

61st Annual Conference of the German Association for American Studies
“*America After Nature: Democracy, Culture, Environment*”
12 – 15 Juni 2014, Würzburg

CALL FOR PAPERS

Liebe DGfA-Mitglieder,

anbei finden Sie den Call for Paper Proposals für die Jahrestagung 2014 in Würzburg. Wie schon 2013 wurde der Termin der Versendung dieses Calls vorgezogen, damit Ihnen und den OrganisatorInnen der Workshops mehr Zeit für die Einsendung von Vorschlägen bleibt.

Eine zweite Neuerung gibt es 2014: Um die Workshops planbarer zu machen, wurden jeweils zwei ReferentInnen vorab nominiert. Dennoch sollte genug Raum sein für Interessierte, um sich um die verbleibenden Plätze in den jeweiligen Sektionen zu bewerben.

Alle Interessenten und Interessentinnen an den Workshops für die Jahrestagung 2014 „America After Nature“ in Würzburg sind ab sofort herzlich eingeladen, ihre Paper Proposals bitte **direkt an die entsprechenden Workshop-Leiter/innen** unter den unten angegebenen Kontaktdaten zu schicken.

Die Frist zur Meldung läuft bis zum **15. Februar 2014**.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

Ihr Philipp Gassert
Geschäftsführer der DGfA

1. Teaching American Democracy, Culture, and Environment in the EFL Classroom Carsten Albers (Köln) / Nancy Grimm (Jena) / Uwe Küchler (Halle-Wittenberg/Bonn)

Although Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) has increasingly been focusing on intercultural and transnational ties and interconnections, applying academic theories to practice while keeping in mind the demands and needs of schools, teachers, and learners has presented a constant challenge. Against the background of the conceptual frame of the conference, which emphasizes that “nature provides the concepts and ideas at the core of America’s political, cultural, and social structure,” this workshop will attempt to bridge the gap between academia and school by repositioning Foreign Language Education on an interdisciplinary nexus between its related disciplines (including American Studies) and conceptualizations.

‘Nature’ or rather ‘the environment’ is a theme that has been used as a subject of discussion as well as backdrop for inter-/transcultural comparison in EFL-teaching materials since the late 1970s. Arguably, today, ‘the environment’ has evolved as *the* global issue in the EFL classroom. Unfortunately though, this has also led to two inapt developments in the EFL classroom: (1) Topic choice and task formulation is often governed by mass media representations and not so much by the conceptual affiliations with the topics of environment, culture, or democracy. (2) A strong focus on impending doom has evolved as problematic

particularly in terms of a lack of multifaceted and well-balanced approaches toward American culture. Therefore, a more balanced, interdisciplinary approach, materials that are appropriate and useful, as well as a more elaborate focus on the relationship between environment(s), culture(s), and democracy is needed. Talks invited for this workshop may focus on, but are not restricted to, the following questions:

1. *Classroom Topics*: How can TEFL facilitate a better understanding of how changes in nature and the current ecological situation impact cultural aspects and democracy in particular (and vice versa)? How can we communicate the importance of these topics to students so that they can understand it on their own terms?
2. *Materials Design*: Is there a need for critical evaluation of currently available educational materials, their activities and tasks? Which materials could be added and how should they be structured? Which primary texts could form the basis of educational materials: texts (lyrics, short stories, graphic novels, etc.), audiovisual media (music video clips, documentaries, movies, etc.), digital media (websites, online games, etc.)? Consequently, how should 'reflective practitioners' design and present materials while moving away from an overly apocalyptic and often isolated take on topics?
3. *Knowledge & Theoretical Reasoning*: In terms of bridging the gap between academia and school, which theoretical foundation and reasoning can TEFL provide in terms of integrating scholarly expert knowledge on the interrelated topics of environment, culture, and democracy into current educational standards and requirements, teaching principles, and curricula?

Confirmed Speakers:

- Prof. Dr. Laurenz Volkmann (Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena): "Nature poetry/Eco-poetry: 'Alternative' Perspectives on Teaching American Studies"
- Dr. Roman Bartosch (Universität zu Köln): "Tricky Natures: Bodies, Genders, and Animal Others in the Environmental Classroom"

Contact and send a 200-word abstract to:

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2. Black Ecologies

Juliane Braun (Würzburg)

Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath provided an ominous warning of the consequences to be expected when racial injustice and socioeconomic stratification collide with the effects of climate change. With the intensifying inequality of the "Great Recession" coinciding with a greater frequency of extreme weather events and, more recently, the latest grim predictions of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, mainstream awareness of both problems and their interrelations has been on the rise. Literary scholars in the field of ecocriticism have likewise been increasingly aware of these intersections. In recent years we have seen an outpouring of new work attending to the lived experience of African Americans in relation to

the environment and to the racism that has inhered in the construction of both the idea of “nature” and the environmental movements designed to “conserve” it. Taking its cue from works such as Kimberly K. Smith’s *African American Environmental Thought*, Kimberly N. Ruffin’s *Black On Earth*, and Paul Outka’s study of the linked constructions of race and nature from the antebellum period to the Harlem Renaissance, this workshop aims to deepen these lines of inquiry by examining the historical connections and conflicts between people and places within the economy of slavery and its various reiterations, and to trace continuities between “African American Ecoliterary Traditions” (Ruffin) and contemporary movements for environmental and climate justice.

This workshop invites papers that, from a variety of perspectives, critically engage environmental or ecological concerns in African American literature. In addition to applying an ecocritical approach to African American literature, papers could potentially focus on spaces of particular relevance to African American Studies (such as the ship, ocean, island, or plantation), the interplay between a black agrarian tradition (or “land ethic”) and contemporary theories of sustainability, or the relationships between black authors and various environmental movements.

Confirmed Speakers:

- John Barnard, College of Wooster
“Sustainable Farms and Slave Plantations: Morrison and the Black Agrarian Ideal”
- Benjamin Fagan, University of Arkansas
“Revolutionary Nature: Time and Space in the Caribbean Archipelago”

Please send a short abstract (250-300 words) and biographical note (3 to 5 sentences) to Juliane Braun at j.braun@uni-wuerzburg.de

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3. The Right to Urban Farming and a Rooftop Garden? Ecological Urbanism and (the End of) Politics

Dennis Büscher-Ulbrich (Kiel) / Marius Henderson (Hamburg)

Starting from Lefebvre’s oft-cited notion of “the right to the city” (rather than Whitman’s Paumanok) this workshop invites a critical survey of what many—including David Owen in *The New Yorker* (2004)—have come to call “Green Manhattan.” We wish to situate the model practices pertaining to ecological urbanism in Manhattan and other urban centers—from urban farming to rooftop and community gardens to sustainable transport—within the larger socio-economic patterns and (counter-)hegemonic discourses on sustainability, new urbanity, “urbanature” (Nichols 2011), and (the end of) politics. As Swyngedouw et al. (2006) have stringently argued, “‘feel-good’ depoliticized sustainability policies” are grounded in several assumptions which require challenge. These assumptions include the idea that a) social and ecological problems are external side-effects of, rather than integral to, the workings of liberal politics and the capitalist world-economy, b) Nature and the environment

as universalized imaginaries, and c) the belief that environmental problems can be ‘managed’ through a dialogical politics that depoliticizes ecology by disavowing nature’s contingency. Building on Žižek’s critique of ecology as “a new opium of the masses” (2007), we invite papers that discuss and problematize approaches such as Brugmann’s (2009), which exhort us to become “masters of a stable, just, and ecological urbanism,” while relying on a consensual notion of the city as a hybridized yet non-antagonistic social entity where nature’s contingency and ecological resilience—not to mention the internal contradictions of capital accumulation—disappear from view, and emancipatory politics is ruled out from the start. In contrast, Lefebvre’s work provides us with the conceptual apparatus to think (social) space as a (social) product and to analyze changes in the mode of production of social space—including the urbanatural space of “Green Manhattan”—as it is “simultaneously perceived, conceived, and lived” (1991). Accordingly, the workshop encourages papers that take a radical look at urban centers in the US in terms of both spaces of representation and representations of space (across various media) where ecological and political imaginaries clash rather than meet, thus creating scenes of dissensus rather than negotiation or consensual framing.

Papers may include, but are not limited to the following fields of inquiry:

- Nature, politics, and the city in contemporary literature, film, and music
- Nature, poetry, and the polis
- Emerging sub- and/or countercultural ecological/eco-critical spaces, articulations, and practices
- Neo-romanticism, green anarchism, and social ecology today
- Hipsterism, urban dropouts, and the actuality of Thoreau and Adorno
- Biocentrism, “urbanature,” and critical animal studies
- Ecological urbanism and (political) subjectivity

Confirmed Speakers:

Bryan Sentes (Montreal): “A Critical Survey of Urban Ecological and Cultural Practice in Montreal”

Will Potter (Washington, D.C.): “War on the World: Controlling Nature and Controlling Social Movements”

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4. Tracing the roots and evolution of American environmental politics

Andreas Etges, (LMU München) / Andreas Grieger (Rachel Carson Center München)

At a time, when issues such as global climate change or energy security are a major focus of international discourses and discussions, the critical role of the United States in these areas has become an important topic for scholarship. Yet as new studies look at the complex combinations of interests, processes, and institutions of American environmental policy-making, they are often lacking a historical dimension. However, a historic understanding of America’s relationship with the environment can be crucial in order to assess current policy debates. Just as issues such as climate change, water and land pollution or an ever increasing

demand and use of natural resources have become global, American concerns about the environment have also become more international in character. Thus by looking at political histories of American environmentalism, important continuities as well as discontinuities that mark new directions in American environmental concern and policy-making can be revealed. Furthermore, looking at the historical emergence and evolution of American environmental consciousness and politics can provide new insights into the various ways America became involved with a globalized world.

This workshop will address the question of when, why and how the environment entered into American politics in the era of globalism. Presentations can focus on specific events such as global environmental conferences or treaties or try to highlight the role of actors on the state as well as non-state level. This could address America's involvement in international organizations as well as the transnational exchanges of ideas and cooperation among environmental activists, movements and organizations.

Confirmed Speakers:

- Dr. Anna-Katharina Wöbse (Universität Genf)
"The Americanisation of environmental diplomacy after World War II"
- Andreas Grieger (Rachel Carson Center/LMU München) "Global 2000 and the struggle over American environmental diplomacy in the early 1980s"

Organizers

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5. Citizens of America? Citizens of the Earth? Environmental Consciousness and the Power of Images

Katharina Fackler / Klara Stephanie Szlezák (Regensburg)

Some environmentalists argue that a change in the moral landscape is necessary to save the threatened ecosystems of the Earth and that visualizations of our environment have the potential to support this process by influencing the way we see the world and our role in it: *Earthrise*, the 1968 photograph of the earth rising from behind the moon taken by the crew of the Apollo 8, is said to have "chang[ed] our relationship to the Earth and to each other."¹ Pictures of the tiny boats of Greenpeace activists that dared to confront the Soviet whaling ship *Vlastny* in 1975 were called a "mind bomb" "that explodes 'in the public's consciousness to transform the way people view their world.'"² From petroglyphs, to engravings and paintings, to photographs, to digital images: while not all visualizations of the environment are necessarily "mind bombs," many of them can be seen as taking part in the cultural and social negotiations of images of ourselves and our place in larger (ecological) systems. Pictures can *make visible* aspects of the environment otherwise disregarded. Yet, just like the concepts and the agents they visualize, they are socially construed and as such subject to adoption for various agendas. They can be used to reaffirm established, dominant world views, justifying, for example, existing power structures and the distribution of resources. At the same time, they can offer new perspectives and open up spaces for alternative relations between humans and their environments. This also entails the negotiation of different conceptualizations of 'mother nature,' 'environment,' 'eco-system,' or 'the Earth,' which are

¹ Biophysicist John Platt, qtd. in Poole, Robert. *Earthrise: How Man First Saw the Earth*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2008. 9. Print.

² Robert Hunter, director of Greenpeace, qtd. in DeLuca, Kevin Michael. *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism*. New York: Guilford, 1999. 1. Print.

intricately linked with the roles that humans assume towards them – as agents, aggressors, defenders, victims, observers, designers, guests, or others. Regardless of the role assumed, people’s connection to place interrelates with membership in (imagined) communities, be it on a local, national, or global and transnational level, which also entails rights and responsibilities. Pictures can become sites for environmental struggles in which humans position themselves with regard to these rights and responsibilities.

This workshop is interested in exploring diverse visual representations that reflect and potentially shape the way individuals perceive their place(s) and perform their role(s) in larger environmental contexts. These visuals may be taken from different historical contexts and may represent all visual genres and media. Research questions arising from these considerations may include but are not restricted to the following:

- In what ways do images interrelate with environmental consciousness? What functions do they have in debates about the environment? What do the pictures discussed make visible? What do they conceal?
- How do images serve to confirm and consolidate dominant constructions of the environment? In what ways do they resist, challenge, and revise prevailing conceptualizations?
- What strategies do visual representations employ to potentially trigger human actions? What role do visual documents of activism and protest play in the emergence of environmental consciousness?
- How are “models of citizenship”³ propagated and modified? What other modes of belonging can serve as alternatives to ‘citizenship’? What would be the implications for the distribution of natural resources?
- How do approaches vary according to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age group etc.?
- In how far do images relate to people’s encounters with the environment, be it for the purpose of leisure, as in travel or visits to parks, be it for utilitarian purposes, as in farming, mining, or the lumber industry? How do received images of nature direct our individual gaze in immediate encounters with it?
- In which ways can we establish links between the past and the present via such images? To what extent can visual rhetorics be seen as historically grown, or diversified and adapted through time?
- How do images partake in local, national, and transnational discourses of environmental responsibility? What are potentials and limits of the rhetoric of ‘our shared planet’ in view of claims made by nation states or other communities? What are possible alternatives to such configurations of the globe?

Confirmed Speakers:

Prof. Dr. Karsten Fitz: “The Ecological Indian in the American Visual Imagination”

Dr. Gisela Parak: “Environmental Photography under the EPA: Documerica’s Contradictory Vision”

Send a short bio and abstracts of about 300 words for a 20-minute presentations to:

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³ Hariman, Robert, and John Louis Lucaites. *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2007. 12. Print.

6. Disaster Discourses

Florian Freitag (Mainz)

Events commonly referred to as “natural disasters” – storms, earthquakes, fires, and floods – call for immediate action as well as for long-term interpretation, for discourses and narratives that meaningfully relate the events to existing political, economic, social, and cultural structures. Addressing questions of accountability and responsibility, but also seeking to draw lessons from these events in the interest of preventability, such discourses and narratives provide broad analyses that extend well beyond the geographical and temporal frames of the events at hand. Hurricane Katrina, for instance, has sparked critical debates and analyses about racism and neoliberalism not just in Louisiana in 2005, but in 21st-century American society and democracy in general, with the result that the event has ultimately been framed as a “stress test” of the US as a whole (Short 2013). Similarly, Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* is less concerned with the Dustbowl as an individual event than with the socio-economic structures of agriculture and agribusiness in the America of the 1930s.

Hence, while disasters themselves may be intense, yet short-lived and local, accounts, analyses, and representations of disasters may draw attention to fundamental shortcomings and systemic flaws in society, politics, and culture, to the point where it has been declared that “there is no such thing as a natural disaster” (Hartman and Squires 2006). Natural disasters thus emerge as important crystallization points or triggers that have instigated discussions about and calls for systemic changes, already providing a glimpse of the impact that more geographically and temporally extended “restructurings” of nature may have.

This workshop seeks to gather papers from a variety of disciplines on discourses and narratives about North American natural disasters and the lessons or conclusions they draw from individual events for society, democracy, and culture at large. Contributors may draw on documentary and fictional representations as well as academic and popular analyses of disasters ranging from the Chicago fire of 1871, the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, and the 1930s Dustbowl to Hurricane Andrew in 1992, the Montreal-Ottawa ice-storm in 1998, and the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Questions to be addressed may include, but are not limited to the following:

- What are the larger political and social contexts in which individual disasters have been framed and how are they discursively connected with other “events” at the time?
- What divergent discourses and narratives have specific disasters sparked and how can these divergences be accounted for?
- Which actors are involved in the narrativization and memorialization of particular natural disasters and what is their relation to the issues they focus on? In what ways are the victims of disasters involved in these discourses?
- In what ways has the narrative of specific disasters changed over time and why?
- How do disaster discourses, narratives, and media representations negotiate the boundary line between “nature” and “culture” or “politics”?
- What political, social, and cultural changes can be traced to individual disasters?

Confirmed speakers:

Susann Köhler (FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg): “‘After the Flood’: Hurricane Katrina and the Politics of Ruin Photography.”

Christina Kannenberg (U Konstanz): “‘Rich Countries Wear Tattered Underwear’: Narratives of the 1998 Montreal Ice Storm.”

Please send a 300-word abstract and a short CV by e-mail to: Florian Freitag (JGU Mainz, An der Hochschule 2, 76726 Germersheim; freitagf@uni-mainz.de)

7. A World on the Move: The Environmental Politics of Migration

Christine Gerhardt (Bamberg) / Christa Grewe-Volpp (Mannheim)

The present cultural moment is not only informed by a growing sense of global environmental crisis, but also by people's intensifying movements within and across national borders. The intense and often ambivalent relationships between these two phenomena, however, have received relatively little attention so far, especially from literary and cultural critics. With this panel we invite papers that explore how particular notions of the natural environment have intersected with people's migratory movements in the American literary and cultural imagination, with a special focus on the political implications of this junction.

We are interested in presentations on topics that address, but are not limited to, the following questions:

- In which ways do increasing migratory movements in the age of globalization call for a reassessment of the notion of America as "Nature's Nation"?
- How have changes in people's relationships to the environment due to various kinds of movement in place intersected with America's democratic institutions, grassroots politics, and /or other forms of political involvement?
- How has the environmental justice movement, in particular, responded to the specific concerns of migratory people? How else have migration and environmental issues been linked politically as well as culturally?
- How can ecofeminism be brought to bear upon issues of the environmental politics of migration?
- How can the critical analysis of plant and animal migrations be linked to new concepts of people's sense of place, such as Ursula Heise's ecocosmopolitanism, or the questions addressed by green postcolonialism?
- How do relationships between humans and non-humans have to be rethought in a globalized world with unstable borders?
- How do literary and other texts link the migration of animals, plants, and people, and how can these be approached conceptually? Apart from the environmental implications, what are the historical, political, cultural, and economic connections?
- Does the phenomenon of migration invite specific forms of nature's representation, or new kinds of green aesthetics?

Confirmed Speakers:

Prof. Dr. Gesa Mackenthun (Universität Rostock): "Puppy Burgers and Pleistocene Overkill: The Myth of the Un-Ecological Indian"

Prof. Dr. Cate Sandilands (York University, Toronto, Canada): "Plants on the Move: The Vegetal Politics of Migration"

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8. Risky Business: American Negotiations of 'Natural' Risks and Opportunities

Florian Groß (Hannover) / Susanne Leikam (Regensburg)

The fervor of the recent controversies about the health effects of hydraulic fracturing ('fracking') or the impact of Monsanto's genetically engineered produce has pointed to the importance of (re)assessing cultural negotiations of risks that have been tied to modifications of what is commonly called 'nature.' Human interventions into the natural environments of North America—from Native American fire clearings to the introduction of the railroad, to river regulations to high altitude ski resorts—have offered countless opportunities for the spread of democracy, economic growth, leisure, and the advancement of ideologies and values. Yet, at the same time they have also created a variety of real (and imagined) risks, some of which are more invisible, abstract, or contested than others (cf. Heise's "Cultures of Risk and the Aesthetic of Uncertainty"). Especially as technologies have been growing more complex and the environment is connected ever more densely on a (trans)national or global scale, the modifications of natural environments produce hazards that grow in scale and whose predictions are developing a mounting insecurity (cf. Beck's *Risk Society* or Tenner's *Why Things Bite Back*). Since these risks do not affect all members of a culture equally but are distributed along the lines of class, race, gender, and age, among others (cf. e.g. Ben Wisner's *At Risk*), cultural negotiations of risks reveal power structures, cultural values, and belief systems. Besides, a critical reflection on the interrelationships between non-human environments and U.S. American cultures in terms of risk perception emerges as a productive site of tensions that juxtaposes market capitalism and a reverence for progress with the alleged ideological mission of the self-pronounced 'Nature's Nation' to shepherd 'nature.' Our workshop thus aims at a scholarly exploration of the cultural practices, politics, and aesthetics of American narratives of 'natural' risks and opportunities and intends to investigate these narratives in their particular historical, economic, religious, cultural, and medial contexts. We invite submissions from all disciplines of American Studies that address aspects related to risk and the modification of the natural environment in North American cultures and histories from a large variety of perspectives and in various media. The following questions offer just a few rough guidelines of possible approaches to the issues we would like to discuss in the workshop:

- Which particular patterns or strategies have been employed in cultural negotiations of risks associated with man-made interactions with nature in North America? In which manner has the intentional evocation of real-and-imagined risks been able to be utilized as opportunity in American cultures and histories?
- What happens to discourses of environmental risk when the anthropocentric perspective is abolished? How can we methodologically and conceptually assess 'risk' from a biocentric point of view?
- How have the (supposed) perils of technological inventions that are today considered (almost) free of risk (e.g. the lightning rod) been critically assessed in the course of North American histories? What are the (dis)similarities in the aesthetics and politics of these historical risk negotiations?
- Which conceptualizations of 'nature' underlie the discourses on risk and how is the relationship between 'nature' and 'culture' implicitly defined in these narratives?
- How are regional, (trans)national, or global American narratives of risks (e.g. global warming) related to issues such as the natural sciences, environmental activism, 'natural' disasters, democracy, the nation, economic progress, and the often quoted American optimism?

Confirmed Speakers:

Dr. Julia Faisst, Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, “Wear Your Shelter: Natural Risks and Speculative Sustainability in Mary Mattingly’s Nomadographies”

Dr. Julia Leyda, Sophia University, Japan, “Superstorm Sandy and Sharknado: Hyperbolic Risk as Transmedia Event”

Please send a short CV and a one-page proposal to both Florian Groß (florian.gross@engsem.uni-hannover.de) and Susanne Leikam (susanne.leikam@ur.de).

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9. Scrap, Spam, Bit Rot: the Politics and Poetics of Digital Detritus

Andrew S. Gross, / Karin Hoepker (Erlangen-Nürnberg)

Digitality promises the virtual, but it also produces all sorts of redundancy and waste. The paperless office has resulted in junkyards full of electronic scrap; digital data is vulnerable to viruses, spam, and bit rot; last year’s models are rendered obsolete before their warranties expire; information gets buried in old disks and zip drives that can no longer be read. We invite papers on the residue of digitality, its material excess, and on cultural attempts to come to terms with noise, spam, and obsolescence. Topics might include but are not limited to the following:

- Contemporary responses to waste and the digital in artistic practice, either in celebration of the virtual as a quasi-utopian, disembodied, anarchic realm; or in forms that seek to counter digitalization by foregrounding the materiality of objects, such as WEEE-art (Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment) or e-waste projects like Thomas Hirschhorn’s installations;
- Narratives of waste such as Philip K. Dick’s use of “kipple” in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep/ Bladerunner*; the pervasiveness of waste in Don DeLillo’s *Underworld*; Pynchon’s ironic parable of the waste collector in *Bleeding Edge*, or the pervasive flotsam of an extinct humanity in Margaret Atwood’s *MadAddam*-Trilogy;
- Responses to the architectural reshaping of built space as “junkspace” (Rem Koolhaas) and by advanced computer-aided design programs, which partially free external surface design from problems of functionality and statics – prominently visible in Frank Gehry’s later projects and famously criticized as excessive and ornamental in Hal Foster’s *Design and Crime (And Other Diatribes)*;
- Governmental legislation, regulation, and waste-management such as the European Union’s WEEE-Directive or the Electronics TakeBack Coalition campaign in the US;
- Social practices which rely on extensive gadget culture and excessive production of data like body tracking (and even “body hacking”) in the Quantified Self movement;
- Initiatives which seek to counter excessive consumerism and waste production with recycling, scavenging, and calls for general resource austerity such as the “reduce, reuse, refuse” credo of the Zero Waste movement.

Our two **confirmed contributors** are Mary Gray, who will be presenting on “E-waste as politics-in-action: Interrogating the geopolitics of U.S. digital consumption and waste

management”; and Bärbel Tischleder, whose topic is “Wasting the Planet, Celebrating Rusty Toys: Pixar's Economies of Nostalgia in the Age of Digital (Re-)Animation.”

Please send abstracts (250 words) and a short bio to Andrew Gross andrew.gross@fau.de and Karin Hoepker karin.hoepker@fau.de, Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, Bismarckstraße 1, 91054 Erlangen.

Electronic submissions are preferred.

10. “Shock and awe, beauty and despair-- it’s all there”⁴: Eco-Photography’s Views on the Transnational Landscape

Verena Laschinger (Erfurt) / Eva-Sabine Zehelein (Regensburg)

While environmental concerns already lay close to its heart in the nineteenth century, when the United States of America encapsulated its identity in the truism of nature’s nation, environmentalism has long since transcended national borders. It has in fact developed into a transnational master narrative about nature, which figures prominently in the works of contemporary photographers such as Allan Sekula (*Titanic’s Wake, Fish Story*), J. Henry Fair (*Industrial Scars*), Edward Burtynsky (*Manufactured Landscapes*), David Maisel (*The Lake Project, Oblivion* or *The Mining Project*), Chris Jordan (*Intolerable Beauty*), Jeff Wall (*A Villager from Arıcaköyü Arriving in Mahmutbey-Istanbul, September 1997*), or Dave Walsh (*The Cold Edge*). Capturing pressing environmental and socio-political issues such as water, urbanism, urban sprawl, and migration, atomic energy after Fukushima, oil and fracking, transnational landscape photography points towards ecological disaster, and/or brings the message of sustainability to the public, while at the same time showing a different aesthetics of environmentally impacted sites, sometimes bordering on a new sublime. The panel organizers invite papers from photographers, artists and scholars who explore the vital force of eco-photography from multidisciplinary perspectives.

Confirmed speakers:

John Toohey (Concordia University Montreal, Canada): “The Progressive Landscape: Lawrence Engel and the Nevada Photo Service”.

Astrid Böger (University of Hamburg): “The Farm Security Administration File as Eco-Photographic Archive”.

Antonia Purk (Erfurt University): “From the Text to the Photo Book: Jamaica Kincaid’s Technique of Ekphrasis”.

Workshop organizers:

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⁴ CIWEM Executive Director Nick Reeves; <http://www.ibtimes.com/environmental-photographer-year-2013-winning-shots-1182339>

11. The American National Narrative and the Global Environmental Challenge

Timo Müller (Augsburg) / Alexa Weik von Mossner (University of Klagenfurt/Rachel Carson Center, Munich)

Ecocriticism today increasingly examines the discursive framing of environmental issues. This panel wants to contribute to this strand by analyzing the impact of today's environmental challenges on the national narrative of the United States as a self-contained cultural, political and geographical unit, a clearly defined "homeland" with defensible and controllable borders. This narrative is undermined by the impacts of climate change and other global environmental problems, by the increasing recognition that "bioregions" often transcend national boundaries, by the inability of such boundaries to prevent environmental migration (both human and non-human), and by the global implications of the resource-intensive consumer culture "exported" by the United States. As a political concept, the nation-state is additionally questioned by its inadequacy in negotiating effective environmental policies that can address such global problems and by the pressing concerns of international environmental justice. The global environmental challenge, then, seems to require a re-imagining of the American nation with a focus on what Wai Chee Dimock has called the "connective tissue" that binds the United States to the rest of the world. In recent years this insight has led to the emergence of a transnational ecocriticism, and scholars such as Lawrence Buell, Greg Garrard, and Ursula Heise have called for a "transnational turn" in environmental studies.

We welcome papers from all disciplines in American Studies that discuss these developments and/or their impact on the American national narrative. Topics might include but are not limited to:

- the depiction of global environmental challenges or catastrophes in American literary and cultural narratives;
- the re-examination of American nationalism in various disciplines against this background;
- the negotiation of alternative geographies (e.g. bioregions) in such narratives;
- the negotiation of environmental migration and dislocation in an American context;
- transnational perspectives in American environmental writing;
- the role of the nation-state in transnational environmental debate;
- the global impacts of American consisting and emerging modes of eco-cosmopolitanism.

Please send 300-word abstracts and your CV to both Alexa Weik von Mossner (Alexa.WeikvonMossner@aau.at) and Timo Müller (timo.mueller@phil.uni-augsburg.de).

Confirmed Speakers:

Antonia Mehnert (Munich), "The World is Beating a Path to Your Door": Climate Change, Butterflies and Ethical Glocalism in Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior*"

Dr. Alexa Weik von Mossner (Klagenfurt/Munich), "American Eco(dys)topias and the Transnational Dimensions of Ecological Citizenship"

Dr. Timo Müller (Augsburg), "The Wasteland as a Transnational Space in Contemporary American Poetry"

12. Nature, Technology, and the Body: Posthumanist Interfaces of the Networked Self

Ulfried Reichardt / Regina Schober (Mannheim)

The role of human agency, self-experience, and -description in the ever growing complexities of a global information age has been subject to debate in a number of disciplines. A variety of technological, media-related, and ecological developments have contributed to deconstruct a deep-seated anthropocentrism in the Western world. Among these are the technological convertibility of the human body (for example in terms of genetic engineering, prosthetics, and modern warfare), a rapidly changing information and communication environment with an increased usage of and dependency on mobile media devices, the emergence and development of sophisticated machines, computers, and artificial intelligence programs, and a growing awareness for ecological challenges and the question of human responsibility in dramatically changing natural environments. Scholars in the emerging field of critical posthumanism have therefore proposed a radical shift in conceptualizing the human as an actor within a complex network of non-human agencies rather than as an autonomous, rational, and self-contained subject (Haraway 1991; Hayles 1999; Herbrechter 2009; Wolfe 2010). Notions of the self can no longer be grasped by monocausal explanation patterns, but require theoretical reflections which take into account the relational reciprocity, adaptability, and emergent properties of complex systems. Such theoretical models of the (post)human both inform and are shaped by narratives of the ‘networked self’ which help to (re-)evaluate the disintegrating and ever shifting functions of the interfaces between body, technology, and nature. As a result of these developments the cultural basis of nature is reconfigured, a process which includes a reconceptualization of how human nature can be imagined, discussed, and represented, with far-reaching consequences for what it means to be human.

We invite scholars from a wide variety of fields to submit proposals that investigate the following questions:

- How can we critically account for the growing interdependencies between the human, nature, and technology?
- In light of these interdependencies, how can an interdisciplinary posthumanist project/methodology be realized?
- How does a critical posthumanism challenge traditional notions of the self, nature, and culture?
- Which cultural and political implications does posthumanism carry, not only as an anthropological phenomenon but also as a theoretical perspective and/or methodology?
- To what extent do we have to rethink ethical positions if we reconceptualize human agency and how can such a perspective be reconciled with the belief in human responsibility?
- How do cultural narratives respond to and generate visions of the posthuman and which cultural functions do they have?
- What can a posthumanist perspective contribute to the field of American Studies?

Confirmed speakers

- Prof. Dr. Hanjo Berressem (University of Cologne): “‘We Have Never Been Human’: Posthumanism Before Posthumanism”
- Stefan Danter, MA (University of Mannheim): “Tales of Multiplicity – Varieties of Posthumanism and their Effects on the Humanist Subject/Self”

Abstracts of no more than 300 words and a short CV should be sent to

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13. American Romanticism and the Politicization of Nature

Clemens Spahr (Mainz) / Johannes Völz (Frankfurt/Stanford)

This workshop aims to explore the ambiguous dynamics underlying American Romanticism's engagement with the politics of nature. In *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau famously describes nature as "our common dwelling." At the same time, he insists that "[w]e are not wholly involved in Nature." Similarly, in *Nature*, a text that is concerned with our "original relation to the universe," Emerson writes: "We are as much strangers in nature, as we are aliens from God. We do not understand the notes of birds." This tension between our simultaneous involvement in and detachment from nature raises a number of intricate questions about the translatability of principles of nature into social or political concepts. If we are never wholly involved in nature, can we still assume that principles of nature correspond to social forms? While scholarship has comprehensively addressed how for the American Romantics from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Walt Whitman considerations of nature frequently resulted in political claims, what has received less attention is the question of how precisely the translation of principles of nature into political and social concepts is supposed to work. Romantic conceptions of the relationship between nature and politics vary from claims that 'democratic vistas' can be inferred from nature's vastness to an understanding that the very elusiveness of nature constitutes its democratic and critical potential. Our workshop investigates these questions, asking how these processes of translation work and which theoretical and practical problems the politicization of nature entails. We seek to address the following questions:

- **Hermeneutics, Nature, and Politics:** How precisely can the hermeneutical exegesis of nature produce a political vision? Does our insight into the very elusiveness of nature's meaning result in an appreciation of democratic principles? How does the individual's perception of nature change the ways in which we extrapolate political principles from it?
- **Art, Nature, and Society:** How does art mediate between nature and society? How does the rhetoric/form of art project utopian visions (as in Whitman's free verse experiments)? Does art reveal a correspondence between nature and society or call these correspondences into question?
- **Human nature, Nature, and Democracy:** As Buell has argued with regard to Thoreau's later writings, Thoreau's "politics of nature was further complicated by his deepening commitment to nature's interest over the human interest" (*Environmental Imagination*). How does such an elevation of the materiality of nature complicate philosophical views that relate nature's organic unity to democracy? Does the decentering of the human in relation to nature lead to different conceptions of civic engagement? What is the relation between the place of evolutionary theories in romanticism and laissez-faire politics?

Confirmed Speakers:

Sascha Pöhlmann (München), "Whitman's Futures: Performing Utopia"

Devin Zuber (Berkeley), "The Anarchy of Nature: Thoreau, Occupy, Aesthetics of Dissent"

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