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# The Comeback of Populism

## Transatlantic Perspectives

July 6 - 8, 2017  
International Conference  
Amerikahaus Munich

**Abstracts & Bios**



bavarian  
american academy

Thursday, 6 July 2017

**18.30 Conference Opening**

**Welcome**

**Heike Paul**

Bavarian American Academy / University of Erlangen-Nuremberg

**Klaus Ulrich**

Bavarian State Chancellery

**Award Ceremony**

BAA Dissertation Award

**19.00 Keynote Address**

**Hans Vorländer** (Technical University Dresden)

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**Reception**

Friday, 7 July 2017

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**Michael Hochgeschwender** (University of Munich):

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**Carlos de la Torre** (University of Kentucky):

*Trump's Populism: Lessons from Latin America*.....2

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**10.45 Coffee Break**

**11.00 Panel II: The Populist Movement in Constitutional Democracy**

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**Thursday, 6 July 2017, 18.30 | WELCOME AND OPENING**

## **Keynote Address**

**Hans Vorländer**

### ***Populism in Modern Democracy***

Prof. Dr. Hans Vorländer holds the chair for Political Theory and the History of Political Ideas at Dresden University of Technology and is director of the Center for the Study of Constitutionalism and Democracy. His research focuses on political theory, history of ideas, democracy, constitutionalism, and liberalism. Among his publications are *PEGIDA. Entwicklung, Zusammensetzung und Deutung einer Empörungsbewegung*, co-edited with Maik Herold and Steven Schäller (2016), *Cosmopolitanism, Self-Determination and Territory*, co-edited with Oliviero Angeli (2015), and *Transzendenz und die Konstitution von Ordnungen* (2013).

### **Abstract**

The surge of populism in Western democracies is in essence a crisis of modern democracy as we have come to know it. The liberal and representative democracy was invented to prevent political decision-making from being held hostage to the daily moods of its citizens and anchored instead within a system of checks and balances among the branches of government. This strength, however, is also its weakness: there is the risk that the cleavage between citizens and their political representatives becomes wide enough to undermine the legitimacy of the system as a whole. Parallel to a perceived division between the public and elites, there is a growing sense of political alienation and dissatisfaction with democracy.

Friday, 7 July 2017, 09.00 | PANEL I

## Current Populist Movements in the Americas

**Chair: Ursula Prutsch** is professor of American Studies at the University of Munich.

### **Michael Hochgeschwender**

#### ***A Populist Critique of Populism***

Michael Hochgeschwender is professor of North American Cultural History, Empirical Cultural Research, and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Munich. His research focuses on the U.S. history of Antebellum, Civil War, the period since the Second World War, women's and gender history, American Catholicism, westernization and the cultural history of the Cold War. His latest publications are *Die Amerikanische Revolution: Geburt einer Nation, 1763-1815* (2016), *Religion, Moral und liberaler Markt: Politische Ökonomie und Ethikdebatten vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, co-edited with Bernhard Löffler (2011), and *Epoche im Widerspruch: Ideelle und kulturelle Umbrüche der Adenauerzeit* (2011).

#### **Abstract**

Populism is a broad, yet weakly defined term. The talk argues that the genuinely American populism of the 1880s and 1890s was based on older, radically democratic traditions of Jeffersonianism and Jacksonianism and that it was, contrary to modern populist assumptions, part of a progressive, enlightened project of modernization. It may therefore serve as a critical counterpart to the contemporary more or less openly anti-democratic and non-enlightened variations of populism.

### **Carlos de la Torre**

#### ***Trump's Populism: Lessons from Latin America***

Carlos de la Torre is professor of Sociology at the University of Kentucky, Lexington. His areas of research are populism and democracy, and racism and citizenship. His latest books are *The Promises and Perils of Populism: Global Perspectives* (2015), *De Velasco a Correa: Insurrecciones, populismo y elecciones en Ecuador, 1944-2013* (2015), *Latin American Populism of the Twenty First Century*, co-edited with Cynthia Arnson (2013), and *Populist Seduction in Latin America* (2010).

## **Abstract**

This talk compares recent left-wing populist experiences in Latin America with the Tea Party and Trump's right wing populism in the United States. The argument is divided in three sections. The first compares populist ruptures in the Americas. Whereas Latin American left-wing populism ruptured the neoliberal order and the rule of traditional political parties with the promise to improve democracy, Trump is breaking down America's neoliberal multicultural consensus that linked globalization with the limited recognition of multicultural rights. The second explores different constructions of the category 'the people,' and analyzes how 'the people' is performed to create solidarity among followers while erecting a politician into their savior. Whereas Trump and the Tea Party used ethnic categories to construct the people, Latin American left-wing populists used socioeconomic criteria. The last section uses the experiences of Latin American populists in power to speculate about the future of American democracy under Trump. In Latin America the populist promise to return power to the people led to the erosion of democracy. Are the foundations of American democracy and the institutions of civil society strong enough to resist Trump's brand of radical right-wing populism?

**Friday, 7 July 2017, 11.00 | PANEL II**

## **The Populist Movement in Constitutional Democracy**

**Chair: Jürgen Gebhardt** is professor emeritus of Political Science at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg.

### **Frank Decker**

#### ***Right-Wing Populism in Germany and Abroad***

Frank Decker is professor of Political Science and Sociology of Rheinische at the University of Bonn. He is also the scientific director of the Bonner Akademie für Forschung und Lehre praktischer Politik (BAPP). His main research interests focus on problems of institutional reforms in Western democracies, party systems and right wing populism. Recent publications include *Europas Ende, Europas Anfang*, co-edited with Jürgen Rüttgers (2017), *Der Irrweg der Volksgesetzgebung* (2016), *Parteiendemokratie im Wandel* (2016), and *Rechtspopulismus und Rechtsextremismus in Europa*, co-edited with Bernd Henningsen and Kjetil Jakobsen (2015).

#### **Abstract**

The contribution offers a synopsis and an analysis of the current state of research on the different elements of populism. From a theoretical and conceptual perspective, it describes the core of populism and its right-wing variation, contrasts right-wing populism and right-wing extremism and examines its ideological and organizational characteristics. The empirical parts focus on right-wing populist parties and movements in Germany and Western Europe and the structural causes for their electoral success. Concluding, it will investigate which counter strategies can be identified in the arena of party competition and to what extent they are successful regarding their conditions in the specific contexts.

### **D. Sunshine Hillygus**

#### ***Understanding the Trump Win: Populism, Partisanship, and Polarization in the 2016 Election***

D. Sunshine Hillygus is professor of Political Science and Public Policy at Duke University and director of the Duke Initiative on Survey Methodology (DISM). Her research and teaching specialties include American public opinion and political behavior, campaigns and elections, and survey methodology. She is co-author of *The Persuadable Voter: Wedge Issues in Political Campaigns* (2008) and *The Hard Count: The Social and Political Challenges of the 2000 Census* (2006). She has also published articles in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Political Analysis*, *American Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Politics*, *Statistical Science*, and *Political Behavior*, among others.

## **Abstract**

Pre-election polls and forecasts predicted that Democrat Hillary Clinton would win a resounding victory over outsider Republican Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Trump surprised the world by winning 56.5% of the Electoral College vote to capture the presidency. Did Trump's surprising victory reflect the emergence of new populist forces within the electorate that could splinter traditional partisan cleavages? Or was it a continuation of the polarization and fragmentation that has routinely characterized American politics since the turn of the century? This talk explores voter decision making in the 2016 presidential election using the American National Election Study (ANES), leveraging a module of questions shared across the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) that allows specific evaluation of citizens' perceptions of political elites and out-groups as it relates to the electoral attitudes and behaviors.

Friday, 7 July 2017, 14.30 | PANEL III

## Popular Imagination and Public Opinion: Fiction's Role in the Making and Unmaking of a Democratic Public

**Chair: Kerstin Schmidt** is professor and chair of American Studies at the Catholic University of Eichstaett-Ingolstadt.

### Sascha Pöhlmann

#### ***Missing the People: Populist Aesthetics and Unpopular Resistance***

Sascha Pöhlmann is associate professor of American Literary History at the University of Munich. In his research, he is generally interested in the relation between aesthetics and politics. He is the author of *Future-Founding Poetry: Topographies of Beginnings from Whitman to the Twenty-First Century* (2015), *Pynchon's Postnational Imagination* (2010), and the (co-)editor of essay collections on Thomas Pynchon, Mark Z. Danielewski, foundational places in/of Modernity, electoral cultures, American music, and unpopular culture. He has published essays on contemporary fiction and poetry, queer theory, film, video games, and black metal, among other things, and he is currently working on a monograph on assassination in American literature.

#### **Abstract**

The talk will explore the correlation between populism and popular culture based on the assumption that they both imagine and construct what they profess to address or represent as a given, 'the people.' Understanding 'the people' as a product rather than the foundation of the modern nation-state, the first argument will be that popular culture engages in the imagination of 'the people' through a populist aesthetic that shares numerous rhetorical strategies and 'positions' with the thin ideology of populism in politics. In a second step, the argument will show that popular culture also contains elements of resistance to such populism, which will be described in terms of an unpopular culture that seeks to counter or remove itself from an imagination of 'the people.' The examples will mainly be literary ones, such as Walt Whitman's populist poetics in the nineteenth century, and Jonathan Franzen's famous dismissal of William Gaddis as "Mr. Difficult" in the twenty-first, but it will also draw on other forms of cultural production in discussing the contemporary dialectic of populist aesthetics and an unpopular resistance.

## Stacey Margolis

### *Poe, Popularity, Populism*

Stacey Margolis is associate professor of English at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City, where she teaches nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature. Her most recent book, *Fictions of Mass Democracy in Nineteenth-Century America* (2015) explores the role of public opinion in a world before opinion polling. She is now at work on a book about the origins of the idea that living people have an obligation to future generations.

### **Abstract**

Edgar Allan Poe, a vehement critic of the “tyranny of the majority,” was vicious in his attacks on Jacksonian democracy. This talk reads Poe’s response to the rise of American populism – in his satires, but also in his most popular work, *The Raven* – as a prescient analysis of rule by public opinion. What is most striking about Poe’s account of public opinion is its analysis of how it arose and asserted its authority in an age before polling. In his 1839 story, *The Man That Was Used Up*, Poe dramatizes how isolated utterances and trivial speech become a formidable social power. Like the prosthetic parts that make up General John A. B. C. Smith’s body, the bits of gossip that circulate about him – meaningless in themselves – have the power to make him a celebrity. Poe employs the same kind of repetition in *The Raven*, imagining not only how an empty signifier accumulates meanings, but how repetition can create the popularity it attempts to explain.

Friday, 7 July 2017, 16.30 | PANEL IV

## Young Scholars Forum

**Chair: Heike Paul** is professor and chair of American Studies at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg.

### Laura Vorberg

#### **#Deplorables: Twitter-Populism, Digital Imagined Communities and the Cross-Media Effects of Donald J. Trump's Social Media Campaign Communications**

Laura Vorberg is a PhD student at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg and a member of the research training group "Presence and Tacit Knowledge" funded by the German Research Foundation. She holds a master's degree in American Studies and in Theater, Film, and Media Studies. In her PhD project she observes the construction and effects of different media staging's of political power as forms of political presentation in contemporary U.S. presidential election campaigns. From September until November 2016, she has been a visiting fellow at the Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity and Gender in the Social Science at Duke University, North Carolina (a BAA fellowship).

#### **Abstract**

Despite all uncertainties that remain concerning the reasons for Donald J. Trump's unexpected 2016 U.S. presidential election victory, one major factor of his success has by now been widely acknowledged both by scholars and the press: Trump greatly benefited from his excessive usage of the social media platform *Twitter* which he employed to disseminate his highly controversial messages and claims 24/7. By analyzing Trump's *Twitter* feed as a campaign voice in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, as well as his followers' responses and the cross-media resonance of Trump's tweets, this talk focuses on the specific performative dimension inherent to the medium *Twitter* and its operating modes as a means of producing prototypical populist communities. It suggests that *Twitter* has been functioning as a networked gathering point for a collective of Trump supporters, a digital imagined community of 'deplorables,' connected by their anti-elitist sentiments, popular demands and affective attachment to their leader.

## **Michael T. Oswald**

### ***Trump's Use of Producerism***

Michael Oswald is a research fellow and lecturer at the Chair of Political Science at the University of Passau, a research associate and lecturer at the JFK-Institute at the Free University in Berlin, and a faculty member/lecturer at CIFE (International Centre for European Studies) in Berlin. His research areas are media, parties and society (political culture and ideology), political strategy and framing processes, and extremism and terrorism. He received his PhD and a Master's degree in Governance and Public Policy at the University of Passau, and wrote his dissertation on the Tea Party Movement.

### **Abstract**

A section of U.S. society has come to deeply resent the government and establishment. Donald J. Trump tapped into this vein of cultural indignation with a strategy that won him the presidency. He wooed Midwestern working-class whites who see themselves ill-served by the establishment, the elites and the country's towering institutions. The socio-cultural disconnect has resurfaced with a groundswell of discontent among the 'disenfranchised' – voters who believe mainstream Democrats and Republicans fail to represent their interests. Much of this anti-government and anti-elitist sentiment is down to agitation based on producerist-narratives. Donald Trump sensed this potential, and capitalized on it by communicating in ways that resonated with an audience that feels left behind – a producerist perspective in which jobs went abroad and the working class became a victim of mislead stewardship. This stratagem's appeal to a crucial voting bloc paved the way to Pennsylvania Ave. The research will investigate how the president framed his campaign and speeches to conjure an image that resonates with a constituency whose grievances boil down to Washington's mismanagement of the country's affairs. By using Framing-Theory and the method of triangulation, coded speeches of Donald J. Trump (n=187) show a strategic pattern that is based on producerist sentiments – according to Framing-Theory a powerful metaphor and potentially a winning strategy.

## **Nicole Schneider**

### ***'Grassroots Populism': Black Lives Matter and the Democratization of Political Culture***

Nicole Schneider is research assistant in the American Studies department at the Catholic University of Eichstaett-Ingolstadt. Her PhD thesis focuses on the interrelations and democratic-participatory dimensions of visual and virtual activism and press photography in the Black Lives Matter movement. She has recently co-organized both the 2016 conference of the German Society for Contemporary Theatre and Drama in English, entitled "Theater and Mobility" and the international workshop "A Mobile World Literature and the Return of Place: New Diasporic Writing Beyond the Black Atlantic." She is the recipient of

the 2017 BAA-Fellowship at the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University.

## **Abstract**

The most basic definition of populism posits an imagined community – which uses the label ‘the people’ to define itself – against ‘elitist’ structures, interests, and institutions. In her talk Schneider wants to consider this general assertion of popular power, reflecting the idea of ‘popular agency’ and the Laclauan approach to social movements and sovereignty. ‘The people,’ generally considered to be an ‘empty signifier,’ positioning itself against the elite and critically examining the political structures that govern their everyday lives, thus, constitute a fundamental part of (radical) democratic participation. The Black Lives Matter organization, through their rhetoric and representation in popular media, seeks to reconfigure who ‘the people’ are. Simultaneously they engage in local grassroots and community actions that enact demands for restorative and social justice, and create alternatives to the state violence black lives face. With a focus on alternative conceptualizations of the contested term populism, the talk will combine the analysis of press photographs of the movement and its official statements with Sylvia Wynter’s concept of “being human as a praxis” and theories of grassroots activism.

**Saturday, 8 July 2017, 09.00 | BOOK PRESENTATION (in German)**

***Populismus: Varianten von Volksherrschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart***

**Georg Eckert**

Georg Eckert ist Privatdozent an der Bergischen Universität Wuppertal. Seine Forschungsschwerpunkte sind die Politische Geschichte Deutschlands in der Sattelzeit, die Geschichte Großbritanniens in der Neuzeit, Ideen- und Geistesgeschichte, Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Geschichte der internationalen Beziehungen und Aufklärung und Napoleonisches Zeitalter. Mitherausgeber des vorgestellten Buches ist Thorsten Beigel.

**Abstract**

Populismus ist ein Dauergast in der Geschichte, die Kritik an Populismus ebenso: Beides lässt sich in ganz verschiedenen Epochen, in ganz verschiedenen Ländern und in ganz verschiedenen Herrschaftsformen finden – vom klassischen Athen über frühneuzeitliche Monarchien bis hinein in unsere demokratische Gegenwart. Gemeinsamkeiten der jeweiligen Populismen werden in breiter historischer Schau ebenso deutlich wie deren Unterschiede, vor allem aber die jeweiligen Funktionen des Populismus für Staaten und Gesellschaften. Dass Herrschaft dem Volk dienen soll, hat kaum jemand bestreiten mögen. Strittig aber war und ist es bis vielfach heute, inwiefern das Volk selbst herrschen soll: Die Macht des Volkes erscheint oftmals als Ohnmacht der Vernunft. Wo aber wird der Volksführer zum Volksverführer, wo verkommt die Demokratie zur Demagogie? Warum haben wir uns angewöhnt, Popularität gut, Populismus aber schlecht zu finden? Auf diese aktuellen Fragen gibt es zahlreiche Antwortversuche aus Geschichte und Gegenwart: zahlreiche Varianten der Volksherrschaft, die dieser Band untersucht.

**Saturday, 8 July 2017, 10.45 | INTRODUCTION (in German)**

***Populistische Phänomene und extremistische Bedrohung:  
Zum Aufgabenfeld staatlich verantworteter Präventionsarbeit***

**Werner Karg / Katharina Willimski**

Werner Karg und Katharina Willimski sind Mitarbeiter der Abteilung XI.9: „Erinnerungskultur, Internationale Bildungszusammenarbeit, Extremismus“ des Bayerischen Staatsministeriums für Bildung und Kultus, Wissenschaft und Kunst.

**Saturday, 8 July 2017, 11.45 | PANEL DISCUSSION (in German)**

***Populismus – eine Gefahr für die Demokratie?***

**Margarete Bause, MdL**

Margarete Bause ist integrationspolitische Sprecherin von Bündnis 90/Die Grünen im Bayerischen Landtag. Sie ist Mitglied im Ausschuss für Verfassung, Recht und Parlamentsfragen, sowie Mitglied der Richterwahlkommission. Außerdem ist sie Teil der Enquete-Kommission „Integration in Bayern aktiv gestalten und Richtung geben“ und Mitglied des Beirates der Stiftung Bayerisches Amerikahaus gGmbH.

**Robert Brannekämper, MdL**

Robert Brannekämper ist Abgeordneter des Bayerischen Landtages und Kreisvorsitzender der CSU München-Nordost. Er ist Mitglied im Ausschuss für Wissenschaft und Kunst sowie im Ausschuss für Fragen des öffentlichen Dienstes. Außerdem ist er Mitglied des Landesdenkmalrates, des Beirates der Stiftung Bayerisches Amerikahaus gGmbH, Vorsitzender des Gefängnisbeirates JVA München und im Politischen Beirat des NS-Dokumentationszentrums München.

**Tim Büthe**

Tim Büthe ist Professor für Politik und Lehrstuhlinhaber für Internationale Beziehungen an der Hochschule für Politik der TU München. Zuvor war er Associate Professor of Political Science and Public Policy sowie Senior Fellow der Duke University (USA). Er erforscht primär politische Aspekte internationaler Wirtschaftsbeziehungen, darunter Wettbewerbspolitik im Lichte globaler Entwicklungen. Er hat mehr als 30 Aufsätze in Fachzeitschriften und Sammelbänden publiziert und ist Autor einer Monographie und Herausgeber bzw. Mitherausgeber von mehreren Sonderheften internationaler Zeitschriften.

## **Heinrich Oberreuter**

Heinrich Oberreuter ist Politikwissenschaftler und lehrte an der Universität Passau. Von 2003 bis 2011 war er Direktor der Akademie für Politische Bildung in Tutzing, er ist Mitherausgeber der Zeitschrift für Politik und seit 2012 Leiter der Redaktion der 8. Auflage des Staatslexikons der Görres-Gesellschaft, Autor von zahlreichen Publikationen und ein gefragter Kommentator und Analytiker.

## **Michael Piazzolo, MdL**

Michael Piazzolo ist Abgeordneter des Bayerischen Landtages und bei den Freien Wählern Bayern Vorsitzender des Stadtverbandes München sowie Generalsekretär und stellvertretender Landesvorsitzender. Er ist Mitglied des Ausschusses für Bildung und Kultus, des Beirates der Stiftung Bayerisches Amerikahaus gGmbH, des Hochschulbeirates und des Reformbeirates der Hochschule für Politik München, des Medienrates und Vorsitzender des Ausschusses für Wissenschaft und Kunst.

## **Diana Stachowitz, MdL**

Diana Stachowitz ist Mitglied des Bayerischen Landtages. Sie ist Kirchen- und sportpolitische Sprecherin der SPD-Landtagsfraktion und Sprecherin der SPD-Landtagsabgeordneten für München und Oberbayern. Sie ist Mitglied im Ausschuss für Bundes- und Europaangelegenheiten sowie regionale Beziehungen und im Ausschuss für Eingaben und Beschwerden.

## Bavarian American Academy (BAA)

The Bavarian American Academy promotes and coordinates the interdisciplinary cooperation of scholars in the social and cultural sciences in the widest sense, specializing in aspects of North American culture, society, politics and economics in their hemispheric and global contexts.

The conference is organized by the Bavarian American Academy in cooperation with the Bavarian State Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, Sciences and the Arts and the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg.



Bavarian State Ministry of  
Education and Cultural Affairs, Sciences and the Arts



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