
The Future of American Studies in the Netherlands

*A symposium, sponsored by the Netherlands American Studies Association
& the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

December 14, 2018 Location: Vox-Pop
University of Amsterdam BG3
Binnengasthuisstraat 9, begane grond
1012 ZA Amsterdam

PROGRAM

9:30-10:00

Welcome and Introduction

- George Blaustein (Amsterdam)

10:00-11:00 – Session 1

American Studies in a Moment of Danger? Dissent? Distance? Disorder?

Panelists:

- Frank Mehring (Nijmegen), “Teaching, Grounding, and Promoting European American Studies in a Moment of Insecurity”
- Nadia Verwaal (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken)

Moderator:

- Ruud Janssens (Amsterdam)

In the U.S. context, what-should-American-Studies-be bleeds into the question of what-should-America-be. The field often gravitates toward righteous dissent. American Studies in Europe faces a different context: different burdens, stakes, and opportunities. Within the academy, identitarian claims might inflect the field differently here, and American campus politics translate into European academic life in unpredictable ways. Beyond the academy, Americanists abroad might play different roles in public life than they do in the United States. Shifts in the post-1945 international order (or its collapse) change the ground of American Studies more pointedly than of other fields.

Questions: What is the relationship between American Studies and cultural diplomacy, especially as geopolitics imperil the transatlantic relationship? What are the advantages or disadvantages of immediacy, urgency, or ironic distance?

11:00-11:30 – coffee & tea

11:30-12:30 – Session 2

Pedagogy in American Studies

Panelists:

- Brandon C. Zicha (LUC, The Hague), TBD
- Jaap Kooijman (Amsterdam), “Teaching Trump’s America: The Need of Media Studies in American Studies”
- Anne Martinez (Groningen), “MA Practicum in American Studies: Preparing for ‘Real World’ Jobs”

12:30-13:45 – Lunch

13:45-15:00 – Session 3

National, International, Generational

Panelists:

- **Laura Bieger (Groningen)**
- **Albertine Bloemendal (Leiden)**
- **Thomas Doherty (RIAS)**
- **Rob Kroes (Amsterdam / Utrecht)**

Moderator:

- **Tim Jelfs (Groningen)**

Over the last two decades, American Studies as a field has consolidated around critiques of empire and imperialism in various forms—territorial empire without, neoliberal empire within—often under the banner of transnationalism. We all work in the wake of the *transnational turn*, and the heft of that phrase has been alternately methodological, ideological, generational, or existential.

Those tempests still toss us, surely, and meanwhile, beneath the “transnational imaginary,” a more dismal transnationalism disperses Americanists across national borders. Most American Studies students in the Netherlands are Dutch; more and more teachers in American Studies in the Netherlands are not Dutch. For students, American Studies might function as an avenue of practical internationalism. For non-Dutch teachers, American Studies involves a crash course in Dutchness.

Does the internationalization of Dutch American Studies, and of NASA itself, challenge a “Dutch school” of American Studies? Does “internationalization” really mean Americanization? Does NASA risk becoming nASA? Where is the periphery and where is the metropole?

15:00-15:30 – coffee & tea

15:30-16:30 – Session 4

Americanist Geographies

Panelists:

- **Dario Fazzi (RIAS): “The Everyday Nature of the Empire: US Military Exceptionalism at Test in Europe”**
- **Marietta Messmer (Groningen): “Towards Hemispheric and Multilingual American Studies in the Netherlands”**
- **Maarten Zwiers and Maarten Arnoldus (Groningen): “The Comeback of the Countryside: American Studies Engages the Rural”**

Moderator:

- **Diederik Oostdijk (VU)**

16:45-17:30 – Conclusions

17:30-18:30 – Borrel