

50TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE  
AUSTRIAN ASSOCIATION FOR AMERICAN STUDIES

# VERSIONS OF AMERICA



**SPECULATIVE  
PASTS, PRESENTS, FUTURES**

UNIVERSITY OF KLAGENFURT

**OCTOBER 20-22, 2023**

# WELCOME TO KLAGENFURT

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## USEFUL INFORMATION

Campus map and city map



Book of abstracts for the AAAS 2023

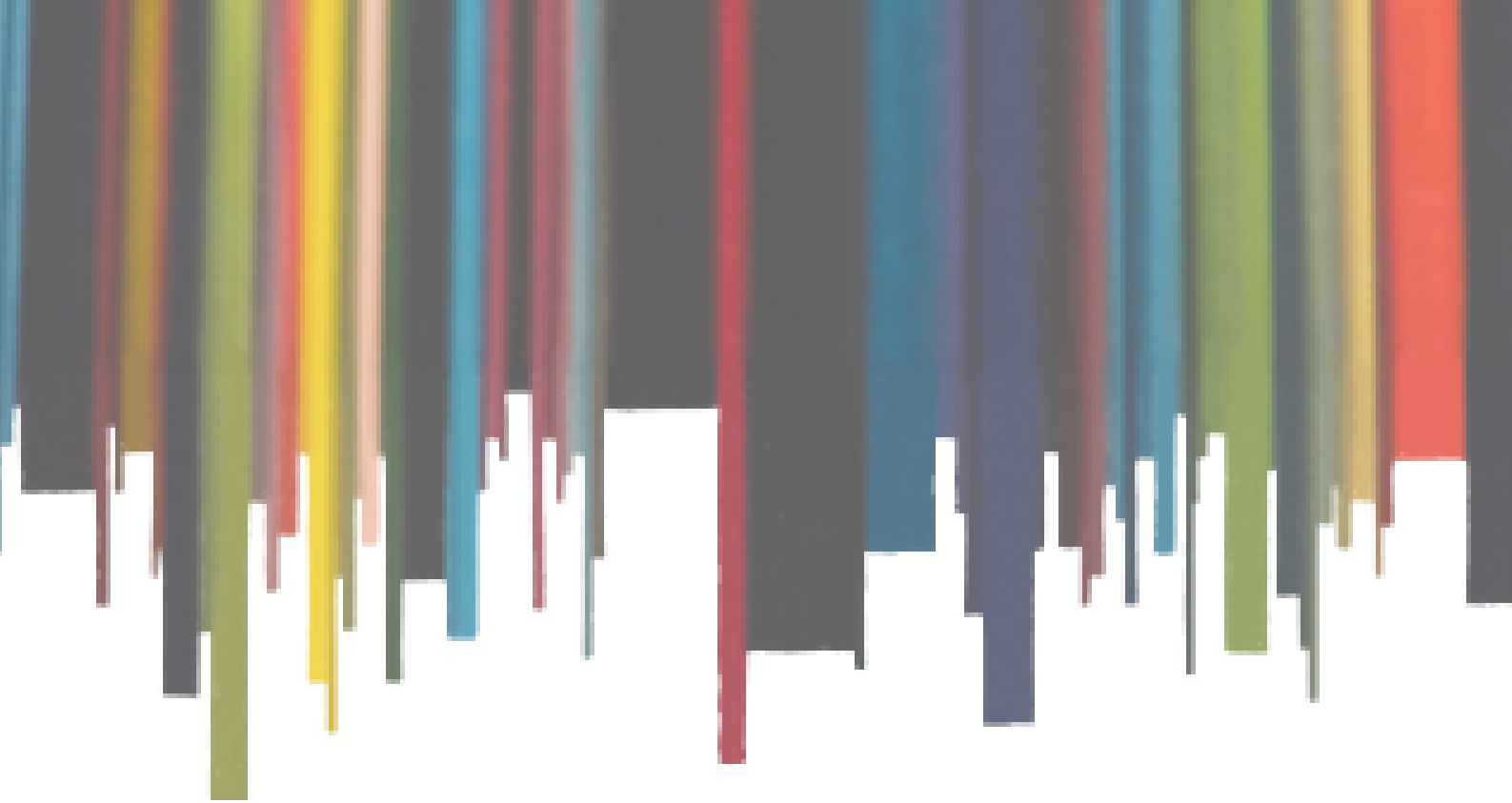


**Bus schedule (C-Bus):** The main bus stops you will probably need are Hauptbahnhof (main railway station), Heiligengeistplatz (downtown Klagenfurt), and Universität (University Campus).



For the **conference dinner** you need to get off at Heiligengeistplatz.

If you require any assistance please contact us via email at **aaas2023@aau.at** or speak to our helpers.



# KEYNOTES

# James J. Donahue

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## Race, Time, and Narrative in Indigenous and African American Speculative Fiction

*Friday | 5.00 PM – 6.30 PM*  
*Room: HS B*



Speculative fiction – including but not limited to such genres as science fiction, fantasy, and post-apocalyptic horror – have long been employed as vehicles for social and political commentary. Imagining worlds not unlike our own, authors of such works enlighten audiences on problems in our world that they may take for granted, such as the ubiquity of structural, systemic racism.

The history and continued legacy of settler-colonialism and slavery, to give but two prominent examples from America's troubled relationship with Indigenous and African American peoples, respectively, have been the subject of a number of popular and award-winning novels in recent years. In particular, many authors – such as Cherie Dimaline (Métis), David Robertson (Cree), Janelle Monáe (African American), and N.K. Jemisin (African American) – use their fiction to collapse the past and future into what I call a "continuous present," in order simultaneously demonstrate how, even while reaching into the future, the past is never left behind. Both Indigenous Futurism and Afrofuturism embrace both the pain and the empowering potential of the past in order to imagine futures where oppressed peoples not only survive, but thrive.

**James J. Donahue** is Professor and Assistant Chair of English & Communication at SUNY Potsdam (USA), where he regularly offers classes on Young Adult Literature, Native American Literature, and The Graphic Novel. His research focuses on the intersections between the study of race and narrative form. His most recent book, *Indigenous Comics & Graphic Novels: Studies in Genre*, will be released by the University Press of Mississippi later this year.

# Sylvia Mayer

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**Sylvia Mayer** is chair of American Studies and Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at the University of Bayreuth. Her major research area is Ecocriticism. Most recently, her work has focused on the cultural and literary imagination of (global) environmental risk, on the study of climate change fiction and petrofiction as environmental risk narratives. She has published on 19th and 20th century U.S. writing, on, for instance, the African American environmental imagination, on Toni Morrison's novels, and on New England regionalist writing.

## Angry Optimism, Utopian Minimalism, and Resilience: Writing America in Times of Climate Crisis

*Saturday | 1.30 PM – 3.00 PM*  
*Room: HS 4*

Writing America in times of climate crisis means responding to the consequences of current human-made climate change that have begun to massively impact societies and cultures worldwide and that have, more specifically, considerably added to the sense of instability and uncertainty characterizing contemporary U.S. society and culture. Climate narratives, whether factual or fictional, always address a world in transition, a world in the process of being remade by climate change, and by doing so reveal the necessity to probe and rethink our understanding of the everyday and the practices that rely on it.

While a lot of U.S. climate fiction has focused on climate catastrophe, on apocalyptic scenarios that engage the causes and possible consequences of socioecological devastation, this talk departs from a focus on catastrophe and decline. Instead, it discusses climate change novels that acknowledge the momentous, often dire, transformations climate change is inevitably bringing about, but, at the same time, also develop socioecological visions of resilience that are firmly anchored in relational thinking and introduce forms of adaptability, flexibility and persistence. Focusing on novels whose fictional worldbuilding centers on the U.S., and drawing in particular on the concepts of “angry optimism” (Kim Stanley Robinson) and “utopian minimalism” (Anahid Nersessian), the talk discusses how these novels explore the shifts in epistemological, ontological and ethical conceptualization that are necessary to cultivate resilience in a world marked by the risks and vulnerabilities of ongoing climate change.

# Mahshid Mayar

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## Erase Till You Arrive: Versioning the Scripts of Empire in Erasure Poetry

*Sunday | 9.00 AM - 10.30 AM*  
*Room: HS 4*

From fast fashion to comic books, from machine guns to gentrification schemes, and from the 0-1 binarism of computer codes to the global span of the US penal landscape, we live in an age that has grown increasingly comfortable with what Mel Bochner identified in 1967 as “the serial attitude.” In my talk, and in engaging with the main theme of the AAAS 2023, I project Bochner’s reading of the serial attitude onto the documental sub-genre of poetry known as “erasure poetry.”

Exemplified by the works of Philip Metres, Layli Long Soldier, Niina Pollari, Solmaz Sharif, and others, erasure poetry is the outcome of such subtractive textual/visual techniques as black-out, white-out, or strike-through of a “source text,” be it older works of fiction or poetry, the transcript of political speeches, documents of legal or historical significance, or newspaper articles. Erasure, esp. the 21st-century examples of it that fall into the sub-category of protest poetry, layers/versions discourses on such historical issues as settler colonialism, the neoliberal iterations of US empire, and so on. In my talk, I interrogate this experimental, documental art-form as the inevitable outcome of a critical serial attitude to discourses, a textual practice of versioning the scripts of US empire that bridges and separates an “original” (however we may define and understand the original) to and from its subsequent versions by the same or subsequent authors.



Invested in transnational and Asian American Studies, **Mahshid Mayar** is the author of *Citizens and Rulers of the World: The American Child and the Cartographic Pedagogies of Empire* (University of North Carolina Press), that has been awarded the Shelley Fisher Fishkin Prize for International Scholarship in Transnational American Studies (by the American Studies Association). Mahshid’s second-book project interrogates the politics and poetics of silence through “erasure poetry” by Asian- and Indigenous American poets.



# **CONFERENCE SCHEDULE**

# FRIDAY 20 OCTOBER

## Pre-Conference

9.30 AM AYA Roundtable Discussion

“How to survive a PhD without going crazy”-Thoughts on Academic Wellbeing (room: S.2.42)

11.00 AM Fulbright Austria Luncheon:

Two Decades of the Fulbright Prize in American Studies

1.30 PM – 3.00 PM AAAS Board Meeting

1.30 PM Registration Opens

Room: HS B

3.30 PM – 4.45 PM Conference Opening & Fulbright Award

### OPENING REMARKS & ANNIVERSARY GREETINGS

**Matthias Klestil**, President of the AAAS

**Elizabeth Martin-Shukrun**, Counselor for Public Affairs, U.S. Embassy Vienna

**Eva-Maria Graf**, Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Education,  
University of Klagenfurt

**Alexander Onysko**, Head of the Department of English, University of Klagenfurt

### FULBRIGHT AWARD 2023

**Hermann Agis**, Executive Director of Fulbright Austria

**Ingrid Gessner**, Vice President of the AAAS

Room: HS B

5.00 PM – 6.30 PM Keynote James J. Donahue

Room: HS B

6.30 PM AAAS Anniversary Reception

“American Night”: Music by “Together”

Main Hall (Aula)

# SATURDAY 21 OCTOBER

8.30 AM Registration Opens

Room: HS 2



**MULTIPLICITIES OF U.S. CULTURE:  
Indigenous Americas**

Room: HS 4

Chair: James J. Donahue | SUNY Potsdam

**KARSTEN FITZ | Passau**

Pop Art, Activism, and Indigenous Futurism: The Visual Art of Ryan Singer

**KATHARINE WILSON | Bamberg**

Francisco Delgado's *Adolescence, Secondhand*: A Postmodern Rhetorics of Survivance

**NINA DE BETTIN PADOLIN | Graz**

Transatlantic Belonging: Early and Contemporary Mohegan Travelers in Madeline Sayet's "Where We Belong"

**(RE-)VERSIONING PASTS, PRESENTS, AND FUTURES:  
Visions of American Pluralism**

Room: HS 2

Chair: Sofie Sabbioni | Basel

**GRIT GRIGOLEIT-RICHTER | Passau**

Visions of Welfare: Poor Whites and Criminal Blacks?

**LEE RIJN TATE**

U.S. Pluralism: Intelligent Design or Accidentally All-Inclusive?

**KIERAN SOMMER | Heidelberg**

"[T]he perfect national illustration of the unity and dignity of the human family": Frederick Douglass's Vision of the United States against the background of the "Chinese Question"

**AESTHETICS AND POSSIBILITIES OF VERSIONING:  
Space, Place, and Geo-Perspectives**

Room: Z.1.29

Chair: Joshua Parker | Salzburg

**ROBERT WINKLER | Salzburg**

Cabin Fever? Conflicting Versions of America in *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), and *Walden* (1854)

**CLARA PETINO**

'Salem Literature' as Memory Site: *The Crucible* and Katherine Howe's *Conversion*

**MATTHEW WYNN SIVILS | Ames, IA**

Versions in Stone: Hawthorne's Ecogothic Rocks

**SPECULATIVE (CULTURAL) POLITICS:  
U.S. Cultural Mobilities**

**Room: HS 3**

Chair: Alexandra Ganser | Vienna

**ÉVA MATHEY | Debrecen**

Versions of America Shaping Hungarian Diplomatic Efforts toward the United States between the World Wars

**MARCUS GRÄSER | Linz**

American World's Fairs in a Divided and (Dis)Connected World: Chicago's "Century of Progress" (1933/34) and New York's "World of Tomorrow" (1939/40)

**BARBARA GFÖLLNER | Vienna**

Decontinentalizing the U.S.? Archipelagic Poetics of Mobility in Caribbean Poetry across the Diaspora

**VERSIONING BEYOND THE HUMAN:  
Pasts, Presents, and Futures of Climate Change**

**Room: HS 1**

Chair: David Callahan | Aveiro

**MARIE DÜCKER | Graz**

Fragmented Future(s): Chronology and Space in Richard McGuire's *Here* (2014)

**MARKUS SCHWARZ | Salzburg**

Evidences of an Otherwise Cosmos: Black and Indigenous Futurisms as Decolonial Praxis

**DAVID J. CROSS | Stuttgart**

Global Weirding, Science Fiction, and the American Apocalypse; or the Past, Present, & Future of the Late-Anthropocene

**10.30 AM – 11.00 AM Coffee Break**

**Room: Z.1.09**

**MULTIPLICITIES OF U.S. CULTURE:  
Afrofuturist Imaginaries**

Room: HS 2

Chair: Juliann Knaus | Graz

**TIMOTHY E. STROUD | Halle-Wittenberg**

America the Wild Seed: Octavia Butler's Speculative Versions of a Disrupted Past

**CHARLOTTE SCHMIEGEL | Heidelberg**

"All You Have to Do Is Know What You Want": Failing Kinship in Samuel R. Delany's *Trouble on Triton*

**(RE-)VERSIONING PASTS, PRESENTS, AND FUTURES:  
West of the Rest: Trans-Mississippi Thirdspaces**

Room: Z.1.29

Chair: Robert Winkler | Salzburg

**MARTIN GABRIEL | Klagenfurt**

Smallpox and the "Empire of Remedies": New Mexico, 1898/99

**ROBIN RAABE | Klagenfurt**

Where East and West converge: Fort Ross as a Multicultural Contact Zone

**STEFAN RABITSCH | Oslo**

"But all I know is, real cowboys is white": Or, why Black Urban Cowboydom is Speculative and Afrofuturist AF

**AESTHETICS AND POSSIBILITIES OF VERSIONING:  
Narrative Versioning Across Media**

Room: HS 1

Chair: Nassim Balestrini | Graz

**CHRISTIAN QUENDLER | Innsbruck**

Poe and the Aesthetics of Versioning in Early Classical Cinema

**SIMONE FRANCESCATO | Venice**

Two Versions of America: *A Stranger in My Arms*

**KARIN HOEPKER | Berlin**

Speculating in Intimacy – Chance, Algorithms, and the Future of Matchmaking

**SPECULATIVE (CULTURAL) POLITICS:  
Aging, Caring, and Kinship**

Room: HS 4

Chair: Iris van der Horst | Klagenfurt

**RUTH GEHRMANN | Mainz**

Medical Futures of America: Health Care in Speculative Fiction and Life Writing of the 1960s

**ROBERTA MAIERHOFER | Graz**

Imagining Pasts, Presents, & Futures: Ursula Le Guin and Speculations on the Human Condition: An Anocritical Approach

**KATALINA KOPKA | Bremen**

"I'm Talking to an Appliance": Speculative Cinematic Visions of Posthuman Eldercare

**VERSIONING BEYOND THE HUMAN:  
Critiques of Environmental Degradation**

Room: HS 3

Chair: Marie Dücker | Graz

**MARIJA KRSTIC | Bayreuth**

Oil Extraction Culture and the American Novel: Reading Petrofiction as Risk Fiction

**ANDREA FÄRBER | Graz**

The Repercussions of Climate Change Affecting the United States in T. C. Boyle's *A Friend of the Earth*

12.30 PM – 1.30 PM Lunch Break

Room: Z.1.09

1.30 PM – 3.00 PM Keynote Sylvia Mayer

Room: HS 4

3.00 PM – 3.30 PM Coffee Break

Room: Z.1.09

**MULTIPLICITIES OF U.S. CULTURE:  
Practices of Identity in Popular Culture**

Room: HS 3

Chair: Roberta Maierhofer | Graz

**OLEKSANDRA ROMANIUK | Vienna**

American Love and Romance in the Global Spotlight: International Adaptations of *The Bachelor* Franchise

**TATJANA KLEIN | Munich**

A Century of The Last Man Trope – Apocalyptic Depictions Female Presidents in Popular Culture

**GEORG GRUBER | Graz**

Lonely-Lost-Literally Me(n): Loneliness, Masculinity, and Internet Memes

**(RE-)VERSIONING PASTS, PRESENTS, AND FUTURES:  
Blackness and Resistance**

Room: Z.1.29

Chair: Timothy E. Stroud | Halle-Wittenberg

**LENA ELISABETH LEßLHUMER | Salzburg**

From Trauma to Agency: Reading Lorde's Version of America as Presented in her Life Writing *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*

**VERENA ADAMIK | Lüneburg**

Sutton E. Griggs and the Black Possibles

**ANDRIN ALBRECHT & HANNAH SCHOCH | Jena & Zurich**

*Nope*: Jordan Peele's Versioning of the American Spectacle

**AESTHETICS AND POSSIBILITIES OF VERSIONING:  
Colson Whitehead's Americas**

Room: HS 1

Chair: Karin Hoepker | Berlin

**JANA ROSEBROCK | Flensburg**

"Maybe America has never been great": Remembering an Alternative Past on Screen in Berry Jenkin's *The Underground Railroad* (2021)

**MARIA WIEGEL | Cologne**

"Also, I am a real person": Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* (2019); or How to Write About Racism in a "Post-Racial" Era

**SPECULATIVE (CULTURAL) POLITICS:  
Prophecy, Conspiracy, and Post-Truth Discourse**

**Room: HS 2**

Chair: Marcus Gräser | Linz

**PÉTER CSATÓ | Debrecen**

Deconstruction, the Sokal Hoax, and Alternative Facts, or Did Postmodernism Really lead to Post-Truth?

**WILLIAM TATE | Harrisonburg, VA**

MONK'S EYES: Into Today - Thomas Merton and a New American Seeing

**SOFIE SABBIONI | Basel**

'Don't Say Gay': Anti-Queer Conspiracy Theories and Far-Right Visions of U.S. American Decay

**VERSIONING BEYOND THE HUMAN:  
Speculative and Transhuman Futures**

**Room: HS 4**

Chair: Elena Ippendorf | Klagenfurt

**CHRISTIAN PERWEIN | Graz**

Cyborg Futures: Fictional Transhumanism and its influence

**IRIS VAN DER HORST | Klagenfurt**

A Transhumanist Version of the United States: Neal Shusterman's *Arc of a Scythe* Trilogy

**DAVID CALLAHAN | Aveiro**

Rearranging Ethnic America in *Horizon: Zero Dawn*

**5.15 PM – 6.45 PM AAAS General Meeting**

**Room: HS 4**

**8.00 PM Conference Dinner (Magdas)**

## SUNDAY 22 OCTOBER

9.00 AM – 10.30 AM Keynote Mahshid Mayar

Room: HS 4

10.30 AM – 11.00 AM Coffee Break

Room: Z.1.09

11.00 AM – 1.00 PM Parallel Panels

### MULTIPLICITIES OF U.S. CULTURE: Nonnormative and Intersectional Identities

Room: HS 1

Chair: Ralph Poole | Salzburg

**Christine VELOSO LAO | Diliman**

Constructing Masculinities in American Drama: Theatricality in Sam Shepard's *True West* (1980) and Young Jean Lee's *Straight White Men* (2017)

**SANDRA TAUSEL | Innsbruck**

Reading Past, Present, and Future Motherhood in Torrey Peter's *Detransition, Baby*

**GREGORY PHIPPS | Reykjavík**

Escaping the Basement: Intersectionality and American Naturalist Literature

**EGE ALPEREN ÖZBEK | Graz**

Fatherhood in the Wilderness: The Father-Daughter Relationship in *Leave No Trace* (2018)

**(RE-)VERSIONING PASTS, PRESENTS, AND FUTURES:  
Storying the Nation**

**Room: HS 2**

Chair: Michael Docherty | Innsbruck

**PATRICK ADAMSON**

Nation(s) in Making: The Historical Westerns of 1920s Hollywood

**INGRID GESSNER & ANGELIKA ILG | Feldkirch**

Re-envisioning America's Frontier: A Speculative Journey through John Wesley Powell's Expedition to the American West and Jaclyn Backhaus' *Men on Boats*

**CHRISTOPHER CAMERON | Charlotte, NC**

Secularism, Gender, and Black Women's Political Thought

**JONAS FAUST | Heidelberg**

Allen Ginsberg's Prophecy, Messianism and the Making of a Future America

**AESTHETICS AND POSSIBILITIES OF VERSIONING:  
Transgenerational Storytelling**

**Room: Z.1.29**

Chair: Verena Adamik | Lüneburg

**TATIANA KONRAD | Vienna**

The Legacy of American Slavery: Contesting Blackness & Re-envisioning Nationhood in *Kindred: A Graphic Novel Adaptation*

**KRISTINA SEEFELDT | Freiburg**

The Civilian-Military Divide: How the US Military is Perceived Through a Multi-generational Lens in Todd Robinson's *The Last Full Measure* (2019)



**SPECULATIVE (CULTURAL) POLITICS:  
Migration, Mobilities, and Modes of Belonging**

**Room: HS 3**

Chair: Marijana Mikić | Klagenfurt

**KLARA S. SZLEZÁK | Passau**

Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* and Maurice Fishberg's *The Jews* -  
Two Versions of America as a Home for Jews

**JULIA MACHTENBERG | Bochum**

"Let's pretend your city // is Evanescence -" Agha Shahid Ali's  
Translocal Reconfiguring of the North American Continent

**PHILINE SCHILLER | Heidelberg**

Cooking Up America: Culinary Versions of America in Contemporary  
Chef Memories

1.00 PM – 1.30 PM Closing Remarks & Farewell

**Room: HS 1**

**Post-Conference**

1.30 PM Meeting of the New Board

# SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS



## Organization

The conference is organized by the Austrian Association for American Studies (AAAS) represented by Matthias Klestil and Marijana Mikić, University of Klagenfurt.

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