President’s Welcome

With its 65th annual meeting, the German Association for American Studies returns to the question of how the idea of competing public spheres within an open and competitive media environment has shaped and continues to shape American democracy and society. As the organizers of this conference put it in the call for papers for the 2018 GAAS annual meeting, the “public sphere” has rarely been understood as a single and unified concept in an American context. This stands in marked contrast to the way many people in Europe still conceive of it. How we define and thereby create “publics” is a question of utmost importance in the contemporary world. At this point, we are living through a “social media” revolution. It rivals earlier such media revolutions that came with the rise of mass circulation dailies during the nineteenth century, the introduction of broadcasting in the 1920s, and the breakthrough of television during the 1950s and 1960s. Yes, social media are now part of the daily routines of billions of people. Yet, we need to remind ourselves that they experienced their political breakthrough only about ten years ago, with Barack Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign. Its impact on social ideas of “publics/counterpublics” has not yet been thoroughly understood. We are faced with the question, for example, of how a political environment, in which major decisions are being announced “straight to the people” in unfiltered 140-character text messages (“tweets”), will be shaped by a continued competition of opinions, standpoints, as well as social, political, and commercial interests. If history is any guide or if the “Black Lives Matter” campaign and the present vociferous resistance of young people against mass shootings give any indication of a future to come, we should expect the rise of new publics and counterpublics that will continue to challenge “the powers that be.” While many (rightly) bemoan the rise of “fake news” and “alternative facts,” the cool, detached, and methodologically rigorous analysis of the dynamics of past and present change is more warranted than ever. Such scholarly pursuits are at the core of our mission at the GAAS. Therefore, as president of the Association, I would like to thank the local organizers at the John F. Kennedy Institute for putting together a highly intriguing program, for inviting many renowned keynote speakers, and for providing a first-class venue for lively scholarly debates. Moreover, I would like to thank the many members of the Association who have answered the call for papers for contributing to what I am sure will be a very stimulating 65th GAAS Annual Meeting.
A Warm Welcome to Berlin

The "public sphere"—an idea with deep roots in the European enlightenment—has always been a contested concept in American culture and society. Almost by default, American intellectuals, artists, politicians, and activists have stressed the non-unitary, diversified, and oppositional dynamics of all things public. While based on enlightened principles of free debate and rational deliberation, the US Constitution in this manner already eschewed a philosophy of consensus building in favor of a philosophy of multi-interested checks and balances. Not the expressiveness of Rousseau’s volonté générale but the procedurality of Madison’s extended republic stood at the beginning of American notions of democratic governance. As a consequence, “public opinion” in the United States could never easily be identified with some widely accepted “public good,” but has always been open to multiple sub- and non-public (private, corporate, technological, etc.) influences.

Thus, from the early days of the American republic, competing interest groups and commercial mass media (first newspapers, novels, and the theater, then radio, television, and the internet) have worked to pluralize public speech and public action—and ultimately the notion of “publicness” itself. Numerous social, political, and aesthetic developments throughout American history can be (re)described against this background as struggles for publicity, waged against the power of elites to define or usurp the national agenda. Despite their ideological differences, two of the most important American contributions to the theory of the public sphere—Walter Lippmann’s The Phantom Public (1925) and John Dewey’s rejoinder The Public and Its Problems (1927)—concur that the public sphere is not a realm of unbiased exchange and unanimous agreement. Rather, in the United States, the public sphere becomes visible as a multi-agential, commercially embattled, highly mediated, and eventually trans-nationalized aggregate of publics and counterpublics. Numerous later discussions of American counter/publics—from Nancy Fraser, Seyla Benhabib, and Michael Warner to Robert Darnton, Michael Hardt, Catherine Squires and others—have further refined this self-conceptualization of democratic speech under the conditions of capitalist mass media. Recent accounts frequently stress the deterritorialized—though regularly Anglophone—nature of counter/public communication in global digital networks. In particular, the communication of public trust—within political contexts naturally inclined to distrust—has been a central topic in and for American culture in the twenty-first century.

The Freie Universität Berlin, the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, and the Graduate School of North American Studies are proud to host this year’s Annual Meeting of the German Association for American Studies. As the capital of Germany, with its vibrant public sphere, Berlin is the perfect place to critically engage with the topic of this year’s conference. We are all looking forward to fruitful and engaged debates that will continue the well-established tradition of open exchange of ideas at our annual conferences. Welcome to Berlin! We hope that all of you will have a wonderful time!
WEDNESDAY 23 May 2018
4.30 – 6.30 p.m. • Room 319 / JFKI
Editorial Board Meeting

THURSDAY 24 May 2018
8.30 a.m. – 4.30 p.m. • Room 319 / JFKI
DGfA / GAAS Board Meeting
1.00 – 2.00 p.m.
Catered Lunch for Board Meeting
3.00 – 4.30 p.m. • SSC
PGF Get-Together
The get-together aims to welcome new scholars to the Postgraduate Forum of the GAAS and to facilitate exchange between early career scholars of American Studies. In a casual setting, early career researchers of all qualification levels can learn about the PGF and meet other graduates and postgraduates before the conference picks up pace.

FRIDAY 25 May 2018
8.00 a.m. – 6.00 p.m. • Room 206 / JFKI
Conference Office

8.00 a.m. – 6.00 p.m. • Room 206 / JFKI
Conference Office

9.00 – 10.30 a.m. • Seminaris
Keynote Lecture
Catherine Squires (Minnesota)
“Generating Creative Friction: Counter-Narratives & Ethical Imaginaries at Home in Black Counterpublics”
Chair: Boris Vormitan (Bard College Berlin)
→ p. 21

10.30 – 11.00 a.m.
Coffee Break

11.00 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. • Seminaris
Keynote Lecture
Andrew Gross (Göttingen)
“Community and Contagion: Crises of Liberalism in the Writing of Benjamin Franklin”
Chair: Astrid Franke (Tübingen)
→ p. 22

12.30 – 2.00 p.m.
Lunch Break

PGF LUNCH MEETING • SSC
Early career scholars are invited to address issues of their concern and to vote for the location of the 2019 PGF conference (free pizza provided). Organized by the current PGF team in Berlin (Helen Gibson, Anne Potjans, Simon Rienäcker, Jiann-Chyng Tu).

2.00 – 5.00 p.m. • JFKI / GNAS / SSC
Workshops 1–7
→ p. 10 et. seq.

3.15 – 3.45 p.m.
Coffee Break

5.15 – 6.15 p.m. • Room 340 / JFKI
Women’s Caucus

6.30 – 7.30 p.m. • Room 340 / JFKI
Diversity Roundtable
SATURDAY
26 May 2018

8.00 a.m. – 6.00 p.m. • Room 206/JFKI
Conference Office

9.00 – 10.30 a.m. • Seminaris
Keynote Lecture
Sarah Igo (Vanderbilt)
“Thinking Publics: The History of a Promise and a Problem”
Chair: Olaf Stieglitz (Köln)
→ p. 23

10.30 – 10.45 a.m.
Coffee Break

10.45 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. • Seminaris
DGfA/GAAS Members’ Meeting

1.00 – 2.00 p.m.
Lunch Break

INFO SESSION  DFG funding and GAAS scholarships with Peter Schneck (Osna-brück)—Brown Bag Lunch • Room 340/JFKI

BROWN BAG LUNCH  Digital Project Shorts (DASI Forum) • Room 319/JFKI
The Forum of the Digital American Studies Initiative (DASI) will first provide an overview of activities and developments since last year’s annual meeting. Following this, scholars will give short presentations on current digital humanities projects in American Studies. At the end, there will be the opportunity for an exchange of ideas and further networking.

2.00 – 5.00 p.m. • JFKI/GSNAS/SSC
Workshops 8 – 14
→ p. 14 et. seq.

3.15 – 3.45 p.m.
Coffee Break

5.15 – 6.15 p.m. • Room 340/JFKI
PGF Meet the Speakers
The Postgraduate Forum invites early career 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 early career researchers and intensive discussion about the conference’s general topic as well as the individual keynote lectures.

6.15 – 7.45 p.m. • Room 340/JFKI
Podiumsdiskussion: “Zwischen Fake News und Fact Checking: Die Transformationen des öffentlichen Raumes”
→ p. 26 et. seq.

8.00 p.m. • Domäne Dahlem
Party

SUNDAY
27 May 2018

8.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. • Room 206/JFKI
Conference Office

9.30 – 11.00 a.m. • Seminaris
Keynote Lecture
Todd Gitlin (Columbia)
“How the American Right Organized an Assault on the Others”
Chair: Katja Kanzler (Dresden)
→ p. 24

11.00 – 11.30 a.m.
Coffee Break

11.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. • Seminaris
Concluding Lecture
Claudia Rankine
“The Racial Imaginary in Contemporary American Art”
Moderator: Sean Bonney (FU Berlin)
Followed by a Book Signing
→ p. 25
AMERICAN STUDIES AS ENGAGED SCHOLARSHIP: DOING PUBLIC HUMANITIES FROM THE LOCAL TO THE TRANSNATIONAL

WORKSHOPS 1–7
FRIDAY 2.00–5.00 p.m.

1 (Trans)National Counter/Publics and the Politics of Humor in US Culture
• Room 201
Organizers Erik Redling (Halle), Stefanie Schäfer (Erlangen)

2 Early Mass Cultures as Counter/Publics • Room 203
Organizers Aleksandra Boss, Kristina Graaff, Martin Klepper, Simon Rienäcker (HU Berlin)

3 When the Beacon Breaks: The End of Mass Media and the Rise of the Niche
• Room 319
Organizers Torsten Kathke (Mainz), Sabrina Mittermeier (München)

4 Muckraking 2.0: Activist Modes and Media of Documentary Revisited
• Room 340
Organizers Astrid Böger (Hamburg), Christof Decker (München)

5 The Ableist Public and Crip Counterpublics • LIB
Organizers Simon Strick (FU Berlin), Olga Tarapata (Köln)

6 Rumor, Gossip, and Reputation in the American Counter/Public Sphere • SSC
Organizers Pierre-Héli Monot (München), Florian Zappe (Göttingen)

7 Teaching Counter/Publics: American Studies and Digital Pedagogy • GNAS
Organizers Ingrid Gessner (Regensburg), Uwe Küchler (Tübingen)

WORKSHOPS 8–14
SATURDAY 2.00–5.00 p.m.

8 American Studies as Engaged Scholarship: Doing Public Humanities from the Local to the Transnational
• Room 201
Organizers Regina Schober (Mannheim), Alexander Starre (FU Berlin)

9 Taverns, Salons, and Vaudeville Theaters: Space and Public Spheres in Nineteenth-Century America
• Room 203
Organizers Evangelia Kindinger (Bochum), Dietmar Meinel (Duisburg-Essen)

10 Counter/Publics and the Private Sphere • Room 319
Organizers Karsten Fitz (Passau), Johannes Voelz (Frankfurt), Stefan Hippler (Würzburg), Katrin Horn (Erlangen)

11 Public Feeling • Room 340
Organizer Heike Paul (Erlangen)

12 Transnational Periodical Counter/Publics • LIB
Organizers Florian Freitag, Tim Lanzendorfer (Mainz)

13 Electronic Agoras: Inter/Multimedial Dissensus and the Public Discourse of Islamophobia • SSC
Organizers Elena Furlanetto (Duisburg-Essen), Frank Mehring (Nijmegen)

14 The Prison as Counter/Public • GNAS
Organizers Birte Christ (Gießen), Andrea Zittlau (Rostock)

WORKSHOPS 1–7
FRIDAY 2.00–5.00 p.m.

2 Early Mass Cultures as Counter/Publics
Organizers Aleksandra Boss, Kristina Graaff, Martin Klepper, Simon Rienäcker (HU Berlin)

Christina Meyer (Hamburg)
“Middlebrow Publics? Reading Gender in the Serial Press, 1910–1930”

Maskid Mayar (Bielefeld)
“‘our work is done and now for some fun and play’: Personal Fictions of the World and (Counter) Publics of Childhood”

Annabel Friedrichs (Hannover)
“Drawing Appeals: Femininity and Feminism in Nell Brinkley’s Graphic Art”

Luvena Kopp (Frankfurt)
“Publics/Counter Publics: Billie Holiday and the Early War on Drugs”

Carmen Dexl (Erlangen-Nürnberg)
“Negotiating the Boundaries between Consent and Dissent: Josephine Baker as a Cultural Icon, International Star, and Social Activist”

1 (Trans)National Counter/Publics and the Politics of Humor in US Culture
Organizers Erik Redling (Halle), Stefanie Schäfer (Erlangen)

Allison Stagg (Mainz)
“Political Humor in Early American Caricature Prints”

Mischa Honeck (HU Berlin)
“The Senator and His Satirist: Carl Schurz, Thomas Nast, and the Ethnicization of Political Humor”

Antje Dollmann (HU Berlin)
“19th-Century Medical Humor, Professional Authority and Lay Audiences in Narratives by Henry Clay Lewis, Marcus Lafayette Byrn, and Silas Weir Mitchell”

Guido Isekenmeier (Stuttgart)
“The (Counter)Public Burning: Cold War Politics and Frontier Humor in Robert Coover’s Magnum Opus”

Carsten Schinko (Stuttgart)
“Fun Rides in Lethal Rush Hours? Reflections on the Buddy Cop Movie”

Carsten Junker (Leipzig)
“Haunting the Monstrous President: Reinstituting High-Culture Notions of Authorship in Contemporary Political Satire”
When the Beacon Breaks: The End of Mass Media and the Rise of the Niche
Organizers Torsten Kathke (Mainz), Sabrina Mittermeier (München)

Martin Lüthe (FU Berlin)
“When the Ticker Ticks: Telegraphic Fiction, Media Change, and Infatuating Communication”

John Munro (Saint Mary’s University, Halifax/Tübingen)
“Fighting Fake News in the Age of McCarthyism: A Counter-Public Sphere at the Heart of Empire”

Sabrina Mittermeier (München)
“From The WELL, Actually: How Partisan Websites Flooded Public Discourse”

Kay Losey (Grand Valley State University, MI)
“Trump in the ‘Twitter-verse’: Using Personal Style for Mass Appeal and its Implications”

Stefanie Mueller (Frankfurt)
“@AltNatParkSer and @RogueNASA: Science, Nature, and Rogue Tweeting”

Muckraking 2.0: Activist Modes and Media of Documentary Revisited
Organizers Astrid Böger (Hamburg), Christof Decker (München)

Ina Batzke (Münster)
“‘Define American’: Undocumented Activism 2.0”

Julia Faisst (Eichstätt)
“Homelessness 2.0: New Documentary Modes of Precarious Habitats in Late Capitalism”

Lee A. Flamand (FU Berlin)
“The Intermedial Aspirations of Documenting Dissent: Ava DuVernay’s 13th”

Anne Nassauer (FU Berlin)
“Documenting Dissent—US Activists’ Capture and Representation of Protests”

Sarah Säckel (Stuttgart)
“Bursting the Fashion Filter Bubble: Activist Documentary Modes Presenting the Exploitation of Textile Workers and the Planet”

Babette B. Tischleder (Göttingen)
“The Inconvenience of Loving Gaia: On the Style and Sentiment of Ecocritical Documentaries”

The Ableist Public and Crip Counterpublics
Organizers Simon Strick (FU Berlin), Olga Tarapata (Köln)

Sharif Bitar (Oldenburg)
“Witches, Voodoo, and Down’s Syndrome: Disability as Intersectional Feminism’s Blind Spot in American Horror Story: Coven”

Tatiana Prorokova (Marburg)
“Alcoholic, Mad, Disabled: Constructing Lesbian Identity in Ann Bannon’s Beebo Brinker Chronicles”

René Dietrich (Mainz)
“Assimilation as Debilitation: Incapacitated Sovereignty, Ableist Settler Publics, and Bodily Refusal”

Gesine Wegner (Dresden)
“Through Deaf Eyes”: Losing and Reclaiming Public Space in Brian Selznick’s Wonderstruck”

Rumor, Gossip, and Reputation in the American Counter/Public Sphere
Organizers Pierre-Héli Monot (München), Florian Zappe (Göttingen)

Katrin Horn (Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Sebastian Jobs (FU Berlin)
“Just Rumors and Gossip? Uncertain Knowledge from a Historian’s Point of View”

Marek Paryż (Warsaw)
“The Social Dynamics of Rumor in Walter Van Tilburg Clark’s The Ox-Bow Incident”

Maria Verena Peters (Hagen)
“From the Whisper Network to #MeToo: Framing Gender, Gossip and (Sexual) Violence against Women”

Teaching Counter/Publics: American Studies and Digital Pedagogy
Organizers Ingrid Gessner (Regensburg), Uwe Küchler (Tübingen)

Alexander Dunst (Paderborn):
“Teaching Digital American Studies: Some Approaches, Tools, and Experiences”

Sebastian M. Herrmann (Leipzig):
“Questioning the Authority of the Linear Form? Leipzig’s Social Hypertext Reader SHRIMP and the ‘Introduction to American Studies’”

Horst Tonn (Tübingen):
“New Formats for Digital Teacher Trainings”

Viola Huang (Passau):
“Teaching the Black Power Movement, the Genre of Documentary Film and Critical Media Literacy”

Joannis Kaliampous (Lüneburg) & Martina Kohl (Berlin):
“I Think They Are Irresponsible: Teaching Sustainability with (Counter)Narratives in the EFL Classroom”
**WORKSHOPS 8–14**  
**SATURDAY 2.00 – 5.00 p.m.**

### American Studies as Engaged Scholarship: Doing Public Humanities from the Local to the Transnational
Organizers Regina Schober (Mannheim), Alexander Starre (FU Berlin)

**8**  
- Room 201

Susan Smulyan (Brown University)  
“What Can Public Art Teach the Public Humanities?”

Philipp Löffler (Heidelberg)  
“Consequences of Academic Reading? Teachers Training, the German Public High School System, and Tom Franklin”

Gary T. Edwards (Arkansas State University)  
“Local Historic Knowledge Production and ‘The Public’ in Jonesboro, Arkansas: An Academic’s Encounter with Contemporary Community Theatre and a Historic Community Lynching”

Katharina Motyl (Tübingen)  
“Engaged or Enraged? On the Disparate Acceptance of the Scholar-Activist Mode in U.S. and German American Studies”

Antje Kley (Erlangen-Nürnberg)  
“The Public Humanities and Literary Knowledge”

Briann G. Greenfield (New Jersey Council for the Humanities)  
“Democracy Demands Wisdom: The Role of State Humanities Councils in the American Model”

### Taverns, Salons, and Vaudeville Theaters: Space and Public Spheres in Nineteenth-Century America
Organizers Evangelia Kindinger (Bochum), Dietmar Meinel (Duisburg-Essen)

**9**  
- Room 203

Laura Bieger (Groningen)  
“Toward a Definition of Public Space”

Jan D. Kucharzewski (Hamburg):  
“A cannibal of a craft: Ships as Liminal Counter/Publics in the Works of Herman Melville”

Ferdinand Nyberg (Tübingen)  
“Spacing Out: Alcohol, Threat, and Antebellum Temperance”

Daniel Stein (Siegen)  
“Crime Scenes as Popular Public Spheres in Antebellum City Mystery Novels”

Rieke Jordan (Frankfurt)  
“With Eyes Closed and Ears Open: The Phonograph and the Listening Public”

### Counter/Publics and the Private Sphere
Organizers Karsten Fitz (Passau), Johannes Voelz (Frankfurt), Stefan Hippler (Würzburg), Katrin Horn (Erlangen-Nürnberg)

**10**  
- Room 319

Pia Wiegmink (Mainz)  
“Domestic Publicity in Antebellum African American Women’s Life Writing”

Cedric Essi (Bremen)  
“Queer Memoirs on Interracial Adoption: Domestic Intimacies, Public Interventions, and the Rise of Multiracialism”

Maria Sulimma (FU Berlin)  
“‘Sir, she can hear you’: The Mute Woman in Popular Culture”

Bärbel Harju (München)  
“The Art of Privacy in the Age of Hyper-Publicity”

Stephan Kuhl (Frankfurt)  
“Private Language and American Literary Publics”

David Rosen (Trinity College, CT) and Aaron Santesso (Georgia Tech)  
“Private in Public: The Fragment in Contemporary American Nonfiction”

### Public Feeling
Organizer Heike Paul (Erlangen-Nürnberg)

**11**  
- Room 340

Hannah Spahn (Potsdam)  
“Public Feeling in Ida B. Wells’s Anti-Lynching Campaign”

Dustin Breitenwischer (Freiburg)  
“Feeling Alone: Catherine Opie and the Womanless Street”

Katharina Gerund (Erlangen-Nürnberg)  
“Public Feeling on the Home Front: The ‘Waiting Wives’ of US Wars Abroad”

Elisabeth Bronfen (Zürich)  
“The Mimicry of Care: Representations of Female Politicians in Homeland and House of Cards”

Simon Dickel (Essen)  
“ACT UP, Public Mourning, and Archival Activism”

Suncica Klaas (Potsdam)  
“Consumptive Economies of Public Commemoration: Mourning ‘Tiananmen’ in American Political Culture”

###  
**WORKSHOPS—15**
Transnational Periodical Counter/Publics

Organizers: Florian Freitag, Tim Lanzendörfer (Mainz)

Matthew Pethers (Nottingham)
"An Executioner in the Civil State: Periodical Culture and the Reimagining of Social Authority in Jeffersonian America"

Kate Lacson (Université Côte d’Azur)
"The Manilaña Marked Woman"

Philipp Reisner (Düsseldorf):
"Contemporary Christian Periodicals and American Religious Culture: From The Christian Century (1884–) to First Things (1990–)"

Nina Weißer (München):
"Radical America and Quaderni Piacentini: A Case Study of a Transnational Counter-public"

Michael Connors Jackman (Memorial University of Newfoundland):
"The Imagined Audience of The Body Politic: Transnational Activism and the Horizons of a Liberationist Counterpublic"

Electronic Agoras: Inter/ Multimodal Dissensus and the Public Discourse of Islamophobia

Organizers: Elena Furlanetto (Duisburg-Essen), Frank Mehring (Nijmegen)

Stefan Brandt (Graz):
"Fear of an Islamic Planet? Intermedial Exchange and the Rhetorics of Islamophobia"

Martina Pfeiler (Bochum):
"1700% Project: Mistaken for Muslim: Intermedia Interplay and Challenging Islamophobia in Anida Yoeu Ali’s Performance Poetry Clip"

Brigitte Georgi-Findlay (Dresden):
"Inter/Multimedia Constructions of Islam in Contemporary TV Series"

Mahmoud Arghavan (Independent):
"Islamophobia without Islamophobes: New Strategies of Representing Imperialist versus Suicide-Bomber Necropolitics in Syriana and Homeland"

Frank Mehring (Nijmegen):
"Holy Terror! Intermediality and Public Discourse of Islamophobia in the Graphic Novels of Frank Miller"

Elena Furlanetto (Duisburg-Essen):
"The Reluctant Islamophobics: Multimedia Dissensus in Kingdom of Heaven (2005) and Agora (2009)"

The Prison as Counter/Public

Organizers: Birte Christ (Gießen), Andrea Zittlau (Rostock)

Aylwyn Walsh (Leeds, UK)
"Race, Space and Violence: US Prison Cultures Doing Time between Prison and Plantation"

Katharina Fackler (Graz)
"Race and Criminalization in Austin Reed’s The Life and the Adventures of a Haunted Convict"

GNSAS

Dennis Büscher-Ulbrich (Kiel)
"‘A counterproposal of unmanageability’: Riots and the Carceral State"

Kristina Graaff (HU Berlin)
"Navigating the Counter/Publics of Prison: An Intersectional Perspective"

Jayne Thompson (Widener University, PA)
"How to Listen: Collecting the Voices of Incarcerated Women"

Hochschild setzt darauf, dass es immer die Möglichkeit gibt, die Filterblasen der politischen Lager zu überwinden, eine neue Form der Kommunikation über die Gräben hinweg zu beginnen und alte Feindschaften in neue Freundschaften zu verwandeln.« Neue Zürcher Zeitung

Ein Buch, das sich ... leicht liest und spannend ist wie ein Krimi. «Die Zeit

Die Zeit
Michael Warner

“Fake Publics”

THURSDAY 6.00–7.00 p.m.

The current political crisis in the US revolves around a media crisis: Twitter rivals official communiqués, bots plant invented news stories on social media to swing elections, television networks brand themselves with rival versions of the truth, and reporters who document lies are accused of peddling “fake news.” It has become clear in retrospect that the comparatively stable public sphere of the twentieth century rested on the gatekeeping function of major newspapers and television news, a function they no longer play. Their model of broadcast-plus-feedback has come to seem archaic. Social media, especially Facebook, have introduced new structuring principles in public discourse, having to do with their own architecture and profit model. The media infrastructure by which publics come into existence has fractured. In other respects, though, the combat of representation has been a condition of the public sphere from its emergence in the early eighteenth century, the very notion of the public has always been an imaginary, and publics have always been more plural than anyone wanted to admit.

In this talk I will take a long view of media infrastructures as grounds from which to project publics, to ask what might have changed as well as what features of the public sphere might simply be newly exposed.

Catherine Squires

“Generating Creative Friction: Counter-Narratives & Ethical Imaginaries at Home in Black Counterpublics”

FRIDAY 9.00–10.30 a.m.

This paper begins with a meditation on the “Rosa Parks House” controversy. The house was saved from demolition in Detroit, reconstructed in Berlin, then returned to the US for a memorial exhibition only to be suspended in a legal battle over its authenticity. Both sides in the battle over the house accused various constituencies in the US of “not loving Rosa Parks enough” to do the right thing in her memory. I view the controversy as a means to incite what Hazel Carby terms “creative friction.” I braid together stories of home linked to Harriet Tubman, Rosa Parks, and Erica Garner. I seek to illuminate and uplift counter-narratives of radical love and hospitality obscured in mainstream narratives of these women’s contributions to Black counterpublics. I weave these stories with contemporary projects inspired by these Black female icons to imagine means of repairing and rejuvenating traumatized Black selves and communities through ethics of radical love and care.
Andrew Gross

“Community and Contagion: Crises of Liberalism in the Writing of Benjamin Franklin”

FRIDAY 11.00 a.m.—12.30 p.m.

In 1722, when Benjamin Franklin began publishing letters under the pen-name Mrs. Silence Dogood in his brother’s newspaper, The New-England Courant, Boston was in the midst of a smallpox epidemic. The epidemic triggered a crisis of public health and a crisis of public debate. Over half the population of about 11,000 residents was infected with a disease that would kill fourteen percent of its victims; but for the first time on what would become American soil, doctors began to inoculate—in the face of violent opposition. Silence Dogood mentions neither the disease nor the inoculation debates. However, James Franklin’s paper played a key role in the controversy, backing the faction that argued against inoculation. Those arguing in favor rallied around Cotton Mather.

My talk will analyze the arguments behind the positions, exploring if perhaps the belief in the “invisible world,” so central to the witchcraft cases, put Mather in a better position to understand the mechanics of contagion. I will also discuss Franklin’s evolving attitude towards disease, in particular after the death of his four-year-old son Francis to smallpox in 1736. However, the main focus of my paper will be on the debates themselves, and particularly on how opposing inoculation enabled a diverse group of publically concerned citizens to constitute themselves as a coalition and to articulate distinct visions of community, by opposing what they saw as sanctioned attacks on the body and its maladies. As with contemporary “anti-vaxxers,” the anti-inoculators may have been united more through their opposition to authority than by any coherent political ideology. However, they began to understand themselves as a coalition and to articulate distinct visions of community, by opposing what they saw as sanctioned attacks on the body and the body politic. This controversy over the benefits of inoculation and its meaning provides an opportunity to explore the formation of publics and counterpublics at the moment when the first daily newspapers began to appear.

Sarah Igo

“Thinking Publics: The History of a Promise and a Problem”

SATURDAY 9.00–10.30 a.m.

Can “the public” think rationally—or at all? The question, which has been posed insistently in the aftermath of Donald Trump’s election, has in fact surfaced periodically in the United States from the early republic onward. But it especially preoccupied intellectuals and theorists in the twentieth century, when hopeful prospects for popular thought and democratic deliberation seemed to clash with the imperatives of an increasingly specialized and ever more fragmented “mass society.” Even as opinion surveyors, behavioral researchers, marketers, and focus group conveners promised to reveal the mysteries of the public mind once and for all, confidence in the people’s collective wisdom and intellectual autonomy plummeted. Indeed, as a host of experts came to believe they knew the public more precisely and scientifically, the less they thought of its capacities. This talk takes a wide-ranging, century-spanning view of what John Dewey termed in 1927 “the public and its problems” not so much in order to explore the purportedly problematic public as the problem of how scholars as well as commentators have envisioned and represented it. Reflecting on our technologies for knowing “the public”—as well as their recurring failures—it will ask how we might better characterize the career of popular thought in the twentieth century, and in our own time.

Andrew S. Gross is a professor of American literature at the University of Göttingen. His latest book, The Pound Reaction: Liberalism and Lyricism in Midcentury American Literature, appeared in 2015. Other publications include the co-authored Comedy, Avant-Garde, Scandal: Remembering the Holocaust after the End of History; the co-edited Pathos of Authenticity; and a guest-edited issue of Amerikastudien.

Sarah E. Igo is an Associate Professor of History and Director of American Studies at Vanderbilt University, with affiliate appointments in law, political science, sociology, and medicine, health and society. She teaches and writes about modern American intellectual and cultural history. Igo is the author of The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public, which was an Editor’s Choice selection of the New York Times, and one of Slate’s Best Books of 2007. Her new book, out from Harvard University Press in 2018, is The Known Citizen: A History of Privacy in Modern America.
Todd Gitlin

“How the American Right Organized an Assault on the Others”
SUNDAY 9.30–11.00 a.m.

The road to Trump has been in the making for decades. Since the 1980s, the Republican right has been animated by revulsion against two social forces: nonwhite minorities and the knowledge class. In the wake of the 1960s revolts, wealthy ideologues began to fund an ideological reaction capable of mobilizing a strong political arm. The counter-Establishment they engendered and brought to a focus identified a common enemy: the reforming state. Over the ensuing decades, they aggrandized savage capital; cultivated a revolt against science; demolished unions; demonized the press; and otherwise campaigned against the welfare state, the civil service, and independent thought. They refined the art of compressing their animus into rousing slogans: “Law and order,” “tax and spend,” “build the wall.” Meanwhile, the liberal-Social Democratic left failed to generate an alternative spirit. This was true for both the movement left and the Democratic Party, both of which found it easier to identify with demographic segments than with a universalist or cosmopolitan alternative capable of generating a stable majority. The right’s anti-democratic tendencies have become more pronounced and more forcefully asserted. The right’s penchant for hierarchy has out-organized the left’s penchant for decentralization and anarchy.

Claudia Rankine

“The Racial Imaginary in Contemporary American Art”
SUNDAY 11.30 a.m.–1.00 p.m.

Claudia Rankine is the author of five collections of poetry, including Citizen: An American Lyric and Don’t Let Me Be Lonely; two plays including Provenance of Beauty: A South Bronx Travelogue; numerous video collaborations, and is the editor of several anthologies including The Racial Imaginary: Writers on Race in the Life of the Mind. For Citizen, Rankine won the Forward Prize for Poetry, the National Book Critics Circle Award for Poetry (Citizen was also nominated in the criticism category, making it the first book in the award’s history to be a double nominee), the Los Angeles Times Book Award, the PEN Open Book Award, and the NAACP Image Award. A finalist for the National Book Award, Citizen also holds the distinction of being the only poetry book to be a New York Times bestseller in the nonfiction category. Among her numerous awards and honors, Rankine is the recipient of the Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry, Poets & Writers’ Jackson Poetry Prize and fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Lannan Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, United States Artists, and the National Endowment of the Arts. She is a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and teaches at Yale University as the Frederick Iseman Professor of Poetry.

In 2016, Rankine founded the Racial Imaginary Institute, which takes the form of a moving collaboration with other collectives, spaces, artists, and organizations towards art exhibitions, readings, dialogues, lectures, performances, and screenings that engage the subject of race. The name “racial imaginary” is meant to capture the enduring truth of race: it is an invented concept that nevertheless operates with extraordinary force in our daily lives, limiting our movements and imaginations. Because no sphere of life is untouched by race, the Institute gathers under its aegis an interdisciplinary range of artists, writers, knowledge-producers, and activists. It convenes a cultural laboratory in which the racial imaginaries of our time and place are engaged, read, countered, contextualized and demystified.
PODIUMSDISKUSSION

„Zwischen Fake News und Fact Checking: Die Transformationen des öffentlichen Raumes“

SATURDAY 6.15–7.45 p.m. • Seminaris


Moderation Christian Lammert (FU Berlin)

Ingrid Gessner (Universität Regensburg)
Andreas Horchler (Redakteur, ehemals USA Korrespondent des Hessischen Rundfunks)
Anke Ortlepp (Universität Kassel)
Alexandra Schuler (Stellv. Redaktionsleiterin dpa Foto)
The work of Christian missions in past centuries has persistently been viewed in a negative light. This volume presents a more nuanced interpretation of mission work. The Syria Mission of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) is one example of how different cultures met one another within the “contact zone” of mission stations, and how – despite conflicts and differences of opinion – a fruitful dialogue occurred.

Published with the support of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF): PUB 332-G24

2017
296 pages with
11 illustrations
978-3-515-11599-5
E-BOOK
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CONFERENCE LOCATIONS

THURSDAY

Conference Opening at Henry Ford Bau
Garystraße 35
14195 Berlin

The Henry Ford Bau—the venue for the conference opening and the keynote by Michael Warner—is located in walking distance of the JFK Institute and the Seminaris Campus Hotel (15–20 minutes). Conference participants may also take the subway line U3 for one stop from “Dahlem Dorf” to “Freie Universität (Thielplatz)”; the building is just a short walk down the street from the station (see map).

FRIDAY–SUNDAY

All keynote lectures, as well as the members’ meeting and the concluding lecture by Claudia Rankine take place at the conference center of the Seminaris Campus Hotel (Takustr. 39, 14195 Berlin). All other conference events, including most of the workshops, are at the JFK Institute (Lansstr. 7–9, 14195 Berlin).

The party on Saturday night is at Domäne Dahlem, an open-air museum with a small farm just a short stroll away from the JFK Institute at Königin-Luise-Str. 49, 14195 Berlin.

Room Directory

Rooms 201, 203, 319, 340 and the library (LIB) are located in the JFK Institute at Lansstr. 7–9.

The seminar room of the Graduate School of North American Studies (GSNAS) is located in the building next to the JFK Institute at Lansstr. 5.

The Student Service Center (SSC) of the Freie Universität is around the corner from the JFK Institute at Iltisstr. 4.