023) appropriate and challenge settlers' legal discourse and canonical literature. These four collections, connected through their use of archival disassembly, Indigenous testimony, and documentary poetics, revisit the geopolitical, mythological and narrative foundations of the American nation, along with the buried histories they conceal: genocide, dispossession, captivity, injustice and silence. This panel will show how each of the texts is a counter-archive, an investigative site where fragments, multilingual and multimodal textures, and various acts of refusal re-map and reclaim the past, while at the same time showing how that past has led to the structural inequalities of the present. Together, these papers ask how visions of freedom might be understood differently when narrated from the borderlands and by the communities whose survival is itself an insurgent act. The constellation of docupoetic practices discussed will provide decolonial counter-visions of freedom understood as sovereignty, as relation, as memory that resists forgetting.

CHAIR

- ✦ Simone Knewitz, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn
- ✦ Niall Munro, Oxford Brookes University

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Paulina Ambroży, Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu - UNSETTLING FREEDOM: INDIGENOUS SURVIVAL AND GENOCIDAL MEMORY IN MARGO TAMEZ'S FATHER/GENOCIDE
- ✦ Simone Knewitz, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn - APPROPRIATION AS DECOLONIAL GESTURE: THE DOCUMENTARY POETICS OF LAYLI LONG SOLDIER AND JORDAN ABEL
- ✦ Niall Munro, Oxford Brookes University - 'HANGTHEMBRINGTHECAMERA': HORRORISTIC VIOLENCE AND THE LIMITS TO FREEDOM ON THE US-MEXICO BORDER

KEYWORDS

CONTEMPORARY EXPERIMENTAL POETRY, DOCUMENTARY POETICS, DECOLONIAL COUNTER-NARRATIVES OF FREEDOM, ARCHIVAL DISASSEMBLY, INDIGENOUS TESTIMONY, MEMORY, SOVEREIGNTY, MARGO TAMEZ, ANTHONY CODY, LAYLI LONG SOLDIER, JORDAN ABEL

FUTURE FREEDOMS IN SCIENCE FICTION

Thursday 03
15:30 - 17:00
SALETTA SEMINARI

The perennial promise of freedom is central to US imaginaries. Science fiction (SF) is one field in which these imaginaries of freedom are expressed, negotiated, critiqued and re-envisioned in particularly effective ways. Increasingly diverse in terms of authors and readers as well as types of stories told, contemporary speculative fiction now offers a wealth of narratives that help us think differently about both our future and our present. As science fiction scholar Veronica Hollinger notes, "It is SF's capacity metaphorically to distance us from the present that is now its most significant feature, its capacity as discourse to estrange the present" (146). To make the familiar seem strange fosters different ways of seeing the world, and speculative fiction can help us imagine alternatives; in the words of author N.K. Jemisin, its "creators are the engineers of possibility." Importantly, SF narratives can function as what Jémeljan Hakemulder calls "moral laboratories," allowing us to construct scenarios and conduct thought experiments that challenge received truths.

This panel will explore SF narratives that all engage with the limits and possibilities of freedom, at both personal and societal levels. They construct futures that decenter the human in important ways but simultaneously center the question of what freedom can mean in such more-than-human contexts. The texts analyzed in this panel all have the potential to help us navigate pressing concerns in the present. These concerns include the impact of climate change and loss of biodiversity as well as the development of robotics and artificial intelligence. The overall aim of the panel is to explore the potential of these narratives in providing insights into how freedom needs to be rethought in an American context characterized by an erosion of some of the most fundamental civic liberties.

CHAIR

- ✦ Jenny Bonnevier, Örebro universitet

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Jenny Bonnevier, Örebro universitet - FREE TO BE RESPONSE-ABLE: TERRAFORMING A BETTER LIFE IN ANNALEE NEWITZ'S THE TERRAFORMERS
- ✦ Maria Lindgren Leavenworth, Umeå universitet - A MAP TO FREEDOM: STORYTELLING AND ENTANGLEMENTS IN SAM J. MILLER'S BLACKFISH CITY
- ✦ Berit Åström, Umeå universitet - "SITTING DOWN WITH A HUMAN LIKE THIS WOULD NEVER NOT FEEL STRANGE": PERSONHOOD, BODILY AUTONOMY AND FREEDOM IN THE MURDERBOT DIARIES

KEYWORDS

SCIENCE FICTION, MORE-THAN-HUMAN, FUTURE IMAGINARIES

A LONG QUEST FOR FREEDOM IN AFRICAN AMERICAN WRITING

Thursday 03
15:30 - 17:00
AULA A

“Is the struggle endless?” When asked this question by Frank Barat, Angela Davis responded that “as our struggles mature, they produce new ideas, new issues, and new terrains on which we engage in the quest for freedom. Like Nelson Mandela, we must be willing to embrace the long walk toward freedom” (2014). This panel seeks to investigate how African American activism and artistic expression have embraced that walk after the Civil Rights Era. Drawing on multiple genres and kinds of narratives, from autobiography to drama to poetry and prose, the panelists explore how the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement is engaged actively by contemporary black authors and activists, and not merely in terms of nostalgia and/or commemoration.

Black identity in the US has variously been assimilated to experiences of enslavement/ “the afterlife of slavery” (Hartman 2006), fugitivity, segregation, and constant struggle for equal rights in a (still) highly racialized society. Black expression has been grappling with and challenging this overimposed understanding of blackness, and yet never forgetting the political and civil struggle for freedom. Thus, the works examined in this panel present “visions of [black] freedom” in which the past is re-enacted creatively as a living archive through which unveil and fight against contemporary injustice with renewed awareness.

CHAIR

✦ Chiara Patrizi, *Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Vahit Yaşayan, *Erzurum Teknik Üniversitesi* - WHO WRITES AMERICA? FREEDOM, AUTHORSHIP, AND ERASURE IN PERCIVAL EVERETT'S JAMES
- ✦ Frank Obenland, *Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz* - “REVOLUTION IS THE MAN IN THE MIRROR” – STAGING THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN DRAMA
- ✦ Seda Şen, *Başkent Üniversitesi* - A PAIR OF WINGS AND A HEART FILLED WITH HOPE: REIMAGINING FREEDOM IN THE REPRESENTATIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN FOLKTALES IN POETRY
- ✦ Jan Beneš, *Ostravská univerzita* - ARTICULATIONS OF BLACK AGRARIAN FREEDOM IN LALITA TADEMY'S CANE RIVER, MARGARET WILKERSON'S THE REVISIONERS, AND NATALIE BASZILE'S QUEEN SUGAR

KEYWORDS

AFRICAN AMERICAN, CIVIL RIGHTS, BLACK IDENTITY

ACADEMIC WELL-BEING

Thursday 03
15:30 - 17:00
AULA B

In recent years, expectations for safe and inclusive workplaces have grown significantly. Yet, creating welcoming and healthy work environments with reasonable work-life balance remains a challenge in academia. Early-career researchers and graduate students, in particular, face increasing precarity and prolonged periods of uncertainty as they navigate transitions from PhD programs to postdoctoral positions, adjunct roles, and eventually tenure-track or permanent appointments. This round table aims to open up a dialogue about the challenges we face as we seek to foster healthy work environments and to explore strategies that support both personal well-being and professional success.

CHAIR

✦ Abigail Fagan, *Leibniz Universität Hannover*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Anna Kurowicka, *Uniwersytet Warszawski*
- ✦ Enikő Maior, *Partium Christian University*
- ✦ Joanna Mąkowska, *Uniwersytet Warszawski*

KEYWORDS

WORK-LIFE BALANCE, WOMEN, CAREER TRAJECTORY

EAAS WOMEN'S NETWORK

AGAINST THE TYRANNY OF LANGUAGE. THREE (POST) MODERN QUESTS FOR LIFE, LIBERTY, AND HAPPINESS

Thursday 03
15:30 - 17:00
AULA C

The tension between constraint and freedom in art and literature, especially in the highly formalized code of the poetic text, has been at the roots of Modernist and Postmodernist poetics ever since the iconoclastic drive of belated Romanticism took the literary institutions by storm. The symbolist challenge of the boundaries between prose and poetry (verse libre, the prose poem) the spatialization of the form advocated by Futurism and Dada, with their experiments in typography (parole in libertà, visual poetry) & performance (sound/polyphonic poetry), and the self-referential loop within writing itself (disruption of genres/forms and self-effacing irony, as with Language Poetry) have revolutionized once and for all the terms of the discussion concerning the rules of the literary game. Either by encouraging unconstrained approaches to composition (the automatic writing of Surrealism and the spontaneous prose of the Beats, who in turn looked at Whitman's hypermeter free verse, modeled after aria d'opera) and techniques perceived as impromptu (stream of consciousness/train of thought) or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, by amplifying the degree of difficulties in the creative process (Oulipo's severe contraintes), explorers of unbeaten paths and cutters of new wood have striven to create free sites for inventiveness beyond the normative tyranny of the canon. In the US, the process has constantly taken place within the dialectics of tradition and innovation and the wider frame of the hybrid identity of the American writer, at one time native and transcontinental. Hence, the peculiar resonances among the three authors here discussed, separated by three generations, subject to peculiar forms of voluntary exiles and in constant opposition to conventions and rules that they perceive as limiting and oppressive of both creative quest and personal identity. Eccentric (Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven and Abraham Lincoln Gillespie, who exhibited their radical otherness in vestemic, social interaction and even in the transformation of their houses in artworks, along the lines of Kurt Schwitters and his Merzbaum) or seemingly integrated in the New England understated and unassuming public persona (Susan Howe, who in her composite ethnic identity operates in the heart of the Transcendentalist cradle), they enact a wide range of strategies of liberation from form. Whereas their otherness is rooted in gender (von Freytag-Loringhoven and Gillespie) political stance (Gillespie) and feminism (Howe), their artistic forms of rebellion to conventions exploits the interrelations among the arts (sculpture and performance – von Freytag-Loringhoven; music – Gillespie and Howe), the resonances of intermedia (von Freytag-Loringhoven, Howe) and technology (Howe), with their playful blurring of the borders between genres, forms, and the unlocking of the misprison of language (the German-born von Freytag-Loringhoven, the French exile Gillespie, the Irish – from her mother's side – and American Howe) through their relentless practice of multilingualism and/or linguistic deterritorialization.

CHAIR

- ✦ Floriana Puglisi, *Università di Catania*
- ✦ Salvatore Marano, *Università di Catania*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Giuliana Arcidiacono, *Accademia di Belle Arti di Catania* - BARONESS ELSA VON FREYTAG-LORINGHOVEN AND THE POETICS OF EMBODIED FREEDOM
- ✦ Salvatore Marano, *Università di Catania* - EARFLUXSATISVIE-THRU-HEYPERSIEVING': ABRAHAM LINCOLN GILLESPIE'S 'PURPLEXICON DISSYNTHTEGRATAIONS' OF SYNTAX
- ✦ Floriana Puglisi, *Università di Catania* - "BETWEEN ESCAPE AND ENCLOSURE": UNSETTLING THE TEXT(S) IN SUSAN HOWE'S WRITING

KEYWORDS

FREEDOM AND CONSTRAINT, MULTILINGUALISM AND LINGUISTIC DETERRITORIALIZATION, PERFORMANCE, VISUAL AND SOUND POETRY

1920S–2020S: VISIONS OF UNFREEDOM

Thursday 03
15:30 - 17:00
AULA D

This panel explores the antifascist intellectual manifestos of 1925 and 2025; each emerged in moments of escalating nationalism, warning of the dangers posed by repression and censorship. Drawing on intellectual history and biopolitical theory, this panel will trace evolving definitions of *unfreedom*, focusing on the interplay between the two historical periods addressed in the manifestos. The 1925 manifesto, born in the wake of Mussolini's regime, draws from the concerns voiced by thinkers like Gramsci (the cultural dimensions of hegemony), and Gobetti (anti-authoritarianism). It also resonates with Arendt, who later described the totalitarian impulse to suppress plurality in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. The manifesto reflects early critiques of fascist nationalism as a project of enforced homogeneity and biopolitical control, also bringing out questions of immunity as related to community (Esposito, 2006).

The 2025 manifesto, meanwhile, engages with contemporary challenges: digitally mediated authoritarianism, the weaponization of disinformation, economic injustices, and the climate emergency. It echoes concerns raised by Snyder in *On Tyranny* (2017), particularly about illiberalism emerging from within liberal democracies such as the US. The manifesto also highlights the importance of "the independence of the judiciary, the press, institutions of culture, higher education and science," and, in this sense, it resonates with the notion of "contamination," included in the 1925 manifesto ("contaminare politica, letteratura e scienza è un errore") as a key concern for fascism, both in a constituent and destituent perspective. Together, the 1925 and 2025 manifestos form a transhistorical dialogue about how visions of unfreedom can imagine or foreclose possibilities of political agency, autonomy, and dissent. Is freedom narrated, contested, and redefined through narratives of resistance and/or complicity? In this regard, can literature be considered a space of freedom—or a site of its undoing? Through this comparative lens, we aim to reconsider what it means to be free in an age increasingly defined by control—both visible and invisible.

CHAIR

- ✦ Alice Balestrino, *Università di Roma "La Sapienza"*
- ✦ Emanuel Rota, *University of Illinois - Urbana-Champaign*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Alice Balestrino, *Università di Roma "La Sapienza"* - THE AUTHOR'S AUTHORITARIANISM. GERTRUDE STEIN AS OBLIQUE INTELLECTUAL.
- ✦ Eli Park Sorensen, *Chinese University of Hong Kong* - PREDICTING THE FUTURE: BIOPOLITICS AND ALGORITHMIC GOVERNMENTALITY
- ✦ Silvana Patriarca, *Fordham University* - THE END OF THE INTELLECTUAL AND THE RETURN OF ENGAGEMENT: SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE 'RENEWED OPEN LETTER AGAINST THE RETURN OF FASCISM' AND ITS ITALIAN PRECEDENT
- ✦ Emanuel Rota, *University of Illinois - URBANA-CHAMPAIGN* - IT *CAN* HAPPEN HERE: TRANSATLANTIC MANIFESTOS AND THE AMERICAN CRISIS OF FREEDOM

KEYWORDS

FASCISM, AUTHORITARIANISM, BIOPOLITICS

THE AMERICAN WEST - A LAND OF FREEDOM? REVISIONS OF THE MYTH

Thursday 03
15:30 - 17:00
AULA 1

The myth of the American West as a land of freedom is one of the most firmly entrenched myths of American culture, and it is inseparable from other symbolic constructions of the region, stressing limitless possibilities, individual autonomy, and healthy communal relations. It has its roots in the earliest narratives of the frontier that envisage it as a space of personal and collective renewal. In the late eighteenth century, decades before the beginning of the era of westward expansion, Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, in his famous letter "What Is an American?," wrote about the frontier as a place where European settlers, fleeing oppression and injustice in their native countries, can experience freedom most fully. Some of de Crevecoeur's ideas echo in Frederick Jackson Turner's influential essay *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*, which essentially equates freedom with an individualistic pursuit of opportunities. This pursuit defines the exceptional American experience. To Turner, the process of expansion is a manifestation of historical imperative, hence its inevitability. That some people can achieve freedom, prosperity and progress at the expense of the oppression and suffering of others is an example of the logic of history. Turner's frontier thesis shaped the thinking about the history of the American West for decades to come, until it was challenged by the so-called New Western Historians, who have sought, among others, to restore the voices of the disfranchised in the West: women, immigrants, and ethnic groups. The historical counter-narrative thus created had been preceded by revisionist artistic representations of the West. At least since the 1940 publication of Walter Van Tilburg Clark's *The Ox-Bow Incident*, a classic text about lynching in the West, revisionist Western narratives have interrogated key ideas on which mythical constructions of the region are based: freedom, regeneration, individualism, prosperity. Our panel will discuss classic and recent, cinematic literary and photographic, narratives of the American West that have contributed to the revisionist examination of the regional imaginary by problematizing the ambivalence of idea of freedom.

CHAIR

✦ Marek Paryż, Uniwersytet Warszawski

SPEAKERS

- ✦ James Deutsch, *Smithsonian Institution* - CONTRASTING FREEDOMS AND CONSEQUENCES IN THE 1969 AND 2010 VERSIONS OF TRUE GRIT
- ✦ Audrey Goodman, *Georgia State University* - YOUNG WOMEN WARRIORS: ENVISIONING AND EMBODYING THE WEST'S INDIGENOUS FUTURES
- ✦ David Rio Raigadas, *Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea* - SEARCHING FOR FREEDOM IN THE AMERICAN WEST THROUGH MOBILITY: WILLY VLAUTIN'S EARLY NEVADA FICTION
- ✦ Marek Paryż, *Uniwersytet Warszawski* - THE PRICE OF FREEDOM: THEMES OF OPPRESSION AND VIOLENCE IN RECENT EUROPEAN FILM WESTERNS

KEYWORDS

US WEST, WESTERN NARRATIVE, REVISIONISM, MOBILITY, VIOLENCE

UN | BANNING BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS

Thursday 03
15:30 - 17:00
AULA 2

Current debates about diversity and inclusion in the context of US books for young readers, which index a political rift over questions regarding the representation of LGBTQIA+ and racially minoritized groups in the US, emerged out of an unprecedented constellation of political, social, legal, and economic conditions that have affected publishers, public schools, parents, and political figures in equal measures. While book bans and book challenges have existed for a long time, the current curtailment of intellectual freedom is unprecedented in that it specifically targets books for young readers, vilifies diversity initiatives, and operates through well-organized and politically influential groups such as Moms for Liberty. This ongoing form of book banning is also unprecedented because it coheres around a particular tipping point: The year 2020 brought forth a historical reckoning in the publishing industry with its persistent lack of diversity, fuelled in part by online activism collected under hashtags such as #blackoutbestsellerlists and #publishingpaidme; that same year, the COVID-19-related experiences of involuntary homeschooling meant that many parents engaged more extensively and perhaps more critically with their children's assigned readings and curricula; and finally, the confluence of banning and unbanning activities in online and embodied forms register the dynamic debates between ideologically different counterpublics in the US and beyond. This panel examines the dynamics of book banning and its counter-movement of unbanning (i.e., forms of commodity activism, book curation, and micro-interventions in the interest of securing the right to read). We examine the current phenomenon of "Un banning Books for Young Readers" from the perspectives of critical race theory, queer and trans studies, and dis/ability studies and approach three select case studies with book studies, literary studies, and cultural studies methodologies. Individually and collectively, the papers analyze how formal aspects such as forms of "legal storytelling," forms of catalogue curation and book activism, forms of promotional materials, and forms of curriculum building contribute to book censorship and the strategic unbanning of books in the times we're in.

CHAIR

✦ Silvia Schultermandl, *Universität Münster*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Aline Franzus, *Universität Münster* - PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE: A PUBLISHER PUSHING FOR CHANGE?
- ✦ Corinna Norrick-Rühl, *Universität Münster* - WALKING THE TIGHTROPE: SCHOLASTIC, CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND BANNED BOOKS

KEYWORDS

BOOK BANNING, INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM, YOUNG READERS, LEGAL STORYTELLING, BOOK ACTIVISM

VISIONS OF REPRODUCTIVE (UN)FREEDOM

Thursday 03
15:30 - 17:00
AULA 3

In this panel, we focus on various representations and articulations of reproductive (un)freedom, i.e., the freedom, or lack thereof, to make autonomous decisions about one's reproduction and to be able to exercise these decisions. Throughout the history of the United States, reproductive freedom has been highly contested, and reproductive rights, especially those of women of color and marginalized individuals, have been restricted and actively violated. Recently, reproductive freedom has again come under attack as the Supreme Court overturned the constitutional right to abortion. The ruling severely limits access to reproductive healthcare services and curtails the ability of pregnant individuals to decide whether or not to continue a pregnancy. These restrictions on reproductive autonomy not only endanger individual liberties but also undermine fundamental democratic principles. In this context, cultural texts have long served as important contributions to discussions about reproduction and women's rights. By examining historical realities, sociocultural developments, and political contexts, these texts can reinforce, update, or challenge existing assumptions and their underlying ideologies. Furthermore, they illuminate the individual impact of restricted reproductive autonomy stemming from social and intersectional inequalities; as such they may also function as warnings against the erosion of reproductive rights. Importantly, cultural texts enable a nuanced portrayal of complex reproductive experiences and practices, and thus expand and diversify narratives while simultaneously challenging stereotypes and stigmatization. The panel is structured around a diachronic analysis of reproductive freedom and its limitations in the U.S., tracing its cultural articulation from the period of criminalization to the post-Roe crisis, and engaging with a variety of texts. Specifically, the focus of the four papers lies on the issue of bodily autonomy, voluntary childlessness, and abortion. The papers by Isabel Kalous and Ina Batzke focus the late 19th and early 20th centuries, respectively, and analyze how preventing or terminating a pregnancy was treated both publicly and in fictional and non-fictional texts. The panel then shifts to contemporary engagements with abortion, examining cultural responses to the erosion of reproductive rights: Małgorzata Olsza's paper considers reproductive rights activism in comics, and Jennifer Gouck's paper interrogates the rise of the abortion road trip novel in contemporary Young Adult fiction. Together, the papers reveal continuities and ruptures in the portrayal of reproductive autonomy and demonstrate how cultural narratives serve as sites for negotiating the meaning and implications of reproductive freedom.

CHAIR

✦ Isabel Kalous, *Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Isabel Kalous, *Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg* - HERBAL REMEDIES, VOLUNTARY CHILDLESSNESS, AND REPRODUCTIVE AUTONOMY IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY
- ✦ Ina Batzke, *Universität Augsburg* - REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOMS? LITERARY ENGAGEMENTS WITH ABORTION IN EARLY 20TH-CENTURY US LITERATURE
- ✦ Małgorzata Olsza, *Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu* - DRAWING CHOICE: CONTEMPORARY COMICS AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ACTIVISM
- ✦ Jennifer Gouck, *Universität Münster* - REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND THE ROAD: THE ABORTION ROAD TRIP AND/AS RESISTANCE IN AMERICAN YOUNG ADULT FICTION

KEYWORDS

ABORTION, REPRODUCTIVE AUTONOMY, LITERATURE, COMICS

TEACHING AMERICAN STUDIES WHEN FREEDOM IS UNDER ATTACK

Friday 04
08:30 - 10:00
SALETTA SEMINARI

This roundtable builds on the forthcoming RSAJournal's Forum, "Outside In, Inside Out: Teaching American Studies in a Changing World," which gathers international perspectives on how institutional, cultural, and geographic contexts shape the teaching of American Studies. Contributors to the Forum—from The Netherlands, Austria, Romania, The Bahamas, and Italy—will be joined by a U.S.-based scholar for an open conversation on pedagogy, curricular design, and the broader question of how we teach American Studies at a time when the very notion of freedom is under strain, both within and outside the United States. The roundtable aims to examine teaching as an emancipatory practice. On his first day in office, President Donald Trump signed over 200 executive orders, many of which directly undermined fundamental rights and freedoms. These include attacks on birthright citizenship, on laws ensuring the safety of transgender people, and on the U.S. education system through efforts to dismantle diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and to restrict the teaching of critical race theory, Latinx and border studies, and gender and queer studies. Academic and educational freedom—at all levels—is being strategically recast as "radical" or "wasteful." As the EAAS Board emphasized in its April 2025 statement on "Developments in the United States Affecting Academic Freedom and International Collaboration," these policies not only endanger U.S. scholars, teachers, and students but also disrupt international research partnerships and create a chilling effect on academic inquiry worldwide. The roundtable takes seriously the responsibility—and the possibility—of teaching American Studies as a practice of critical freedom. Participants will explore how transnational American Studies classrooms can cultivate intellectual resilience and cross-border dialogue despite political pressures and institutional constraints. By reflecting on local pedagogical innovations and global solidarities, the discussion will move from critique to collaboration. Finally, the session will serve as a launchpad for a new Teaching Network within the EAAS, complementing existing thematic networks (Women's, LGBTQ+, Early Career Researchers, Poetry, Digital Studies). The network will provide an ongoing platform for sharing teaching resources, developing collaborative projects, and mentoring across institutions and borders. In keeping with the conference's broader theme, this roundtable understands teaching as both a practice of freedom and a political act—a way of imagining, sustaining, and defending the intellectual and ethical spaces that make transnational American Studies possible.

CHAIR

✦ Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello, *Salem State University*

RESPONDENT

✦ Ingrid Gessner, *Pädagogische Hochschule Vorarlberg*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Saskia Fürst, *University of The Bahamas*
- ✦ Frank Mehring, *Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen*
- ✦ Loredana Bercuci, *Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara*
- ✦ René Dietrich, *Universität Rostock*
- ✦ Chris Parkes, *King's College London*

KEYWORDS

ACADEMIC FREEDOM, TRANSNATIONAL EDUCATION, GLOBAL COLLABORATION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI), TEACHING NETWORK

THE AESTHETICS AND POLITICS OF FREEDOM IN THE ERA OF JIM CROW

Friday 04
08:30 - 10:00
AULA A

The panel will examine the meanings of (un)freedom during the Jim Crow Era, focusing on how literature was an important arena where those meanings were contested. We will examine different historical moments of the Jim Crow era, from the post-Reconstruction period to the 1960s, in order to illuminate significant intersections and continuities in the way the beauty and power of the written word were mobilized for emancipatory purposes. Special attention will be devoted to the aesthetic choices and experimental interventions privileged by the artists under consideration.

The panel brings together an international and interdisciplinary group of scholars who explore different literary genres (the short story, the novel, and letter writing) and forms of contamination between the arts (more specifically between literature and music). The panel will start from the “nadir” of African American history, at the turn into the twentieth century, with two papers that discuss how the notion of freedom, the legacy of slavery, and the tensions between generations were explored in the stories published by major protagonists of American realism like Paul Laurence Dunbar and Charles W. Chesnutt. These thematic and formal concerns will then be examined in connection with the Black liberation aesthetic that informs Richard Wright’s experimentation with jazz in *The Man Who Lived Underground* and Mary Lou Williams’s musical and epistolary practices.

CHAIR

- ✦ Maria Giulia Fabi, *Università di Ferrara*
- ✦ Maria Cristina Iuli, *Università del Piemonte Orientale “Amedeo Avogadro”*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Amina Gautier, *University of Miami* - THE SEARCH FOR ‘FREEDOM’ IN CHARLES CHESNUTT’S THE WIFE OF HIS YOUTH
- ✦ Simone Francescato, *Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia* - INTERGENERATIONAL CONFLICT AND FREEDOM IN THE SHORT STORIES OF PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR
- ✦ Marco Petrelli, *Università di Pisa* - DESCENT IN BLUE: JAZZ AND THE NARRATION OF BLACK LIBERATION IN RICHARD WRIGHT’S THE MAN WHO LIVED UNDERGROUND
- ✦ Masayoshi Yamada, *Cornell University* - ‘I’M FIGHTING FOR THE FREEDOM OF JAZZ AND FOR THE FREEDOM PEOPLE HEAR IN IT’: LISTENING TO MARY LOU WILLIAMS IN THE MAKING OF THE BLACK PUBLIC SPHERE IN THE LONG 1960S

KEYWORDS

AFRICAN AMERICANS, AESTHETICS, POLITICS, LITERATURE, JIM CROW

KEYWORDS FOR FREEDOM(S) IN THE U.S.

Friday 04
08:30 - 10:00
AULA B

This roundtable aims at identifying keywords and critical terms that are connected to the broad concept of freedom in the United States across disciplines such as history, literature, and culture. Eight early-career scholars from various fields of American Studies in Italy will debate whether and how it is still possible to conceptualize one of the founding principles of a nation that, in 250 years of history, has constantly interrogated and redefined the meaning of “Freedom,” or, in this case, “Freedoms.” Our discussion ultimately aims at debunking the main ideas that have always been related to the idealistic notion of freedom by addressing variables of gender, race, class, literary genres, and historical contingencies.

CHAIR

- ✦ Maria Ilaria Tonelli, *Università di Torino*
- ✦ Rachele Puddu, *Università di Udine / Università di Trieste*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Angelo Arminio, *Università di Roma “La Sapienza”*
- ✦ Antonio Di Vilio, *Università di Napoli Federico II*
- ✦ Enrico Mariani, *Università Ca’ Foscari Venezia*
- ✦ Serena Mocci, *Università di Cagliari*
- ✦ Emanuele Monaco, *Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna*
- ✦ Daphne Orlandi, *Università di Catania*
- ✦ Helena Paoli, *Università di Bari*
- ✦ Valentina Romanzi, *Università di Torino / Università di Verona*

KEYWORDS

FREEDOM, AISNA

AISNA GRADUATES ROUNDTABLE

FREEDOM AND IDENTITY

FRIDAY 04
08:30 - 10:00
AULA C

This panel brings together distinct explorations of the relationship between freedom and identity in contemporary American literature and visual art. Rather than providing a univocal perspective on the topic, the session aims to foreground the multiple ways in which literary and artistic expressions have often served as counterpoints to canonical narratives of national identity and traditional ideas of “American freedom.” Each in its own way, the five contributions assembled here move from the alternative visions of America that emerged in the wake of the social movements of the 1960s to compose a mosaic of the increasingly fragmented self-narrative that has defined the United States and its culture throughout the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

By engaging with questions of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, illness and disability, and the frequent intersections of these categories in the work of minority writers and artists, the panel follows an established tradition of highlighting how the American project has been repeatedly challenged, rewritten, and reimagined by those on its margins and through the perspective of the Other. Individual papers range from a focus on African American speculative revisions of the historical discourse on slavery, to the renegotiation of personal freedom and identity in LGBT literature of the AIDS era, the possibilities for expressive freedom and agency afforded by neurodivergent life writing, and the reshaping of the symbols of American liberty by Indigenous artists asserting cultural sovereignty.

A shared premise uniting these contributions is their insistence on the cultural work of marginalized groups as a privileged site for understanding the limits of US national mythmaking and performing a necessary redefinition of the country's foundational narratives. As the various works examined in this panel show, freedom and identity are not uniform or fixed concepts in American history and culture—they are instead continually subject to questioning, re-embodiment, and re-signification. As a result, the portrait of America that collectively emerges from these papers is never that of a static shot but rather the result of an ongoing, unfinished, and plural process of expanding, complicating, and reshaping the American narrative in light of its shifting meanings.

CHAIR

✦ Simone Sannio, *Freie Universität Berlin / Independent Researcher*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Iulia-Andrea Milica, *Universitatea din Iași* - REWRITING FREEDOM: OCTAVIA BUTLER'S SPECULATIVE REVISION OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN DISCOURSE
- ✦ Simone Sannio, *Freie Universität Berlin / Independent Researcher* - FREE AT LAST? NOTES ON THE AMERICAN UNFINISHED IN THE FICTION OF THE 1990
- ✦ Mathieu Duplay, *Université Paris-Cité* - WE, TOO, ARE ITALIAN': FREEDOM AND THE ALLURING OTHER IN ALLEN BARNETT'S THE BODY AND ITS DANGERS
 - ✦ Ruth Maxey, *University of Nottingham* - AUTISM AND EXPRESSIVE FREEDOM IN RECENT AMERICAN LITERATURE
 - ✦ Katharina Wiedlack, *Universität Wien* - 'THROUGH CREATING I ASSERT MY FREEDOM': LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS IN CONTEMPORARY ALASKA NATIVE VISUAL ART

KEYWORDS

CANON, IDENTITY, MULTIPLICITY

FEMINIST FREEDOMS AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY FASCISM

Friday 04
08:30 - 10:00
AULA D

The United States is in the middle of a fight to maintain its democratic status. As Nikole Hannah-Jones reminds us, the US has only been a multiracial democracy for sixty years. That status has always been fragile. For the majority of its history, freedom has been an ethos rather than a reality. So, too, has US society remained resolutely patriarchal, regardless of significant feminist political gains since the 1970s.

In the face of the rise of a white nationalist, heteropatriarchal, anti-democratic front in the United States, this panel considers what visions of freedom feminism has to offer today, and how anti-feminist sentiment has evolved in the context of some limited gains toward gender equality. We are specifically interested in mainstream media and popular culture, looking to where popular feminisms can and do push back against the undermining of hard-fought political gains. What kinds of feminist freedoms are able to be articulated in the current context? What is unsayable in the current context? And what new sites (popular, academic, visual, literary) are emerging to offer possibilities of growing feminist resistance?

CHAIR

✦ Megan Wesling, *University of California, San Diego*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Megan Wesling, *University of California, San Diego* - RECONSIDERING FEMINIST FREEDOMS IN THE CONTEXT OF NEOLIBERALISM
- ✦ Claire Sorin-Delpuech, *Aix-Marseille Université* - ANTIFEMINIST WOMEN'S VISIONS OF FREEDOM, THEN AND NOW
- ✦ Ariana Vigil, *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* - WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES AND THE CURRENT REGIME
- ✦ Karma Chávez, *University of Texas* - FROM PROTEST TO PEDAGOGY: ATTACKS ON US HIGHER EDUCATION IN AN AGE OF AUTHORITARIANISM

KEYWORDS

FEMINISM, GENDER STUDIES, ANTI-FEMINISM, NEOLIBERALISM, SOCIAL MEDIA

TRANSCULTURALITY UNDER NEOLIBERALISM IN 21ST CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE: BETWEEN LIBERATION AND CAPTURE

FRIDAY 04
08:30 - 10:00
AULA 1

This panel explores the relationship between transculturality and neoliberalism, examining how contemporary American literature negotiates the liberatory potential of transculturality while resisting neoliberal capture. It thus speaks to the conference's concern with freedom from a capitalism that "plunders" the transcultural environment.

As theorized by Wolfgang Iser and Mikhail Epstein, transculturality foregrounds hybrid identities that move beyond fixed cultural borders, fostering cross-cultural exchange. Neoliberalism, by contrast, with its emphasis on individualism, market logic, and global mobility, commodifies cultural difference, generating tension between authentic self-expression and economic incorporation.

Exploring transculturality under neoliberalism offers a lens for understanding the interplay between liberation and constraint. In the 21st century, transcultural subjectivities are often celebrated as signs of freedom—through cosmopolitanism, nomadism, and global belonging—yet such freedom often conceals structures of coercion and displacement. The same system that enables transnational movement also erects symbolic and economic barriers that restrict it.

Contemporary American literature mirrors this ambivalence. Writers such as Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie depict hybrid identities that challenge racial and economic hierarchies within a neoliberal U.S. context. Junot Díaz fuses Dominican and American narratives, exposing how global capitalism shapes both personal and collective identities.

Homi K. Bhabha's concept of the "third space" elucidates how transcultural encounters can generate subversive identities resisting homogenization. Yet, as Arjun Appadurai warns, global cultural flows are frequently co-opted into commodified forms, transforming transcultural exchange into marketable diversity. This dynamic is visible in Viet Thanh Nguyen's critique of the commodified refugee narrative and in Colson Whitehead's reimagining of transcultural resistance to systemic oppression.

Such works highlight a paradox: transculturality promises new modes of belonging and solidarity, yet neoliberal structures often repackage these as consumable products. Attending to this paradox across public and private spheres reveals how American literature probes both the possibilities and limits of transcultural freedom under neoliberalism.

CHAIR

✦ Aristi Trendel, *Le Mans Université*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Maria Pirgerou, *The American College of Greece* - OPEN CITY BY TEJU COLE: A PARALLAX VIEW OF TRANSCULTURAL IDENTITY WITHIN NEOLIBERALISM
- ✦ Aristi Trendel, *Le Mans Université* - THE PROMISE AND PERIL OF TRANSCULTURALITY IN CLAIRE MESSUD'S *THE EMPEROR'S CHILDREN*
- ✦ Theodora Tsimpouki, *Ethnikó kai Kapodistriakó Panepistímio Athinón* - "THERE IS NO VIEW FROM NOWHERE:" TEJU COLE'S TREMOR AND TRANSCULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE GLOBAL NEOLIBERAL ERA

KEYWORDS

TRANSCULTURALITY NEOLIBERALISM, LIBERATION, CAPTURE

WHEN THE WORLD CLOSES IN ON YOU: FREEDOM, GAMEPLAY, AND VIDEOGAMES

Friday 04
08:30 - 10:00
AULA 2

U.S. culture has long imagined freedom as boundless movement—the right to roam and to shape one's destiny. Videogames, as the perhaps most interactive and participatory of media, would seem to embody this ideal, as they promise agency and control over virtual stand-ins that explore vast worlds: a playable version of the liberal fantasy that freedom is limitless. Yet, as John Durham Peters reminds us in his book *The Marvelous Clouds* (2015), "We are conditioned by conditions we condition. We shape tools that shape us." Indeed, videogames translate freedom into systems, algorithms, and feedback loops, turning the ideal of autonomy into a procedural structure of constraint. The promise of freedom thus becomes inseparable from the operations of code and control, exposing how digital play mirrors the ideological paradoxes of American freedom—its entanglement with discipline, its domination of nature, its dependence on technological mastery, and its blindness to structural inequality. The proposed panel will investigate how videogames represent freedom and procedurally enact it. Bringing together perspectives from media studies, American studies, and game studies, the papers will explore how digital worlds reproduce, complicate, and/or subvert the ideological grammar of freedom that has defined the U.S. self-imagination. Videogames, we will suggest, function as spaces where players rehearse freedom as both desire and discipline, world-building and world-closing. Andrei Moran-Nae's "The Freedom of Limits in Gameplay" will examine the freedom of limits in gameplay, showing how players experience constraint as agency and internalize the disciplinary logic of the game engine as a form of self-directed play. Steve Rabitsch will then turn to the videogame *West* as a pedagogical and historiographic site, arguing that titles such as *Red Dead Redemption* (2018) and the *Oregon Trail* remake (2021) remediate and contest the frontier myth, translating competing narratives of westward expansion and settler colonialism into interactive form. Marko Jevtic will analyze *Scarface: The World Is Yours* (2006) and *Mafia III* (2016), tracing how the gangster's power fantasy reimagines the American Dream only to confront it with the racial and structural limits of that ideal. Finally, Francesca Razzi will explore *Red Dead Redemption 2* alongside Bret Harte's frontier fiction to trace transmedia patterns of agency, environmental determinism, and the natural limits of freedom. Taken together, these papers will demonstrate that the digital landscapes of videogames are anything but open: they transform freedom into a set of playable conditions, thereby exposing how, in both code and culture, the world is only yours until it closes in.

CHAIR

✦ Michael Fuchs, *Leopold-Franzens-Universität Innsbruck*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Andrei Moran-Nae, *Universitatea din București* - THE FREEDOM OF LIMITS IN GAMEPLAY; OR, WHY PLAYERS DO NOT REALLY WANT TOTAL FREEDOM IN VIDEO GAMES
- ✦ Stefan Rabitsch, *Universitetet i Oslo* - "STRETCHED TO THE POINT OF SNAPPING": LIBERATING COMPETING HISTORIOGRAPHIES OF THE AMERICAN WEST THROUGH VIDEO GAMES
- ✦ Marko Jevtic, *Universität Konstanz* - "THE WORLD IS YOURS": GANGSTER GAMES AND THEIR FANTASIES OF (BLACK) POWER
- ✦ Francesca Razzi, *Università "G. d'Annunzio" Chieti-Pescara* - TRANSMEDIA PATTERNS OF AGENCY: *RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2*, FREE CHOICE AND ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINISM

KEYWORDS

VIDEO GAMES, FREEDOM, GAMEPLAY, PROCEDURAL RHETORIC, AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA

A TENUOUS GRASP ON FREEDOM: COMPETING IDEAS FOR WOMEN'S SELF-DETERMINATION

FRIDAY 04
08:30 - 10:00
AULA 3

In reading the CfP, the WN steering committee felt that the conference's theme, "Visions of Freedom," resonates particularly with women's as well as gender and sexual minorities' history and representations. Freedom has not only been a quest, it has often proven elusive for American women. Take, for example, the history of feminist activism. "Rights" have been central to claims on freedom and citizenship: the right to vote, the right to own property, the right to divorce, the right to work, the right to open a bank account, the right to abortion, etc. While women have been denied some of these rights or had these rights circumscribed through the law, the place of women in American society has often been a reflection of the supposedly natural relationship between men and women. American women's tenuous grasp on freedom has been compounded by how race and class have been used by some of the most privileged women to advance their own claim to rights at the expense of racialized and working-class women. This social and economic imbalance between men and women and between women has been the site of serious contention between feminists and antifeminists as well as progressives and conservatives from the 19th century to today. The Women's Network hopes to sponsor a panel that can unpack some of these complicated demands and relationships, shed light on their intricacies, and ultimately, provide a nuanced understanding of visions of freedom espoused by American women and gender and sexual minorities.

CHAIR

✦ Anna Kurowicka, *Uniwersytet Warszawski*

SPEAKERS

- ✦ Atalie Gerhard, *Universität des Saarlandes* - CHOOSING LIFE: SELF-DETERMINATION AS MATERNAL RESISTANCE IN *SALVAGE THE BONES* (2011) AND *FUTURE HOME OF THE LIVING GOD* (2017)
- ✦ Julia Nitz, *Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg* - MAKING AMERICAN WOMEN HEALTHY AGAIN: ANTEBELLUM FASHION BASHING AND ITS CONTRADICTIONARY IMPULSES
- ✦ Rita Filanti, *Independent Researcher* - WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN THE US AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY: THE ANARCHIST PERSPECTIVE
- ✦ Małgorzata Olsza, *Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu* - VISIONS OF FREEDOM: REPRODUCTIVE BODIES IN REBECCA HALL'S *WAKE: THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF WOMEN-LED SLAVE REVOLTS*

KEYWORDS

MOTHERHOOD, REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE, WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE, ANARCHISM, HEALTH ACTIVISTS

EAAS WOMEN'S NETWORK

WESTERING IN/THE DISCIPLINE; OR, WHY THE AMERICAN WEST MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

Friday 04
10:15 - 11:45
SALETTA SEMINARI

EAAS WEST OF THE REST NETWORK

First on-site/in-person group meeting

As the fastest-growing geo-cultural region in North America across most metrics, the American West matters to the future of the United States of America and the global community. The West of the Rest network is dedicated to facilitating and promoting an invigorated and sustainable study of the West, its meaning to Americans and to people in the most far-flung locales, as its connections span the globe. Chiefly informed by New/Post-West and Global West schools of thought, our network's efforts are geared toward (re)centering scholarly attention on the American West along decidedly hemispheric, historical, transnational, multicultural, gender-diverse, and intersectional lines. While scholarly in intent and practice, our network also seeks to promote broader public engagement with Western lifeworlds.

The West of the Rest network cordially invites and welcomes scholars of all ranks who actively work and/or are interested in one or more of the following:

The multicultural geographies and lifeworlds of the West --- Visual and other art of the West --- Popular culture Wests (across a range of media, including television and film) --- The literary and lyrical West --- Western lifewriting and oral traditions --- The West as performance (show, stage, re-enactment, in everyday life) --- Silicon, virtual and videogame Wests --- Environmental history, wildlife and plant history, and energy humanities --- The hydrological/hydrographic West --- Material histories and cultures of the West --- Museums and exhibits of the West --- The military-industrial complex and/ in the West --- Indigenous Studies perspectives/approaches (activism, negotiation, trade, kinship, syncretism) --- Livestock raising and horsemanship economies/cultures --- Borderlands studies --- Globalism, international ties, and connection --- Gothic and Weird Studies --- Gender-diverse/queer Wests --- Critical regional studies --- Politics and protest --- Paleontological Wests and other non-anthropogenic epistemologies (geology, geomorphology, deep time) --- Etc.

Network co-founders: Stephen Aron (The Autry Museum of the American West), Alex Hunt (West Texas A&M University), Agnieszka Kotwasńska (American Studies Center, University of Warsaw), Patricia N. Limerick (University of Colorado Boulder), Stefan Rabitsch (University of Oslo), John Wills (University of Kent), Esther Wright (Cardiff University)

At this point, we actively solicit ideas and suggestions for collaboration, outreach, and knowledge transfer activities which are geared toward helping the network grow.

CHAIR

✦ Stefan Rabitsch, *Universitetet i Oslo*

KEYWORDS

AMERICAN WEST, POSTWEST, HEMISPHERIC WEST, GLOBAL WEST

UNMADE AND REWRITTEN: BLACK COUNTERNARRATIVES TO DOMINANT HISTORIES

FRIDAY 04
10:15 - 11:45
AULA A

In the 2003 preface to his seminal work *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Saïd put forward the idea that history is not just inherited, it is created and, therefore, it can be unmade: “My argument is that history is made by men and women, just as it can also be unmade and rewritten, always with various silences and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated” (xix). Building on this insight, this panel seeks to understand contemporary African American texts as imaginative spaces of freedom and resistance against national narratives of white supremacy. More specifically, we examine how these creative forms confront and challenge white supremacy and racial terrorism in the United States by remaking, reworking, and at times redressing dominant historical narratives. Through the act of story-telling, writers and artists reclaim silenced voices, reimagine the past, and construct alternative histories that center marginalized experiences while asserting cultural and aesthetic agency.

These three papers analyze how contemporary works engage with and respond to pivotal moments and enduring legacies of racial violence and terrorism in American history—the transatlantic slave trade, the institution of slavery, the plantation economy, the brutal lynching of Emmett Till, and the systemic racial segregation of the Jim Crow South. Moreover, these papers focus on the ways Black authors use speculative, dystopic, uchronian, uncanny, or alternate forms of fiction to challenge linear historical narratives, envision radical futures, and disrupt entrenched histories of oppression.

CHAIR

✠ Frédérique Spill, *Université de Picardie Jules Verne*

SPEAKERS

- ✠ Joanna Davis-McElligatt, *University of North Texas* - THE FLYING AFRICANS: FUGITIVITY AND RESISTANCE IN BLACK COMICS
- ✠ Solveig Dunkel, *Université de Lille* - PERCIVAL EVERETT'S THE TREES (2021): THE SILENCE OF THE ARCHIVES AND THE NOVEL AS A COUNTER-MONUMENT
- ✠ Laura Wilson, *University of St Andrews* - “OUR MONTICELLO”: BLACK RESISTANCE AND RECLAMATION IN JOCELYN NICOLE JOHNSON'S MY MONTICELLO
- ✠ Viola Marchi, *Universität Bern* - VISUALIZING OPPRESSION AND PRACTICING FREEDOM IN PAUL BEATTY'S THE SELLOUT AND PERCIVAL EVERETT'S THE TREES

KEYWORDS

AFRICAN AMERICAN, HISTORY, CIVIL RIGHTS, PLANTATION, MEMORY

ENDURING VISIONS OF FREEDOM: A RETROSPECTIVE OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

Friday 04
10:15 - 11:45
AULA B

The European Study Group of Nineteenth-Century American Literature is an international research network dedicated to the study of lesser-known and marginalized nineteenth-century American literature of the long nineteenth century. In this open round table discussion, we examine nineteenth-century literature as a formative archive for understanding the roots—and recurring patterns—of our present which is marked by democratic strain, renewed culture wars, racial injustice, widening economic inequality, environmental crisis, and intensified debates over national identity. We are going to debate how much nineteenth-century literature, even in its conventional expressions, is driven by conflicting aspirations for compliance and rupture, formula and freedom. A special focus will be on banned nineteenth-century books.

CHAIR

- ✠ Verena Laschinger, *Universität Erfurt*
- ✠ Julia Nitz, *Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg*

SPEAKERS

- ✠ Daniela Daniele, *Università di Udine*
- ✠ Elena Furlanetto, *Universität Duisburg-Essen*
- ✠ Yifah Hadar, *Independent Researcher*
- ✠ Michaela Keck, *Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg*
- ✠ Ralph J. Poole, *Universität Salzburg*
- ✠ Antonia Purk, *Universität Mannheim*
- ✠ Mariana Teixeira Marques-Pujol, *Université Toulouse-Capitole*

KEYWORDS

NINETEENTH CENTURY, BANNED BOOKS, CENSORSHIP

EAAS EUROPEAN STUDY GROUP OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN
LITERATURE NETWORK

EAAS AMERICAN STUDIES NETWORK GENERAL MEETING

Friday 04
10:15 - 11:45
AULA C

The American Studies Network (ASN) is a group of European centers involved in American Studies. The idea of a network of centers arose during the European Association for American Studies (EAAS) meeting in London in April, 1990. The ASN was founded in November, 1990 in Berlin at a meeting of interested directors of American Studies centers. The initial group of eight members has expanded to include 14 institutions from all over Europe and is now welcoming associated members from outside of Europe. All members take an interdisciplinary approach to American Studies; are independent organizations with some of their own sources of funding, not exclusively linked to a university; have some research facilities; and are committed to a role of public service to the community at large. ASN works in close association with the EAAS. In association with the EAAS the network also awards a biennial book prize. The jury of the book prize consists of scholars affiliated with the member institutions of the ASN.

CHAIR

▣ Martin Lütke, *John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies*

EAAS AMERICAN STUDIES NETWORK

CONSTRAINTS OF FREEDOM IN AMERICAN CINEMA: GANGSTERS, SOLDIERS, INSTITUTIONS

FRIDAY 04
10:15 - 11:45
AULA D

Ever since the on-screen gangster took root in the cultural imaginary at the beginning of the 20th century, this staple of the so-called underworld has displayed an ambivalent relation to the nation's founding ideals. These ideals themselves – enshrined in Thomas Jefferson's unalienable rights of "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" – were open to interpretation and initially envisioned to pertain only to white men who served as model citizens of the state to come. Classical cinematic portrayals of the gangster, in turn, oftentimes question the very attainability of the *Declaration of Independence's* premises and promises by featuring as their (anti-)heroes immigrants who ruthlessly and violently pursue power and status. These iconic figures – e.g. Vito Corleone or Tony Montana – are usually depicted as traditionally anti-modern, bound by honor and loyalty, and a striving for acknowledgement. Seeing themselves barred from the freedom that America promises, gangsters find ways and build structures to force it. Cultural studies and film studies alike have started to question the relevance of the American gangster. "At the beginning of the twenty-first century," in Ingrid Walker Fields' words, "the social reality of one of popular culture's favorite figures—the gangster—is in decline" (611). In this panel, we will challenge the gangster's relationship with ideals of liberty and investigate how they adapt to their cultural context. How do we approach the outdated values, xenophobic tendencies, and aggressive misogyny of many underworld films today? Are we still dealing with the same caliber of tragic hero when mobsters appear on screen as incarnations of comic-franchise villains (*The Penguin*) or when they brake out into campy dance numbers (*Emilia Pérez*)? What kind of freedom do the traditional screen gangsters represent and how does it differ (if at all) from that of more recent texts? We consider the frameworks that enable underworld players to stage themselves as liberators and protectors of freedom as well as the aesthetic strategies used to portray them. The aim is to further probe the traditional gangster figure's enduring allure as well as new interpretations of marginalized characters seeking liberty by means of organized crime.

CHAIR

▣ TBC

SPEAKERS

- ▣ Robert Winkler, *Universität Salzburg* - "THE MASK / OF MASCULINITY / IS A MASK / A MASK THAT'S WEARING ME": DE/CONSTRUCTING VISIONS OF MALE FREEDOM IN SERGIO LEONE'S ONCE UPON A TIME IN AMERICA (1984)
- ▣ Wibke Schniedermann, *Universiteit Gent* - THE GANGSTER AS INTERFACE BETWEEN LAW AND JUSTICE
- ▣ Laura Herges, *Heidelberg Center for American Studies* - THE MILITARY-ENTERTAINMENT COMPLEX AND THE DEATH OF CRITICAL FILMMAKING

KEYWORDS

GANGSTER, FILM; CRIME, JUSTICE, LEGALITY

ALTERNATIVE LOOKS VISION AND COUNTER-VISION IN AMERICAN POETRY

Friday 04
10:15 - 11:45
AULA 1

From John Winthrop's call for the world to watch the 'City on a Hill' to Emily Dickenson's imperative to tell it all at a 'slant' and Elizabeth's Bishop's likening of poetry to her grandmother's glass eye, vision has played a central role in poetry's relationship with national, generational and personal identity. Rather than looking straight on, that vision has relied on being seen as much as seeing, and on truths at once so skewed and literal that the artificial has become the material. This panel considers the literal, figurative and metaphysical role of vision in American poetry by investigating acts of seeing or blindness, considering language as a manifesting force, and exploring poetry's relationship to other media which rely on sight and image. From these starting points, it addresses questions that probe the conference theme: what can vision's complex relationship to poetic form tell us about the affordances and limits of freedom, and what does it mean to make freedom visible in poetic imagery and diction.

These papers bring together Don Mee Choi's visual images of transnational memory, Elizabeth Bishop's visions of an America that sprawls across the continent, and Frost's tightly woven vision of regionality, by scrutinising vision's kinship with America's founding principle of freedom. Vision, this panel suggests, is often grounded in language, but it also alludes words or finds new ways of bringing together communicative forms. The affordances and pressures of poetry's own forms, the panel argues, are crucial to our understanding of vision's power and its place in American Studies.

CHAIR

✠ Gulsin Ciftci, *Universität Münster*

SPEAKERS

- ✠ Mohan Ding, *Georg-August Universität Göttingen* - THE VISION OF TRANSNATIONAL MEMORY IN THE WORKS OF DON MEE CHOI
- ✠ Philip McGowan, *Queen's University Belfast* - LEARNING TO SEE WITH ELIZABETH BISHOP
- ✠ Lucy Cheseldine, *University of York* - KEEPING WATCH: POETIC VISION AND FORMAL FREEDOM IN ROBERT FROST'S LONGER POEM
- ✠ Julius Greve, *Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg* - STASIS IN VERSE: VISIONS OF CIVIL STRIFE IN WALT WHITMAN AND HENRY TIMROD

KEYWORDS

POETRY, VISION, FORM, TRANSNATIONALISM, IDENTITY

EAAS POETRY NETWORK



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