

re thinking solidarity

20th international conference
july 8 – 9 2021



**bayerische
amerika-akademie**

21

thursday, july 8 2021

2.00 PM Warm-up and Welcome

2.30 PM Conference Opening by **Heike Paul** (Bavarian American Academy, FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

3.00 PM Panel 1

Theories of Solidarity in Democratic Societies

Chair: **Christof Decker** (LMU Munich)

Sally J. Scholz (Villanova University)

Solidarity's Reach

Dietmar Süß (University of Augsburg)

History, Anticapitalism, and the Social Practice of Solidarity

4.00 PM Coffee Break

4.15 PM Panel 2

Traditions of Solidarity

Chair: **Michael Hochgeschwender** (LMU Munich)

Janine Giordano Drake (Indiana University Bloomington)

The Industrial Workers of the World and the Churches: The Unexpected History of "Solidarity" in the United States

André Habisch (KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt)

The Catholic Social Thought Tradition: How Entrepreneurs Contributed to its Emergence

5.15 PM Coffee Break

5.30 PM Award Ceremony

BAA Dissertation Award

7.00 PM Keynote Address

Chair: **Heike Paul** (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Pippa Norris (Harvard University)

The Two Faces of Trust (aka the Cautionary Fable of the Frog and the Scorpion)

friday, july 9 2021

3.00 PM Panel 3

Global Representations of Solidarity

Chair: **Nathalie Aghoro** (KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt)

Jiann-Chyng Tu (University of Regensburg)

Eslanda Goode Robeson, Colored Cosmopolitanism, and World Citizenship

Quynh Nhu Le (University of South Florida)

Envisioning Cross-Racial Solidarities Through Time and Tense

4.00 PM Coffee Break

- 4.15 PM** **Panel 4**
Cultural Practices of Solidarity
Chair: **Katharina Gerund** (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)
Chandra Russo (Colgate University)
Embodied Experience and Social Movement Study
Silvia Schiltermandl (WWU Münster)
Intimate Archives and Experimental Narratives of Transnational Kinship
- 5.15 PM** **Coffee Break**
- 5.30 PM** **Panel 5**
Solidarity in the Anthropocene
Chair: **Sylvia Mayer** (University of Bayreuth)
Lisa Garforth (Newcastle University)
Utopia, Solidarity, and the Anthropocene: Hope After Human-Centeredness
Solvejg Nitzke (TU Dresden)
Green Companions/Making Kin with Trees: Interspecies Solidarity and the Future of Humanity
- 6.30 PM** **Coffee Break**
- 7.00 PM** **Closing Keynote**
Chair: **Heike Paul** (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg)
Aleida Assman (University of Konstanz)
Repairing the Past: Divided Narratives and National Solidarity
- 8.00 PM** **Wrap-up and End of Conference**

thursday, july 8 2021, 3.00 PM

Panel 1: Theories of Solidarity in Democratic Societies

Chair: Christof Decker is professor of American Studies at LMU Munich and a member of the Bavarian American Academy.

The idea of solidarity depends on social bonds connecting individuals in a society and committing them to positive, morally motivated acts. Yet in an open society shaped by democratic egalitarianism and economic competitiveness, the social bonds may be as varied and contested as the multicultural communities making up the social fabric. This panel aims to theorize the conceptual dimensions of solidarity as a social, political and civic issue and to gauge its usefulness for the current state of U.S. American society and politics. What are the salient features of solidarity in contemporary discourses, and how do they fare in an era of partisan politics?

Sally J. Scholz (Villanova University)

Solidarity's Reach

Sally J. Scholz is department chair and professor of Philosophy at Villanova University. Her research in social and political philosophy focuses on solidarity, oppression, violence, and just war theory. Among her publications are *Feminism: A Beginner's Guide* (2010), *Political Solidarity* (2008), *On Rousseau* (2001), and *On de Beauvoir* (2000). She co-edited *Philosophical Perspectives on Democracy in the 21st Century* (2013), *The Contradictions of Freedom: Philosophical Essays on Simone de Beauvoir's 'Les Mandarins'* (2005), and *Peacemaking: Lessons from the Past, Vision for the Future* (2000). Scholz has served as chair of the American Philosophical Association Committee on Lectures, Publications, and Research (2011-2014), chair of the APA Committee on the Status and Future of the Profession (2015-2018), and President of the North American Society for Social Philosophy (2015-2019).

Abstract

Political solidarity cannot be practiced by an individual in isolation; it characterizes groups, both as a descriptive and as a normative concept. But what are the boundaries of the solidaristic group? This paper takes on the assumption that "solidarity has its limits." I argue that in order to understand what solidarity is, we have to understand its reach. The bounds of solidarity are inclusive, expansive, and fluid. Solidarity is inclusive because it has no membership criteria and no penalty for free-riders. Solidarity is expansive insofar as the causes which it addresses often require participants to seek deeper understanding of the social and political conditions which give rise to the need for solidarity. Solidarity is fluid because it connects seemingly disparate causes and it has a tendency to transform in response to both the need for and the effect of social change. Understanding these aspects of solidarity's reach helps to conceptualize the unique moral relations of solidarity.

Dietmar Süß (University of Augsburg)

History, Anticapitalism, and the Social Practice of Solidarity

Dietmar Süß is professor for Modern History at Augsburg University. His research focuses on social movements in the the 19th and 20th century, labour history, and the history of Nazi Germany. His publications include *Solidarität: Vom 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Corona-Krise* (2021), *“Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer”: Die deutsche Gesellschaft im Dritten Reich* (2017); *Death from the Skies: How the British and Germans Survived Bombing in World War II* (2014).

Abstract

Years before the First World War began Kurt Eisner, the long-mocked Munich revolutionary, dreamed that something new would emerge from the ruins of the old authoritarian state order. Something, however, for which the concepts were still lacking. And so, in 1908, he wrote to a friend about the new feeling of solidarity that would open the door to a new world: solidarity, that is more than “humiliating pity.” “Solidarity is the builder of a whole sublime world order.” Solidarity – for Eisner this was scientific analysis and political fighting formula, which described the new self-confidence of the workers’ movement since the middle of the 19th century. However, over the years, militant solidarity has become a somewhat stale pathos formula, politically gutted, and used in an inflationary manner, so that even the political right now speaks of “solidarity” when referring to the “völkisch welfare state.” My argument is that conflicts of solidarity reveal the basic tensions of societies based on the industrial division of labor and the modes of their attempts at social integration in the 20th and 21st centuries. The history of solidarity refers to the history of conflict in capitalist society – and its anti-capitalist critics: to the history of strikes, of labor relations, and the micro-politics in the workplace. In an everyday-historical perspective, this refers to practices of labor, forms of proximity and distance in the production process, and the self-interpretation of workers. The paper focuses especially on debates about labour, solidarity, and the history of the “Third World Movement.”

thursday, july 8 2021, 4.15 PM

Panel 2: Traditions of Solidarity

Chair: Michael Hochgeschwender professor of North American Cultural History, Empirical Cultural Research, and Cultural Anthropology at LMU Munich and a member of the Bavarian American Academy.

This panel explores the historical roots of genuinely modern concepts of solidarity reaching back into the Age of Industrialization with its completely new problems of social organization. This will include both, political as well as practical concepts, for instance, Socialist ideas, notions of solidarity within the broader framework of the Catholic Social Teaching, or liberal, conservative, and cooperativist meanings of solidarity. Thus, contemporary concepts of solidarity can be traced back to very different forms of situational analyses and socio-economic settings over the course of the 19th and 20th century.

Janine Giordano Drake (Indiana University Bloomington)

The Industrial Workers of the World and the Churches: The Unexpected History of “Solidarity” in the United States

Janine Giordano Drake is clinical assistant professor of History at Indiana University, where she specializes in comparative labor and working class history, American religious history, and U.S. history education. Her first monograph, *War for the Soul of the Christian Nation: Socialism and American Christianity*, is forthcoming. Previously, she edited *Between the Pew and the Picket Line: Christianity and the American Working Class* (2015), an essay collection on the dialogue between Christianity and American capitalism. Her essays on Christian Socialism and the Social Gospel have appeared in journals such as *Labor* and essay collections including *The Religious Left in Modern America*, *Religion is Raced*, the *Blackwell Companion of American Religious History*, and *Religion and Politics Beyond the Culture Wars*. Janine Giordano Drake has also spent considerable time thinking about the core of a liberal arts education, including the stories we tell about liberty, democracy, and justice. In 2018-2019, she executed a Lilly Foundation grant to discuss Catholic Social Teaching with a broad cross-section of faculty at a Catholic liberal arts college. At Indiana University, she helps resource high school social studies teachers to teach U.S. history and prepare students for college-level work in the liberal arts.

Abstract

The term “solidarity” goes back at least 200 years in the English language, but it was rarely used in the United States until after the Civil War. Yet, even while the early labor organizations pioneered a sense of solidarity among workingmen in the late 1880s and 1890s, their concept of working-class unity remained largely captive to Lockean narratives of democracy, reinforced by evangelical Christian narratives of salvation. It was not until the 1905 founding of the Industrial Workers of the World American workers pushed the conversation on labor justice beyond of the trappings of the a “workingmen’s democracy” to imagine both the church, and state, in different terms. Wobblies (as IWW members were called) urged comrades to see themselves not as autonomous individuals but as members of an interdependent and organic human community. They inaugurated a more European, and perhaps distinctively Catholic, sense of global solidarity rooted in a rejection of representative democracy, of nationalism, of class hierarchy, of meaningful racial distinctions, and of imperialism. Wobblies’ sense of solidarity built directly upon the Roman Catholic Social Teaching known also as the “preferential option for the poor.”

André Habisch (KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt)

The Catholic Social Thought Tradition: How Entrepreneurs Contributed to its Emergence

André Habisch is a professor for Christian Social Ethics and Social Policy at the Business School of KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, where he also serves as a responsible coordinator for the International MA program “Entrepreneurship and Innovation.” Furthermore, he volunteers as academic advisor at the Union of Catholic Entrepreneurs and as chairman of the Board of Trustees of Bayer Cares Foundation. His research interests include responsible entrepreneurship, social innovation, practical wisdom, Catholic Social Thought, social market economy, sustainability management, and sustainable consumption. Recent publications include *The German Chambers of*

Commerce and Industry (ed. with Eberhard Sasse, 2021) as well as articles in the *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal for Markets and Ethics*, and others.

Abstract

The Catholic Social Thought tradition played a crucial role in the emergence of the European economic system (“Rhinish Capitalism”), which is dominating Western Europe since World War II and effectively shapes living conditions until today. Conceptual and practical roots of that concept date back to the times of industrialization during the late 19th and early 20th century. During this formative era, values-based entrepreneurs (whose names are largely forgotten today) effectively became “social innovators,” whose pioneering activities also prepared the ground for the emergence of socio-economic institutions. The essay provides insights into the work of French textile entrepreneur Leon Harmél and his German contemporary Franz Brands, whose Christian values effectively shaped their entrepreneurial as well as citizenship engagement. Both soon enfolded progressive labor practices within their respective organizations – but also actively lobbied for promoting their ideas into the political as well as ecclesiastical realm. While Harmel became a co-initiator of the recent Catholic Social Thought tradition with Pope Leo’s XIII. Encyclical “Rerum Novarum” in 1891, Brands co-founded the “People’s Association for Catholic Germany” in 1890 – the leading civic platform for Catholic Social Thought until its closure by the totalitarian Nazi regime in 1933. Close cooperators and staff-members of this mundane organization later became important political actors: they initiated socio-economic systems still relevant for German labor market institutions until today.

thursday, july 8 2021, 7.00 PM

Keynote Address

Chair: Heike Paul is professor and chair of American Studies at FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg and director of the Bavarian American Academy.

Pippa Norris (Harvard University)

The Two Faces of Trust (aka the Cautionary Fable of the Frog and the Scorpion)

Pippa Norris is a comparative political scientist who has taught at Harvard for three decades. She is the Paul McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government, an affiliated professor at Harvard’s Government Department, and founding director of the Electoral Integrity Project. She has also served as Laureate Fellow and Professor of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney. Her research compares public opinion and elections, democratic institutions and cultures, gender politics, and political communications in many countries worldwide. A well-known public speaker and prolific author, she has published around fifty books and has received numerous honors and awards, including the 2020 Samuel Eldersveld award by APSA and the 2018 fellowship of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Her work has been published in more than a dozen languages. She has served in many different public diplomacy positions such a vice president of the American Political Science Association (APSA) and has been co-founding chair of the Elections, Parties, and Public Opinion Group (EPOP) of the PSA and IPSA’s Elections, Citizens and Parties Research Committee. She has also served as the director of the Democratic Governance Group at the United Nations Development Program in New York and the Advisory Board for International IDEA, and

been an expert consultant for many international bodies including the UN, UNDP, UNESCO, UN Women, NDI, the Council of Europe, IFES, International IDEA, the OSCE, the World Bank, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the UK and Australian Electoral Commissions. She has held visiting appointments at Columbia University, the University of California-Berkeley, and many others.

Abstract

The extensive contemporary literature from multiple disciplines has highlighted many beneficial consequences claimed to arise from trust within advanced industrialized societies, such as for promoting solidarity and overcoming collective action problems within local communities (Putnam), lubricating the wheels of economic markets (Fukuyama), managing organizations (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman), overcoming gridlock in policymaking (Hetherington), and facilitating international cooperation underpinning the democratic peace (Russett). It follows that any signs of low or eroding trust are, and should be, a matter of serious concern. But a broader perspective recognizes that in fact trust has two faces, not one. Blind trust in anti-vax posts weaken herd immunity, putting lives at risk. Faith in Q-Anon conspiracy theories triggered violent insurrection attacking the U.S. Capital. Equally disastrous consequences can follow from gullible belief in fake Covid-19 cures like ingesting bleach, investing lifesavings in Madoff pyramid schemes, or trusting the Big Lie about President Biden's legitimate victory. It is well-known that trust has a dark side, after all, the fable of the frog and the scorpion teaches children to beware of faux promises. This presentation, drawn from a forthcoming OUP book *In Praise of Skepticism*, questions the prevalent rosy assumptions underpinning modern accounts of trust. The study unpacks the concept of dark trust and advances a new 4-fold typology of trustworthy relationships. This is used to analyze new empirical evidence drawn from the World Values Survey 1981-2021 in 115 societies. Social, political and international dimension of trust are compared among diverse authoritarian states, ranging from Myanmar, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan to China, Russia, Nicaragua, and Qatar, as well as among industrialized liberal democracies such as Germany, the U.S., and the UK. The conclusion argues that the risks of too much compliant trust, among individuals and societies, have commonly been underestimated.

friday, july 9 2021, 3.00 PM

Panel 3: Global Representations of Solidarity

Chair: Nathalie Aghoro is assistant professor at American Studies at KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt and a member of the Bavarian American Academy.

When literature captures solidarity on a global scale, it underscores that the same hegemonic power dynamics affect different communities and peoples in situated and particular ways. Global representations of solidarity in transnational and activist literature recognize "sites of convergence" (Le) in racialized, gendered, and class-based experiences and imagine pluralistic forms of solidarity that transgress the territorial logic of the nation state as a response to dominant divide and conquer strategies.

Jiann-Chyng Tu (University of Regensburg)

Eslanda Goode Robeson, Colored Cosmopolitanism, and World Citizenship

Jiann-Chyng Tu is a lecturer in American Studies at the University of Regensburg and doctoral candidate at the Humboldt University of Berlin, where he also received his M.A. in American Studies. He holds a B.A. in English and German from Wake Forest University (NC, USA). In his dissertation project, tentatively titled “Black American Romance: Germany and the African American Novel at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century,” Jiann-Chyng Tu examines aesthetic renegotiations of Blackness, genre, and nation in “post era” African American novels set in Germany by John A. Williams, Paul Beatty, and Darryl Pinckney. Among others, his research interests include 20th and 21st-century American literature and culture, transnational American studies, Afro-Asian solidarity, W.E.B. and Shirley Graham Du Bois, Paul and Eslanda Goode Robeson, American studies in Germany, and critical food studies.

Abstract

Based on preliminary work done at the archives of the Berlin Academy of Arts, this paper focuses on Eslanda Goode Robeson’s journalistic writings for *New World Review*, the publication of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship. More specifically, this paper zooms in on the article titled “World Woman Number One,” published in the July 1951 issue of *New World Review*, one of Goode Robeson’s first articles for the publication. Following Barbara Ransby, Robert Shaffter, Nico Slate, and Imaobong Umoren, I argue that Esland Goode Robeson utilizes *New World Review* as a performative space for articulating and interpreting ideas of world citizenship through a lens of intersectional colored cosmopolitanism. Goode Robeson often featured and championed non-western and other non-white women activist-intellectuals, such as Soong Ching-Ling, to highlight the importance of internationalist as well as intersectional perspectives embedded within strategic colored cosmopolitanism. Taken together, I argue that these strategic internationalist alliances and solidarities not only allow like-minded activist-intellectuals, such as Eslanda Robeson and Soong Ching-Ling, to forge intimate bonds and friendships, but also help create a global intellectual framework and ethos for working towards a vision of world citizenship.

Quynh Nhu Le (University of South Florida)

Envisioning Cross-Racial Solidarities Through Time and Tense

Quynh Nhu Le is associate professor of English Literature at the University of South Florida. She specializes in critical ethnic studies, settler colonial studies, critical refugee studies, Asian American literature and film, Native American/Indigenous literature and film, and theories of affect and embodiment. Her work has appeared in interdisciplinary journals such as *Amerasia Journal*, *Journal of Asian American Studies*, and *Dance Chronicle*. She is the author of *Unsettled Solidarities: Asian and Indigenous Cross-Representations in the Américas* (2019).

Abstract

This paper examines how critical attention to Vietnamese refugee women’s bodies can open spaces for dialogue between Asian, Indigenous, and Black communities across space, time, and tense. It considers how the rememorialization of the war within Vietnamese refugee communities can illuminate interconnections of gendered violence wrought out of U.S. impositions of racialized terror, settler colonial occupations, and imperial wars. In her collection entitled “Small Wars,” photographer An-My Le captures the images of staged Vietnam War reenactments in the Virginia area. Rather than solely documenting these enactments, primarily by white men, Le is also asked to participate

in the production. Taking on multiple roles in front of and behind the camera (as translator, as sniper, and as witness), Le's photographs, and her participation within it, illuminates a destabilizing aesthetic of enfleshment that draws attention to the layers of violence against women embodied in the occupied and haunted spaces of the South. In illuminating interconnections across different communities, the photographs conjure the tensions and potential for solidarities between Vietnamese refugees, Black, and Indigenous peoples.

friday, july 9 2021, 4.15 PM

Panel 4: Cultural Practices of Solidarity

Chair: Katharina Gerund is assistant professor at American Studies at FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg and a member of the Bavarian American Academy.

Solidarity is most easily observed in its established forms of proclamations, demonstrations, and explicitly political activities. The papers in this panel expand this focus by examining cultural practices of solidarity that can be found in somewhat unexpected places. They focus on solidarity as a lived practice and as a process of knowledge-formation as well as its connections with affective archives and notions of kinship. In doing so, they specifically interrogate the embodied experiences of activists and scholars, the emergence of solidarity in cultural texts and among a reading public, and its relation to different forms of knowledge.

Chandra Russo (Colgate University)

Embodied Experience and Social Movement Study

Chandra Russo is an assistant professor of Sociology at Colgate University, where she teaches and does research on social movements and activism, (anti)racism and the body. Russo's work aims to better understand how social movement participants come to see violence and injustice that dominant perspectives occlude while imagining and enacting radical alternatives. The U.S.-based groups Russo examines contest a range of issues that are global in reach, from militarism and state retrenchment to ecological crisis and racial violence, and do so in creative and often unlikely ways. Russo's scholarship contributes to our understanding of how movement groups enact solidarity across various kinds of social difference and forge cultures of resistance under new global arrangements. Russo's book *Solidarity in Practice: Moral Protest and the US Security State* (2018) examines how justice-seeking solidarity drives activist communities contesting U.S. torture, militarism, and immigration policies. Before earning her PhD, Russo spent several years working on immigrant justice issues in New York State, Central Mexico, and Colorado. Her writing on these matters has been published in numerous venues, including *Mobilization, Race & Class, Interface*, and *The Denver Post*.

Abstract

Though embodied resistance has figured centrally throughout history, social movement scholars have paid scant attention to the role of the body in activism. The few yet important studies on embodied activism tend to highlight the work of intentional bodily performance with less attention paid to how bodily experience shapes activists and the movements they join. Yet scholars have long argued that social movements should be understood as knowledge projects, bearing and disseminating alternative and often resistant world-views. Through ethnographic study with solidarity activists that resist

the U.S. security state, I find that embodied experience is central to cultivating new and resistant forms of knowledge. This paper seeks to center embodied experience as a key interpretive lens for both social movement participants and scholars, considering the layered ways in which studying the embodiment of solidarity activism is itself an embodied, interpretive project.

Silvia Schultermandl (WWU Münster)

Intimate Archives and Experimental Narratives of Transnational Kinship

Silvia Schultermandl is professor and chair of American Studies at the University of Münster (WWU). Her research interests are American fiction and life writing, literary theory, transnational American studies, family and kinship studies, transnational feminism, and social media. Her latest books are *Ambivalent Transnational Belonging in American Literature* (2021), *Ethnicity and Kinship in Contemporary European and North American Literature* (ed. with Klaus Riestler, 2021), and *Click and Kin: Transnational Identity and Quick Media* (ed. with Friedman May, 2016).

Abstract

Taking cues from the critical race theorist, feminist, and queer critical traditions of affect studies, recent projects in archival studies have generated new insights into the affective practices of assembling, managing, and facilitating archival spaces for inter-generational memory work. Such projects raise issues about the affective dimensions both of archival epistemologies and of the actual records. To this end, archives are not only manifestations of ideology and hegemony qua Foucault, but in and of themselves sites of affects, feelings, and emotions. In my paper I offer analyses of the following contemporary literary, artistic, and critical works: Jane Jeong Trenka's *Fugitive Visions: An Adoptee's Return to Korea* (2009) and the accompanying Blog *TRACK*, Cristina Sharpe's *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016), Valeria Luiselli's *Lost Children Archive* (2019), and Miroslava Chavez-Garcia's *Migrant Longing: Letter Writing Across the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (2019), and the *FamCam* project. They exemplify the coexistence of a critique of the respective archive's fraught ideological underpinnings with the archive's ability to engender reparative positions towards family histories, genealogies, and feelings of kinship more broadly. In my talk, I discuss the aesthetic-political work these literary and scholarly narratives of archival practices perform in their own right and want to situate them within ongoing discussions about historical recovery work which tackles the systematic marginalization of dominant archival practices and hence the systematic exclusion of racialized lives and narratives. In particular, I want to attend to the experimental narrative form with which these examples cast intimate archives as sites of longing, mourning, and recovery. My talk resonates with the conference theme of "Rethinking Solidarity," especially the idea of solidarity in unlikely places, through the focus on kinship. I would like to extend the notion of intimacy in relation to the familiar/familial to ideas about an intimate reading public of the contingent archives I analyze. This idea of intimate archives will attend to questions about the politics of representation as well as the affective economies of literary, scholarly, and artistic projects which complicate prevalent understandings of family and employ kinship as a theme through which to approach questions about cultural and social belonging.

friday, july 9 2021, 5.30 PM

Panel 5: Solidarity in the Anthropocene

Chair: Sylvia Mayer is professor and chair of American Studies/Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at the University of Bayreuth and a member of the Bavarian American Academy.

Do the accumulation of socioeconomic and environmental threats, the convergence of resource depletion, intractable inequality, and climate change, bring about the real danger that human solidarity itself will suddenly fracture (cf. Mike Davis)? This panel asks in how far the concept of solidarity must be reconceptualized in the Anthropocene, the era when humanity has become a decisive force in the planet's ecology and geology that challenges familiar life-styles, cultural practices, and modes of thought, ultimately asking for a new reflexivity as a species.

Lisa Garforth (Newcastle University)

Utopia, Solidarity, and the Anthropocene: Hope after Human-Centeredness

Lisa Garforth is senior lecturer in Sociology at Newcastle University. Her work focuses on individual and collective attempts to imagine better eco-social futures. Her monograph *Green Utopias: Environmental Hope Before and After Nature* (2017) explored a post-war history of environmental discourse and visions of more sustainable societies. As part of the interdisciplinary project *Unsettling Scientific Stories: Expertise, Narratives and Future Histories* (2016-18) she was involved in empirical studies exploring speculative fiction reading practices (with Chambers 'Reading Science: SF and the Uses of Literature,' in the *Palgrave Handbook of Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Literature and Science*). She is currently working on a book examining the value of science fictional narratives and epistemologies for the sociological imagination.

Abstract

In this paper I explore the current Anthropocene moment in relation to the reimagination of solidarity and utopia in speculative fiction. Western and especially American environmental discourse has often emphasised collective threats and projected global crises into the future in order to demand structural and cultural changes to the damaging, depleting and divisive structures of an exploitative and unsustainable capitalism. Less frequently, but often powerfully, radical ecologism has generated manifestoes and speculative fictions sketching the possibility of new forms of human well-being, justice and solidarity rooted in sustainable ways of living and being. Over the past couple of decades, the future orientation of ecotopian discourse has been fundamentally challenged – by the inexorable logics of the climate crisis, by demands for climate justice, by the (contested) idea of the Anthropocene itself. Here I explore what a classic set of late 20th-century U.S. utopian ecofictions might tell us about better ways of living with the nonhuman, and how new modes of speculative fiction are reworking the very idea of utopia in relation to eco-social crisis.

Solvejg Nitzke (TU Dresden)

Green Companions/Making Kin with Trees: Interspecies Solidarity and the Future of Humanity

Solvejg Nitzke is postdoctoral researcher at TU Dresden. She was part of the DFG-funded project “Climate’s Time” at the University of Vienna and earned her doctorate at Ruhr-University Bochum in 2015 with a thesis on the Tunguska-Event (“Die Produktion der Katastrophe: Das Tunguska-Ereignis und die Programme der Moderne” 2017). Her current research project “Precarious Nature” examines proto-ecological knowledge in 19th-century country-literatures. She works on disaster and science fiction, the intersection of story-telling and knowledge production and ecological thought. Her work on plants focuses on trees and their relationship with and agency in story-telling. She is working on a book-project called “Making Kin with Trees” and a collection “Baum und Text” (in German).

Abstract

A world devoid of trees cannot support humans. Humans depend on trees for food, shelter, clothes, and oxygen and still there seems to be no end to the destruction. Even where people promise to protect and/or plant trees, the giant plants are treated in ways which seem to make matters worse – old-growth forest is “replaced” by invasive tree species planted in already precarious soils; trees become assets in climate mitigation number games and become the stuff of green washing instead of being recognized as living beings. But how could trees, who are so unlike humans, receive the attention, the rights and the compassion, they deserve? Is it possible to relate to trees beyond their “use” for humans? Can trees (and other plants) claim solidarity? A wide range of recent texts imagine trees as partners in a biospheric community of being. From Peter Wohlleben’s *The Hidden Life of Trees* (2015) to Richard Power’s *The Overstory: A Novel* (2018) to Suzanne Simard’s *Finding the Mother Tree* (2021) foresters, novelists, and ecologists conceptualize human-tree-relationship along the lines of solidarity rather than that of competition and utilitarianism. With Donna Haraway’s concepts “companion species” and “Making Kin” I will explore the generic roots and transformations of tree literature in a broad sense as well as the pitfalls and promises of arboreal solidarity in order to find out how narrative trees might grow in(to) the real world.

friday, july 9 2021, 7.00 PM

Closing Keynote

Chair: Heike Paul is professor and chair of American Studies at FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg and director of the Bavarian American Academy.

Aleida Assman (University of Konstanz)

Repairing the Past: Divided Narratives and National Solidarity

Aleida Assman held the chair of English Literature and Literary Theory at the University of Konstanz from 1993 to 2014. She taught as a guest professor at international universities (Rice University, Princeton, Yale, Chicago or Vienna). Main areas of her research are history of media, history, and theory of reading, cultural memory, with special emphasis on Holocaust and trauma. The Max Planck Research Award allowed her to establish a research group on “memory and history” (2009-2015). Together with her husband Jan Assmann she received the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade in

2018. Currently she is directing a research group at the University of Konstanz on civic strength. Her recent publications in English are *Is the Time Out of Joint? On the Rise and Fall of the Modern Time Regime* (2020) and *Shadows of Trauma. Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity* (2016), as well as *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (2012), *Memory and Political Change* (ed. with Linda Shortt, 2012), *Introduction to Cultural Studies: Topics, Concepts, Issues* (2012), and *Memory in a Global Age: Discourses, Practices and Trajectories* (ed. with Sebastian Conrad, 2010).

Abstract

Nations are torn apart today not only through material and social inequality or identity politics but also through divided narratives that coexist independently in the same territory. In order to overcome the division and fragmentation in the society and to mobilize civic strength for common projects it is important to address the divided past and to bring conflicting narratives into a mutually acknowledged relationship.

the bavarian american academy

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

The 20th conference will be held online.

Registration required to receive the link to join the conference.

The organizers wish to thank the following institution for the generous support:



Bavarian American Academy

Stiftung Bayerisches Amerikahaus gGmbH

Karolinenplatz 3

80333 München

Phone: +49-89-55 25 37-42

info@amerika-akademie.de

www.amerika-akademie.de