

Diversity Roundtable of the German Association for American Studies

Workshop at the John F. Kennedy Institute, Freie Universität Berlin

July 30-31, 2020

**The GAAS in 2030:
Imagining Future Practices of Critical Diversity in
American Studies**

In May 2013, the Diversity Roundtable of the German Association for American Studies (GAAS/DGfA) was founded by a handful of people out of the need to reflect and critique exclusionary and exploitative mechanisms in institutional and scholarly practices within German American Studies and German academia at large. Since that time, membership in the Diversity Roundtable has grown by the dozens and concerns of its members have been met with great support. Raising questions of diversity in our organization has also, however, sparked controversies about how to understand, measure, and implement ‘diversity,’ about political implications for our scholarly research and academic planning, and about whose scholarly voice finds and doesn’t find acknowledgment on what terms.

In response to these debates, the Diversity Roundtable is holding a workshop to critically interrogate questions of diversity in current practices of American Studies in order to generate a future vision of the GAAS in 2030—a future shaped by radically altered epistemologies and institutional procedures. In hosting this workshop, we strive to carry on a critical and constructive conversation about our discipline that has received crucial impulses at similar conferences: Universität Tübingen (“Who Can Speak and Who Is Heard/Hurt? Ethnic Diversity, ‘Race,’ and Racism in American Studies in Germany”), Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (“Race, Power, and Privilege in Academia”), and the Bayerische Amerika-Akademie (“Diversity in/and the GAAS”).

The specific goal of our workshop is twofold. First, we strive to develop concrete practical initiatives that might change recurring problems we experience with regard to factors such as race, gender, sexuality, disability, and class. Second, we seek to interrogate the theoretical

premises and implications of such pragmatist approaches in the field of diversity and to examine the intersection of various power dynamics that shape our academic lives. To this end, we will organize panels in which dimensions like anti-blackness and ableism are brought together, either within an individual paper or through the specific constellations of contributions on a given panel. We invite contributions (10-15 minutes in length) from a variety of methodological angles on topics such as (but not limited to):

- **Accessibility:** access intimacy (Mingus), appearance and disappearance in the academy (Titchkosky), universal design university (Powell & Pfahl), conference logistics, unspoken premises, habitus, physical safety, targeted recruitment of staff, alternative modes of academic writing and presentation, mental health, politics of inclusion in GAAS representation and participation.
- **Affect and Institutional Structures:** modes of disidentification (Muñoz), the politics and feelings of tokenism, emotional labor (Ahmed), modes of interpellation.
- **Ethics & Methodology:** 'pornotroping' (Spillers), fetishization of the abject, the representation and reproduction of violence in academic frameworks (research, teaching, presentations), 'safe spaces,' critical diversity perspectives in eco-criticism.
- **Ownership of Knowledge & Epistemological Violence:** citation politics, intellectual property, ethnographic research paradigms, dynamics of appropriation, curation of conference formats (e.g. selection of keynote speakers and workshops).

We welcome abstracts of 300 words or less for papers or other styles of presentation. Please send your abstract and a short bio to anna-lena.oldehus@engsem.uni-hannover.de by **April 15, 2020**. Applicants will be notified of acceptance by the beginning of May.

Organizers: Helen Gibson, Cedric Essi, Anna-Lena Oldehus

Faculty sponsor: Frank Kelleter (Freie Universität Berlin)