



**24th Annual Conference of the Bavarian American Academy
Free Speech: Promises, Meanings, Controversies**

July 9-11, 2026 | Amerikahaus Munich

Call for Papers: Emerging Scholars' Forum

As the United States approaches its Semiquincentennial in 2026, questions about the nature, limits, and legacies of free speech have become more urgent than at any time in recent memory – and so have, once again, questions about the interpretation of the U.S. Constitution. The “Age of Trump” – a period marked by populist rhetoric, (digital) disinformation, campus speech controversies, and renewed debates over press freedom – has exposed deep fissures in Americans’ shared understanding of the First Amendment. Current debates about “free speech” reveal not only a crisis of a core constitutional principle of U.S. American democracy, but also a crisis of civic meaning.

In three panel sessions, two keynote lectures, and an opening podium discussion, the Bavarian American Academy’s Annual Conference 2026 will explore the present tension, asking, among other things, who is entitled to speak, whose voices are amplified or silenced, and what “freedom” itself now signifies in a fractured democracy. Beyond that, and independent of its specific topic, the conference includes an Emerging Scholars’ Forum, where doctoral candidates affiliated with Bavarian universities get the opportunity to present work-in-progress to an interested expert audience.

Application Criteria

Specifically, we invite doctoral researchers to submit proposals including an abstract (300 words) and a short biographical note (100 words).

While we do welcome proposals relating to the conference topic, such a connection is not mandatory. Abstracts will be selected solely based on their academic quality. However, research projects need to be situated in a discipline represented in the Bavarian American Academy, preferably in the fields of history, political sciences, sociology, economics, law, area studies, geography, American literary and cultural studies, or art history.

Submission

Please submit your application materials by **March 15, 2026** to both

- Prof. Dr. Kerstin Schmidt (kerstin.schmidt@lmu.de) and
- Dr. Christoph Straub (straub@amerika-akademie.de).