

THE UNITED STATES AND THE QUESTION OF RIGHTS
63rd Annual Conference of the German Association for American Studies
May 19 to 22, 2016

Workshops

Friday, May 20
2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

“We Will Be Citizens”: Life Writing, Citizenship, and the Question of Rights

Chairs: Mita Banerjee (Mainz) / Katja Sarkowsky (Münster)

This panel explores the intersection of legal debates and literature by investigating debates about citizenship rights through the lens of life writing. It thus draws on both the proliferation of the study of life narratives and on the intensified interest in questions of citizenship rights since the 1990s. In 1994, political theorists Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman observe a “return of the citizen”, an “explosion of interest in the concept of citizenship” in political and social sciences. Particularly in the 1990s and 2000s this debate has fundamentally redefined citizenship as a status and a political relation that exceeds the nation state (e.g. as transnational or cosmopolitan citizenship) and that is differentiated along lines of social stratification and identification (Young). In conjunction with controversies about immigration and the legalization of status as well as with the so-called ‘war against terror’, it has consequently generated a renewed interest in the study of the intersections between citizenship and literature, the function of literature in the discursive construction of citizenship, and concepts of ‘literary’ and ‘cultural citizenship’. As such, this connection has proven crucial for the reconceptualization of literature’s function for discourses of individual and group rights: When citizenship is understood as a legally effective discursive construction that oscillates between poles of (formal) membership and (affective) belonging, between notions of obligations and rights, literary texts can be productively read as engaging in the both critical and affirmative negotiation of forms of citizenship and the rights associated with them.

A field surprisingly under-researched in this context is the specific relation of life narratives to these negotiations of citizenship and citizenship rights. While the literary genre of autobiography features strongly in the analysis of, for instance, the concept of “Americanization” in immigrant life narratives, little systematic attention has been paid to the various ways in which life narratives critically investigate the relationship between an individual life, its collective embeddedness, and the allocation of rights. Where this has been done – e.g. in the study of slave narratives – the analytic focus has been on *human rights* rather than *citizenship rights*; a politically and discursively widespread conflation of different rights and their implied addressees.

Taking as its starting point the two well-established debates around literature and citizenship and life narratives and human rights discourses, this panel thus seeks to contribute to filling the gap of systematic attention to the ways in which life narratives – especially autobiographies and testimonies – negotiate forms of citizenship, citizenship rights, their national and transnational components, their implication in constructions of race and gender, and their function for and potential manipulation in the context of specific rights struggles. Potential materials of analysis include but are not restricted to Japanese American internment autobiographies; prison autobiographies; life narratives in the context of civil rights struggles such as the Black Power and American Indian Movements, but also feminist, LGBT, or disability movements; Arab American and Muslim autobiographies after 9/11; questions of life stories and citizenship education.

Speakers:

Abigail Fagan (Connecticut):

“Woman and Temperance: Women’s Auto/Biographies as Nineteenth-Century Appeals to Citizenship”

Axel Schäfer (Mainz):

"From Competitive Individualism to Social Selfhood: Citizenship and the New Corporate Order in Early Twentieth-Century American Social Thought"

Julia Lange (Hamburg):

"'We Were Victims, too': German American Internment Autobiographies and the (Re-)Construction of Citizenship"

Kathy-Ann Tan (Tübingen/ Berlin):

"Citizenship Deferred: Race, Kinship, Nation and the Cherokee Freedmen Controversy"

Ina Batzke (Münster):

"Contesting Traditional Citizenship: Abject Cosmopolitanism in José Ángel N.'s *Illegal*"

Thomas Clarke (Tübingen):

"'I Tell You Gay Story About Daddy': Charged Stand-Up as Life-Writing and the Humorous Struggle for Cultural Citizenship"

“Graphic Justice”: Mediating the Question of Rights in American Visual Culture

Chairs: Astrid Böger (Hamburg) / Nicole Maruo-Schröder (Koblenz-Landau)

When the scandal of U.S. American soldiers torturing Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib broke after pictures began to circulate on the media in the spring of 2004, the public was shocked and outraged to find out that such atrocities had in fact been committed. However, as Susan Sontag pointed out, written reports about these incidents had circulated for over a year but went ignored by politicians. Unlike such reports, which can easily be suppressed, “[t]he pictures will not go away” but “continue to ‘assault’ us,” as Sontag wrote in “Regarding the Torture of Others” (2004). The adage that pictures speak louder than words seems to hold particularly true for photographic evidence of atrocities but can certainly be extended to other visual media and other subject matter, as well.

Borrowing the title of Thomas Giddens’ recent collection on Graphic Justice (2015), which explores the various relations between graphic novels and the law, we would like to extend this focus and explore the manifold ways in which American visual culture intersects with the notoriously elusive concept of justice and related aspects such as morality, law, and legality, among others. Documentary photography – as different as Jacob Riis’ images of immigrants in New York slums at the end of the 19th century and James Nachtwey’s contemporary war photography, to give but two well-known examples – is one important area in which the connection between visual culture and justice becomes pertinent, aimed as it is at attracting attention to conditions that are deemed unacceptable and therefore in need of change. However, we also invite contributions that focus on decidedly more fictional approaches to questions of justice and the law as they become apparent in, for instance, graphic novels, TV law series, superhero movies, or courtroom dramas. How do such diverse representations depict, expose and negotiate questions of (in)justice? How do they respond to and comment on current crises including terrorism, war, economic and environmental disasters as well as their nefarious consequences for everyone affected by them? Precisely because pictures are often stronger than words, they tend to have a powerful and far-reaching impact, as the example of the scandalous Abu Ghraib images above indicates. Yet, visualization and dissemination alone do not guarantee that justice is actually served. As the public, political, and legal responses to that scandal have also shown, images and their meaning inevitably depend on framing, contextualization, and interpretation. Hence, the intersection of words and images is another potential angle for our workshop. Finally, we are also interested in contributions that explore the visual culture of the internet and how self-made images by average users, uploaded in real-time and potentially accessible world-wide, might impact questions of justice as they reveal events based on eyewitness accounts that might otherwise have been censored, suppressed, and therefore gone unnoticed. In short, this workshop invites papers that, from a variety of perspectives, explore the question of justice in the vast field of American visual culture.

Speakers:

Christoph Ribbat (Paderborn):

“Doing Justice to Diane Arbus: The American Politics of Portrait Photography”

Ingrid Gessner (Regensburg):

“Picturing Ebola: Photography as Instrument of Biopolitical (In)Justice”

Johannes Schmid (Hamburg):

“Marching for Justice: Graphic Literature and the American Civil Rights Movement”

Andreas Beer (Konstanz):

“Just(ice) Smiling? The Guy-Fawkes-Mask between Constitutive Justice and Veiled Spectatorship”

Stefan Schubert (Leipzig):

“Dystopia in the Skies: Negotiating Justice and Morality on Screen in the Video Game *BioShock Infinite*”

Birgit Spengler (Frankfurt):

“Bare Life and Border Justice: Negotiating Exception and Belonging in *The Bridge*”

copyright: work and art in the age of their digital subversion

Chair: Bernd Herzogenrath (Frankfurt am Main)

What is the status of copyright in the age of its digital subversion? It seems that after the death of the author, copyright law still clings to a concept of creativity, intention, originality and authorship that belong to a bygone era. Aesthetic strategies such as cut & paste, remix, appropriation art etc. constantly challenge the prevalent copyright system, and are criminalized by it. As proto-Anarchist philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon already noted in 1840:

The proprietor may, if he chooses, allow his crops to rot under foot; sow his field with salt; milk his cows on the sand; change his vineyard into a desert, and use his vegetable-garden as a park: do these things constitute abuse, or not? In the matter of property, use and abuse are necessarily indistinguishable.

This is exactly what happens, one might argue, in a Copyright System that (like the US Copyright Law) is not even centered on the idea of the creator of a given work, but on the economical aspect: thus not the author is the ultimate beneficiary of such a system, but the commercial users of rights (such as the Record Labels, Publishing houses, etc.).

But what about the rights of the users? Re:Creators? The danger to basic rights posed by a copyright law that professes to simply protect and regulate intellectual property is not obvious on first glance, it is rather based on an ever growing multiplication of restrictions – and this multiplication is “hidden behind technical rule-making, mystifying legal doctrine and complex bureaucracies, all papered over by seemingly plausible appeals to the rights of inventors and authors.”

This workshop wants to discuss today’s copyright system, both from a legal and political perspective (cp. e.g. Lessig) and from artistic and aesthetic practice. It wants to spread out and illuminate the whole field of ‘authorship rights,’ ‘ownership rights’ and what might be called ‘natural/basic rights’ to cultural artifacts.

Speakers:

Mary Ann Snyder-Körber (Berlin):

“Of Copies, Rights, and Nineteenth Century Abolitionist Remix: A Pre-Digital Case Study”

Anne-Marie Scholz (Bremen):

“The Fine Line Between Criminalization and ‘Fair Use’: Doing Transnational Film History in the midst of Copyright ‘Crackdown’”

Jens Bonk-Wiltfang (Osnabrück):

“Players as Creators: Copyright and Player Agency in Video Games”

Julius Greve (Köln):

“Ventriloquism Against the Copyright of the Concept: Authorial Suspension and Modernist Performativity”

Sebastian Scherer (Frankfurt):

“The Limits of No Control: Open Source and National Security”

Dennis Buescher-Ulbrich (Kiel):

“Capitalizing [on] the Commons: General Intellect and [as] Neoliberal Capital”

“The Right to Be Let Alone” – Transformations of American Privacy

Chairs: Karsten Fitz (Passau) / Bärbel Harju (München)

This workshop explores transforming notions of the right to privacy in US culture. Defined by Samuel Warren and Louis Brandeis as “the right to be let alone” in an article that appeared in the *Harvard Law Review* in 1890, privacy is considered one of the most central and conflicted values in American cultural history: fervently demanded and protected, while at the same time often invaded and overly regulated. According to recent debates, American society is in the midst of an unprecedented privacy crisis: in the wake of the NSA scandal, the proliferation of surveillance technologies, and the accumulation of ‘big data’, many Americans fear that their right to privacy is under attack. Yet there is also a tendency to voluntarily waive the right to privacy by divulging private details on talk shows, reality television, and social media. As Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg put it, privacy no longer appears to be “a social norm.” What is more, a staggering confessional culture that pivots on the display of emotions and an emphasis on therapeutic sensibilities adds to Americans’ inclination to privilege self-exposure and ‘oversharing’ over privacy.

In light of these transformative dynamics, a new ‘privacy paradigm’ is on the horizon. This means that there is not only the need to research privacy from a legal perspective, but an obligation to explore the right to privacy against the background of broader social and technological changes triggered by new media, the sexual revolution, neo-conservatism, and globalization, in order to gain a better understanding of the state of privacy rights in American history and society. The panel wants to explore how the right to privacy is intertwined with social and cultural (self-)conceptualizations of the US. In what ways have notions of “the right to be let alone” changed historically and how have these changes been discussed both in an American and a transnational context? How are these transformations of the right to privacy and its concomitant challenges to the individual reflected in the arts, literature, and in popular culture? How important is the right to privacy in discourses on surveillance, new media, and national security?

Speakers:

Katrin Horn (Würzburg):

“‘The Obligation to Privacy’ - (Not) Knowing in Henry James’ *The Bostonians*”

Jasmin Humburg (Hamburg):

“‘Show me something secret’ - The Panic about Privacy in Jonathan Franzen’s *Purity*”

Christina Maria Koch (Marburg):

“‘The most interesting stories are the ones I can never tell’: Exposing the Ordinary, Reclaiming Privacy in Diary Comics by Women Artists”

J. Jesse Ramírez (St. Gallen):

“Sexting, Surveillance, and the Right to Privacy”

Johannes Voelz (Frankfurt):

“Privacy and the ‘new Sincerity’ in the Writings of Ben Lerner, Miranda July, and Tao Lin”

Birgit Wetzel-Sahm (Mainz):

“Negotiating the Right to Be Let Alone: The Constitutional Right to Privacy and the Cultural Practice of the US Supreme Court”

The Law, Incorporated: Embodiments of Legal Agents in North America

Chairs: Alexandra Ganser (Wien) / Stefanie Schäfer (Jena)

This workshop addresses the poetics and politics of embodiment at work in North American legal cultures from a literary and cultural studies perspective. In Foucauldian terms, the law and legal discourse disciplines the body, producing “docile bodies” and subjecting individuals to national paradigms (*Discipline and Punish*, 1975). This process of subjection is itself performed by embodied agents, especially those of legal institutions (judges, attorneys, police officers, prison guards) who thus become corporeal representations of power and knowledge. From a diachronic perspective, these agents have, until recently, been overwhelmingly embodied as white and masculine in literature, television, and other media. Even in contemporary legal culture, the stories of non-white and non-male achievers are conventionally staged as counter-narratives (e.g. the [auto-]biographies of Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor or Ivy-League-trained lawyer Michelle Obama). Through the performance of their bodies in legal cultures, both fictional and non-fictional agents of the law are caught between professionalism and individuality, as agents of the state and as subjects of its power: In these narratives, institutional pressure may clash with subjective values and emotions.

The aim of our workshop is to discuss the representation of the body and embodiment as well as their function in narratives about both agents and subjects of the law, questioning the established dichotomy between them. The analytical toolkits of body studies, critical whiteness studies, and fashion studies provide valuable approaches to this topic: uniforms, for instance, visualize the power its agents are invested with; their racial and gendered performances are intricately linked to a prevalent image of ‘the law.’

Speakers:

Philipp Löffler (Heidelberg)

“Gut Feelings ca. 1850: Ellen Montgomery and Hester Prynne in the Social Bios”

Kerstin Knopf (Bremen)

“The Prison Space Embodied in American Women’s Prison Literature”

Katja Kanzler (Dresden)

“Female Lawyer Figures in Contemporary TV Legal Drama: Gender and/in Figurations of the Legal Process”

Maria Sulimma (Berlin)

“Beyond the Double Bind? Professional Femininities and ‘Uniform’ Desires”

Jochen Achilles (Würzburg)

“Murder or Cleansing? Legal and Illegal Agents in Native American Short Fiction by Simon J. Ortiz and Leslie Marmon Silko”

Alexandra Hauke (Wien)

“Native (Out)Laws: Indigenous Detectives in US and Canadian Crime Fiction”

The Coloniality of Legal Knowledge and Practice

Chairs: Gesa Mackenthun (Rostock) / Andrea Zittlau (Rostock)

Social, particularly racial, inequalities are deeply inscribed into American legal theory, legal practice, and the legal executive. This workshop looks at the legacy of Western racial and land related ideologies in legal thinking, in court rulings, and in the treatment of people of color (in particular Native Americans, Latinos, and Black Americans) within the prison complex.

The American legal logic with reference to Native American land claims is historically bound to notions of private property that are alien to the cultural logic of land ownership among America's original inhabitants. The denial of cultural difference in questions of land ownership is expressed in the Marshall decisions of the 1820s and 1830s which define Native Americans paradoxically as "domestic dependent nations" and continues into the Dawes Act (or General Allotment Act) which insists on the normativity of private land property, denying the legal validity of collective land ownership (Echo-Hawk, Deloria). Since the 1980s, this trend has begun to change. Court testimonies by Indigenous Americans, moreover, include performances of oral knowledge about sacred lands (Brown) and traditional land uses as a way of demonstrating the 'continuous' relationship Indigenous people have held to the lands in question (Monet/Wilson, Daly, Culhane). Developed in the wake of slavery, juridical discourse about Black Americans, both inside and outside the courtroom and the prison system, bears the weight of its colonial history which rationalized the denial of human status (e.g. habeas corpus) on the epistemological grounds of scientific racism. The legal discrimination inscribed in such earlier decisions as *Dred Scott* and *Plessy v. Ferguson* is continued today in subtle discriminations against formerly incarcerated people of color, translated into a system of control that institutionalizes a race-based caste system in the contemporary United States and creates a parallel universe inside and outside of correctional facilities for people of color. Similar practices can be observed with regard to other minorities such as Latinos and people of Arab descent. The social politics of this legal system are increasingly addressed in works of art, esp. literature and life-writing (see the celebrated *Guantánamo Diary* by Mohamedou Ould Slahi).

In all cases, the legal thinking about minorities was and still is determined by scientific theories about the hierarchy of human 'races', including theories about the mental inadequacy of non-Anglo Saxons, as well as scientific practices for ascertaining and proving these categorical differences (craniology, Bell Curve etc.). These colonial epistemologies are active in the legal and prison complex until today and they inform actions of self-justice by citizens regarding themselves as members of the 'master race'. While punishment for racially motivated murder is often wanting, people of color make up to 90% of prison inmates, both in the US and in Canada.

In preparation of this workshop we ask for proposals investigating the connections between colonial (pseudo-)scientific epistemologies and legal theory and practice in the US and in Canada. This may, but does not have to, include papers on land rights decisions and the room they give to displays of indigenous knowledge and land-related practices; the role of scientifically derived assumptions about black (or Indian, or Arab, or Latino) 'character' both in court and in the carceral complex; reflections on the legacy of colonial legal discourse and racial violence; the effects of the practice of outsourcing legal executive power to private security companies (e.g. Blackwater) on the continuation of racially motivated injustice; and transnational comparisons between the coloniality of legal discourse in America and other colonial countries (e.g. Australia, Iraq, Afghanistan). We explicitly invite papers that combine historical perspectives with literary methodologies such as analyses of the work of narrative in the construction of legal thinking, or indeed analyses of the literary representation of colonial legal legacies (e.g. in the works of Wideman, Vizenor, Everett, Hogan, Erdrich, and others).

Speakers:

Norbert Finzsch (Köln)

"Anglosphere, Colonialism and the Common Law: How Settler Imperialism Tweaked the Law"

Sabine Meyer (Osnabrück)

"Law and the Map: Indigenous Art and the Remapping of the Settler State"

Gesa Mackenthun (Rostock)

“The Chaos of Inchoateness: The Social Effects of Legal Ambivalence in Indigenous Rights Discourse”

Amina Grunewald (Berlin)

“Of Wolves and Whales - Visual Evidence Production as Decolonial Imperative”

Andrea Zittlau (Rostock)

“The Power of Poetic Souls: On Incarceration and Race”

Lena Krian (Cornell U)

“The Production of Skin: On Imprisoned Bodies in Diane Glancy”

Rights to Life? Biopolitics and Rights Discourse in the 21st Century U.S.

Chairs: René Dietrich (Mainz) / Jennifer J* Moos (Zürich)

In *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault examines the shift of the right of sovereignty “to take life or let live” to “the right to make live and to let die,” and Agamben in *Homo Sacer* traces the figure that is killed without being murdered to “archaic Roman law, in which human life is included in the juridical order.” Both thinkers of the biopolitical, then, inscribe life in the sphere of rights and under the rule of the law. Depending on how life is defined in its value, it is both that which must be protected in order to be managed according to sovereign interest; and that which can be exposed to sovereign rule or, in a neo-liberal context, made available to be seized by capital. Examining where the caesurae lie between these two realms can thus help to diagnose how a society through history (re)defines the individual or collective “right to life.”

For a nation-state whose founding declaration promises to secure the “right to life,” the question arises what kind of “life”—as defined in legal and juridical terms, as embodied through certain characteristics and practices, and inscribed within particular social and political norms—is evaluated as deserving to be included in the body politic. With the advance of the life sciences, not only the lives of a population but also “life” as biological carrier of information becomes available to be targeted for political and economic gain. Whether one considers, then, the patenting of DNA information, the discussion around factory farming, the legalization of same-sex marriage, or the campaign of “Black Lives Matter”—in the present-day U.S., life as an abstract category, as information, as disposition, as bodily and social practice, and as biological existence is intertwined with human/civil/natural rights discourse in a particular way. The current moment thus strongly invites American Studies scholars to explore in which ways the questions which rights a life possesses and who can claim which rights over (a) life intersect.

Speakers:

Sarah Earnshaw (Munich)

“Survival and Sacrifice: Universal Human Rights and Securing Life in US (Inter)National (In)Security“

Stefanie Müller (Frankfurt/Irvine)

“*The Circle* and Corporate Life“

Thomas Efferth (Mainz)

“Biopiracy: Legal Framework and Possibilities of Academia to Combat It“

Marion Rana (Bremen)

“Deafness, and the Right to Live as Ethnicity: Negotiations of Deaf Culture and Policy in Children’s and General Literature“

Elena Kiesling (Mannheim)

“Black Death or Queer Life? Intersectional Troubles in Black Queer Life Choices“

Susanne Leikam (Regensburg)

“Biopolitics and Climate Change in Edan LePucki’s *California* (2014)“

Workshops

Saturday, 21 May
2:00 pm – 5:00 pm

National Security and the Rule of Law: The War on Terror and the Challenges for Democracy in the United States

Chair: Jürgen Wilzewski (Kaiserslautern)

Discussant: Florian Böller (Kaiserslautern)

After 9/11 the Bush administration claimed inherent powers in dealing with global terrorism and abandoned common human rights standards in its fight against al Qaeda. The politics of preventive detention, military tribunals, renditions, and systematic torture raise questions of legislative and judicial checks and balances with regard to executive power, due process, and habeas corpus. Many scholars have diagnosed a return of the “imperial presidency” and a failed oversight role of Congress.

Barack Obama’s election led to widespread expectations that he would restore the rule of law in the “war on terror”. The finding of double standards in the USA including the failed shutdown of Guantanamo, the widespread targeting and killing of terrorists with drone strikes and the contemporary debate about the NSA surveillance activities, remain to be studied with regard to national security politics, the rule of law, the national identity and the democratic control of the “war on terror”.

The purpose of the workshop is to address the following questions:

- What is the role of the Supreme Court in U.S. national security discourses since 9/11?
- What are the roles of Congress and President in the national security policy of the United States?
- What are the cultural, sociological and historical conditions and forces behind the revival of the “imperial presidency” since 9/11?
- How can we explain double standards in times of national crisis after 9/11 with regard to America’s self-understanding as an exceptional nation?
- How were the policies of exemption in the national security realm after 9/11 justified and what were the underlying narratives?

Speakers:

Marcus Müller (Kaiserslautern)

“Security vs. Values? Obama, the War on Terror and the Rule of Law”

Sebastian Dregger (Eichstätt-Ingolstadt)

“US Supreme Court and National Security: The Hamdan v. Rumsfeld Decision”

Marcus Höreth (Kaiserslautern)

“US Supreme Court and the Domestic Balance of Powers”

Arthur R. Kreuzer (Munich)

“Beyond Landmark Cases: Supreme Court Jurisdiction and the War on Terror”

Lukas Herr (Kaiserslautern)

“Us and Them? American Exceptionalism and the War on Terror”

**“Enslave the liberty of but one human being and the liberties of the world are put in peril”:
Abolition and the Question of Rights in U.S. History and Culture”**

Chairs: Carsten Junker (Leipzig/Bremen) / Pia Wiegink (Mainz)

This panel seeks to address the question of a wide range of rights in the context of abolition both as a political and cultural force. Not only did the enslavement of Africans in the Americas put pressure on rights discourses from the very moment of the inception of the transatlantic slave trade, those in a position to debate, defy, and resist the violation of rights with regard to enslavement practices grounded their arguments in a range of rights discourses.

Abolition and its legacy must be considered a central discursive nodal point in which core ideals of the U.S.—religious, natural, and legal rights—intersected. It encompasses the early colonial period, during which cases against enslavement were argued largely on religious grounds, and the formative years of the United States, during which anti-slavery discourse strongly relied on principles of natural rights such as freedom and equality. It also enables an analysis of the antebellum period, during which anti-slavery politics not only claimed citizenship rights for all African Americans but also inspired discussions about naturalization, voting rights, and gender equality, as well as an interrogation of contemporary civil rights advocates criticizing, for example, the prison industry’s application of the 13th Amendment.

This panel thus proposes to discuss abolition as a catalyst for discourses of religious, human, and, consecutively, citizenship rights in the North American colonies, the U.S. Republic, the antebellum period, and beyond. It seeks to interrogate the ways in which abolition engaged rights, both in their context of the formation of the U.S. nation state as well as in transnational networks and across national borders. We invite contributions that interrogate diverse manifestation of the discourse of abolition and its references to rights—in diverse historical genres and media, as well as in ongoing instances of memorial culture and theory.

Speakers:

Malte Hinrichsen (Hamburg):

“‘This unfortunate difference of colour’: Thomas Jefferson’s Racist Abolitionism”

Ousmane Power-Greene (Clark U):

“Beyond Freedom: Abolition, Exile, and Black American Colonizationists’ Search for Citizenship Rights in West Africa”

Benjamin Fagan (Auburn U):

“Abolition and the Right to Revolution”

Kirsten Twelbeck (Hannover):

“Whitman and the Change of Rights During Reconstruction”

Sebastian M. Herrmann (Leipzig):

“‘Reading the Laws’: Legal Discourse and the Rhetoric of Data-Driven Argument in Nineteenth-Century Abolitionism”

Anna Thiemann (Münster):

“Black Cinema in the Obama Era: Slavery, Freedom and the Ongoing Struggle for Rights”

Can the Center Hold? Democratic Participation and Social Cohesion in a Changing State

Chairs: Christian Lammert (Berlin) / Boris Vormann (Berlin)

Over the course of the twentieth century, expanding welfare regimes in North-Atlantic states helped guarantee economic security for their citizens and social stability for their societies. In the quest for a more inclusive social citizenship, nation-states shielded certain areas of society—such as education, health care, and access to infrastructures—from the influence of the market. Though they never included all social groups, these patterns of state intervention allowed democratic participation, strengthened social cohesion, and ensured upward mobility.

These citizenship regimes have come under serious attack in the past four decades, posing fundamental challenges for democratic and civic participation. The unbundling of the welfare state has unraveled notions of social citizenship and has dismantled universal access to public services. What tended to be seen as rights became regarded as illegitimate entitlements. These tensions within the nation-state have never been resolved. Instead they deepen with every crisis. What rights does citizenship entail after the onslaught on the welfare state? Who has the wherewithal to fully participate in society, and who has the right to the city? How can the center hold, given the deep inequalities that run through US society?

This workshop examines the impact of globalization processes on the state and its capacities to facilitate inclusive, democratic participation and social cohesion. It examines unbundling welfare and citizenship regimes in the United States. The central questions posed in this workshop pertain to the changing possibilities for individuals and social groups to shape their own fate: to participate in social life, in the labor market, and in cities. It reflects on how citizenship rights and rights to the city have been reconceptualized since the 1970s. While the main focus rests on the United States, we invite papers that take a comparative perspective.

Speakers:

Julia Püschel (Berlin)

“Citizenship in the Post-Welfare State”

Wolfgang Hochbruck (Freiburg)

“Pay for Spray – Fire Services and the Loss of Republican Agency”

Darren Botello-Samson (Pittsburg)

“The Neoliberal Erosion of Rights in Administrative Law”

Dennis Büscher-Ulbrich (Kiel)

“Rethinking the Right to the City: Democracy, Police and the Parallax of Political Economy”

Curd Knüpfer (Berlin)

“Technological Innovation and Bottom Up Democracy”

“New Italians” or “Criminal Aliens”: The Contradictions of Latinos/as, Rights, and Race in the United States

Chairs: Gabriele Pizarz-Ramirez (Leipzig) / Jesse Ramirez (Frankfurt am Main)

Latinos and Latinas, the largest minority group in the United States, are at the center of conflicting debates about rights, race, and racial hierarchies in an increasingly diversified US society. Some call them criminals, “illegals,” burdens on the welfare system, a fast-breeding, Spanglish-speaking nation within a nation whose refusal to assimilate threatens Anglo-Protestant values. To others, they are patriots, hard workers, and model immigrants (“New Italians”) who exemplify the continuing power of the American dream. Does the growing demographic, cultural, and political influence of Latinos/as mark the decline of the United States, or its longevity? How should we understand “Latino spin,” which Arlene Dávila defines as the process by which certain discourses and knowledges about Latinos/as trump others? As a racially and socially hybrid group, how are Latinos/as positioned within what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and David R. Dietrich have described as “a new pigmentocracy” in the United States—a social stratification consisting of whites at the top, light-skinned “honorary whites” in the middle, and dark-skinned or black people at the bottom?

This panel seeks to address these questions by reflecting on the ways that the contradictory position of Latinos/as mirrors the contradictions of rights and race in America.

Speakers:

Horst Tonn (Tübingen)

“Imagineries of Citizenship in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands”

Josef Raab (Duisburg-Essen)

“The Disenfranchised Latin@ Alien in *The X-Files* and Beyond”

Markus Heide (Uppsala)

“Social Banditry and the Struggle for Equal Rights in Mexican-American Popular Culture”

Ahu Tanrisever (Frankfurt am Main)

“Scarface 1932|1983: Social Mobility, Ethnicity, and the Gangster Film”

Gabriela Serrano (San Angelo)

“The Use of Spanglish as Latina Grotesque”

The Guardian of Every Other Right: Property and/in Literature in the U.S.

Chairs: Peter Schneck (Osnabrück) / Samira Spatzek (Bremen)

The right to property is fundamentally inscribed into the legal, historical, political, and cultural landscapes of the United States. Literary fiction has always played—and still plays—a crucial role in the negotiations of proprietary claims and property rights, and American writers have always debated concepts of ownership, entitlement, and appropriation in their works. This debate has not only included questions concerning the nature of ownership itself, and the complex relation between property rights and 'the pursuit of happiness' but also questions of what it means to be the subject and the 'object of property' (Patricia Williams), respectively. More recent fictional texts by contemporary U.S. writers clearly attest to the ongoing and fundamental engagement of literary form with the predicaments of property and rights. Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* (2008), for instance, addresses and re-examines the ways in which the systems of chattel slavery and settler colonialism helped to shape foundational conceptual correlations of identity, subjectivity, agency and property; while Kauai Hart Hemmings' *The Descendants* (2009) in similar ways discusses the disruptive force of colonial and neo-liberal politics of dis-possession and their impact on notions of personhood, cultural identity and collective memory.

This workshop seeks to take a closer look at the 'literary history' of property and rights in the U.S. by examining how U.S.-American literature engaged with property as narrative *and* form (cf. Stephen Best; Carol M. Rose) and thus navigated as well as criticized concepts of ownership, possession, and proprietorship, from the early colonial period to the twenty-first century.

Speakers:

Simone Knewitz (Bonn)

"Agrarian Justice: James Fenimore Cooper's Littlepage Manuscripts and the New York Anti-Rent Wars"

Chad Luck (San Bernadino)

"Debt Reckoning: Equity, Property, Bartleby"

Sonja Schillings (Gießen)

"It Came to him Business, It Went from him Poetry: Literary Studies and Ownership in Saul Bellow's 'The Gonzaga Manuscripts'"

Juliane Richter (Cork) / Melanie Stengele (Konstanz)

"Cultural Property and Reader-Ownership in Donna Tartt's *The Goldfinch* (2013)"

Julia Sattler (Dortmund)

"Who Owns Detroit? Negotiating Property in Angela Flournoy's *The Turner House* (2015) and Benjamin Markovits's *You Don't Have to Live Like This* (2015)"

Patrice D. Douglass (Irvine)

"The Claim of Right to Property: Social Violence and Political Right"

Rethinking “Territory”: Territorial Rights and Water

Chairs: Jens Temmen (Potsdam) / Nicole Waller (Potsdam)

There are no borderlines on the sea,” writes the refugee narrator of Edwidge Danticat’s short story “Children of the Sea” (14), shortly before his boat sinks on its attempted passage from Haiti to the U.S. At once programmatic and tragic, the sentence calls attention to some of the issues to be explored in this workshop, namely the cultural, legal, and political representations of the rights of people who enter the U.S. from the sea, who frequent maritime routes claimed by or crucial to the U.S., or who dwell in oceanic areas within U.S. sovereignty. Thinking territory and rights through water, our workshop seeks to address the legal structures and procedures developed for securing U.S. territorial rights with regard to its seaward boundaries and maritime possessions.

While attentive to current scholarship theorizing the relationship of the ocean and sovereignty in terms such as “wet ontologies,” “oceanic thinking,” “oceanic discourse,” and “oceanic mobilities” (cf. Steinberg and Peters, Wilson, Rowe, Ganser), the focus of our workshop lies on how concepts of territoriality shift when they are applied “beyond the paradigmatic space of solid land” (Steinberg, Stratford and Peters). The complex nature of water as territory is highlighted by the *United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea*, according to which maritime borders, far from being clear-cut lines, generally reverberate outward from the coast in legally complicated concentric circles. Embracing these complexities, our workshop invites participants to explore U.S. legal definitions of water as territory and their cultural and political implications. Questions to be addressed may include but are not limited to the following:

- definitions of national boundaries and territories; the boundary function of oceans, lakes, and rivers; the demarcations of state, national, and international waters; imperial managing, delimiting, scaling, and incorporating of water as territory
- the legal status of ships under sail; refugee boats and the question of rights; multiple migrant histories and experiences; the histories of slavery and piracy; the role of water as
- territory in U.S. military engagements
- representations of the legal dimensions of ecological issues: seabed drilling; pollution; ownership of natural resources in oceans, rivers, and lakes
- indigenous challenges to U.S. sovereignty involving fishing and whaling rights; indigenous communities and disputes over territorial rights in the Arctic; Pacific islander coastal rights and “marine tenure”

Speakers:

Georgiana Banita (Bamberg)

“Cargo Culture: Atlantic Offshore Resources from Fossil Fuels to Clean Energy”

Juliane Braun (Bonn)

“Unbounded: The Great Hunt, Natural Law, and the Creation of a Transoceanic American Empire”

Simon Schleusener (Würzburg)

“The Nomos of the Sea: Territory and Sovereignty in Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*”

Nicole Poppenhagen (Flensburg)

“Oceanic Crossroads: Chinese Labor, (Il)Legal Migration, and U.S. Imperialism in the Pacific”

Crister S. Garrett (Leipzig)

“Constructing Geographies of Power: The United States, China, and Emerging Concepts of Order in the Pacific”

Popular Music and (the Discourse on) Human Rights

Chairs: Martin Butler (Oldenburg) / Clark D. Halker (Chicago)

The relationship between popular music and the question of human rights is manifold: Not only does popular music regularly reflect on the issue of human rights, e.g. on their universal significance or their violation; popular music has also been employed as a powerful medium to e.g. articulate and disseminate political ideas or foster group cohesion and solidarity in struggles for human rights, ranging from the chanting of street protestors to professionally organized benefit concerts – such as the “Human Rights Now!” tour in 1988, which featured artists such as Tracy Chapman, Joan Baez, and Bruce Springsteen, or the more recent “Bringing Human Rights Home Concert” organized by Amnesty International in New York City in 2014, at which Madonna shared the stage with Pussy Riot and other politically motivated singers, songwriters, and bands. And, very much in line with Julie Mertus’s observation that, in general, there has been “an explosion of popular culture devoted to human rights [and] a tangible increase in the number of high-profile celebrities championing human rights causes (88)”¹ in the recent past, it seems safe to assume that popular music indeed plays a significant (and perhaps an *increasingly* significant) role in debates on human rights.

At the same time, and in spite of these potentials of popular music in the discourse on human rights, Ian Peddie observes that there is still “an absence of human rights as a topic of critical focus for popular music scholars” (1).² Against this backdrop, and on the basis of a wide understanding of popular music, which also includes the contexts of its production and reception as well as the medial and institutional framework of the entertainment industries, the proposed workshop sets out to explore the intricate connections between popular music and human rights. Focusing on North-American popular music and its contexts (but also taking into account both the global distribution of popular music and the equally global dimension of the discourse on human rights), the workshop’s aims are

- 1.) to shed light on the medially specific ways of addressing human rights *in songs*, taking into consideration the lyrical, musical, and performative levels,
- 2) to examine different ‘uses’ of popular music in debates on and struggles for human rights, e.g. by political campaigns and campaigners, by NGOs or other groups and institutions, and
- 3) to analyze the ways in which the topic of human rights is (strategically) employed in popular music, e.g. in the self-fashioning of popstars as ‘ambassadors’ of human rights.

Accordingly, questions the contributions to the workshop might address include (but are not limited to) the following:

- How, i.e. with what aesthetic strategies, does popular music address human rights on the lyrical, musical, and performative level?
- What aspects/dimensions of human rights does popular music tend to address or ignore?
- If the concept of human rights relies on ontology, on an affirmative definition of ‘the human,’ then in what ways does music negotiate this definition?
- Are there specific genres of popular music that afford themselves for a discussion of and reflection on human rights? Are there specific periods in time, or socio-cultural contexts in which the thematization of human rights is particularly present/absent? And if so, why?
- How are human rights thematized in or across other medial formats in the field of popular music (such as fanzines, websites, blogs, video clips, or (auto)biographies)?
- In what ways, by whom, and for what particular purposes is popular music drawn upon in the struggle for/the discourse on human rights?
- And vice versa: In what ways is the topic of human rights drawn upon in the field of/in the discourse on popular music?

¹ Mertus, Julie. “Evaluating NHRIs: Considering Structure, Mandate, and Impact.” *Human Rights, State Compliance, and Social Change: Assessing National Human Rights Institutions*. Ed. Ryan Goodman and Thomas Pegrum. New York: Cambridge UP, 2012. 74-92.

² Peddie, Ian. *Popular Music and Human Rights. Vol. 1: British and American Music*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011. 1-4. Print. Peddie’s collection of essays is one of the few contributions mapping the field through a range of case studies.

Speakers:**Terence Kumpf (Dortmund):**

“Persistent Resistance: The Demand for Collective and Individual Human Rights Action in the Music of Rebel Diaz”

Melanie Eis (Köln):

“Women’s Rights as Human Rights? Alix Doblin’s ‘Women’s Music’”

Elisabeth Schäfer-Wünsche (Bonn):

“Justice, Human Rights, and Markets: Reggae Sound Collisions”

Mario Dunkel (Dortmund):

“‘Jazz Means Respecting Human Rights’: The Politics of UNESCO’s International Jazz Day”

Annette Karpp (Berlin):

“Punk and/or Human Rights?: From an Anti-Establishment Ideology to an Agenda of Political Participation in New York City’s Punk Scene”

Henning Kuckuk (Kaltenkirchen):

“Patti Smith’s Networking Human Rights”

US Rights in Education

Chairs: Maria Eisenmann (Würzburg) / Uwe Küchler (Bonn)

In times of globalization, education and human rights interact in complex ways. Thus, contemporary forces of globalization and US rights have to be reflected in educational policy discussions, textbook revisions and teacher education for the EFL classroom. There is a need for these issues of justice to be reconsidered at national, regional, and international levels by analyzing civil, political, economic, and social rights aspects. The question is in how far they are present in educational debates and in EFL classrooms. How are human rights and civil rights represented in curricula? How are they reflected in teaching materials focusing on North America? Which other rights, especially when focusing on North America, should be considered for EFL teaching? Do pupils learn about the construction, justification, attainment and manipulation of rights? Is the question of rights also brought into curricula as an educational framework or context? How are rights taught or learned about in present day Germany?

Speakers:

Christian Ludwig (Karlsruhe):

“‘A Queer Thing Happened in America’– The (L) G (BTQ) Rights Movement in the English Language Classroom”

Amy Mohr (München):

“Walking the Line: Rights and the Reader”

Saskia Hertlein (Essen):

“Between Plagiarism, Diversity, and a ‘Hegemonic-°©-Free Zone’ — Wendy Wasserstein’s *Third* and ‘US Rights in Education’ in the Advanced EFL Classroom”

Roman Bartosch (Köln):

“(Post)Human Rights/ Rites: Animals and Ecology in the Inclusive Classroom”

Grit Alter (Innsbruck):

“On not ‘Using’ Characters with Disability in the EFL-Classroom”

Mirja Beutel (Bochum):

“Minority Rights in the EFL-classroom: A Cosmopolitan Approach to the *Columbus Day* episode of *The Sopranos*”

Saturday, May 21
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm

Post Graduate Forum “Meet the Speakers”

**Chairs: Laura Oehme (Bayreuth) / Judith Rauscher (Bamberg) /
Theresa Roth (Bamberg) / Mareike Spsychala (Bamberg)**

The Postgraduate Forum of the GAAS invites young scholars to participate in a panel discussion with the keynote speakers of this year’s annual meeting. The event allows for open scholarly exchange between the speakers and young researchers and intensive discussions about the conference’s general topic as well as the individual keynote lectures.