Forum

Teaching American Studies in Europe: Challenges and New Directions for the 21st Century

Lorenzo Costaguta and Virginia Pignagnoli

Introduction

Historically, the role of American Studies has been to strengthen the foundations upon which the American experience is studied, analyzed and discussed in the academic context. Teachers have been invested with the role of explaining America to European students, making it intelligible by unearthing its numerous contradictions and sophistications, and ultimately favoring exchanges and ties between the US and Europe. However, since its inception in the immediate aftermath of World War Two, American Studies has been facing countless challenges, with generations of scholars contesting its theoretical premises. Born as a project of 'cultural imperialism' during the Cold War, American Studies was profoundly transformed by the impact of the radical movements of the Sixties. The proliferation of disciplines such as African American Studies, Native American Studies, Queer Studies and Women's Studies forced American Studies to abandon its normative nationality-defined framework (Radway).

In the highly influential 1979 essay "'Paradigm Dramas' in American Studies: A Cultural and Institutional History of the Movement," cultural historian Gene Wise gave a conceptual infrastructure to a discipline that the 1970s cultural developments were rapidly making no longer usable. Wise's concept of "Paradigm Dramas" accommodated conflicting tensions in an organic theoretical framework. Suggesting that historical ideas were "a sequence of dramatic acts – acts which play on wider cultural scenes, or historical stages" (Wise 296, cf. Pease and Wiegman 2), Wise argued that historicisations should be abandoned in favor of a model that reflected the fractured nature of the American experience. With this aim in view, he suggested a loose definition of American Studies that would predict its pluralist, particularistic, and comparativist future. In the landmark essay collection *Futures of American Studies*, Donald E. Pease and Robyn Wiegman started from Wise's essay to offer an updated version of the developments that had occurred in the discipline, dividing the multiple 'futures' of

American Studies into four categories: post-hegemonic, comparativist, differential and counter-hegemonic.

RSA Journal invited leading scholars from across the various disciplines in American Studies to discuss pedagogical trends, methodological approaches, module design, and the challenges faced when teaching the literature, culture and history of the United States. The Forum, edited by Virginia Pignagnoli and Lorenzo Costaguta on behalf of the AISNA Graduate Forum, discusses a topic of special interest for early-career researchers, who start teaching at a time fraught with epochal changes both in academia and in the American political and social world. The Forum sought to answer the following questions: have Americanists across Europe succeeded in teaching the complexity of American Studies? What are the main challenges they encounter? What are the theoretical frameworks that are best suited to teach the multiple histories and the multiple contradictions of American culture? How have the field and the various sub-disciplines composing it evolved in the past ten years? What kind of new directions can we envision for the future as far as teaching pedagogies are concerned?

The Forum's contributors, Joe Merton (University of Nottingham), Anna Pochmara (University of Warsaw), Joshua Parker (University of Salzburg), Marietta Messmer (University of Groningen), and Donatella Izzo ("L'Orientale" University of Naples) emphasize the interdisciplinarity and malleability of American Studies, confirming the importance of Pease and Wiegman's analysis. However, while Wiegman and Pease discuss American Studies from the American perspective, (cf. also Wiegman), the Forum's contributors explore the role of American Studies in Europe. This follows a discussion initiated, among others, by Donatella Izzo ("Outside Where?") and Cornelis A. van Minnen and Sylvia L. Hilton ("Teaching and Studying").

Teaching American Studies in Europe has always presented a specific set of problems, connected with the evolving and interdisciplinary nature of the subject itself. Moreover, differences in curricula, university systems and research programs within European countries have contributed to create a diverse field of studies, in which our understanding of American Studies has fractured into many different sub-national fields. Today, such a complicated situation faces new challenges vis-à-vis the current socio-political situation, both in the US and in Europe, with events such as

Trump's presidency, Brexit, the threat of terrorism, the consequences of global warming, but also developments in the academic world, from the spread of digital technologies to a lack of job security.

The following essays offer a variety of perspectives on these issues. First, they point out how American Studies, as a discipline, shows differences and similarities according to where it is taught. For instance, in Merton's contribution we observe the marketization of British academia to satisfy the need for the discipline to be appealing to students. In Poland, as Pochmara's essay demonstrates, American Studies have been employed to introduce innovative trends in academia, such as whiteness studies, masculinity studies, ecocriticism and posthumanism. Izzo's contribution focuses on the specificities of American Studies in Italy, also highlighting both the (profoundly negative) impact that the current trend to marketize academia has on the Italian public university system and the role American Studies scholars play in the circulation of the theoretical discourses mentioned by Pochmara. A second aspect, discussed by many contributors, insists on the multiple connections between American Studies and the history of the country where it is taught, as is exemplified by Pochmara and Merton with regard to the issue of race in the UK and Poland. Thirdly, American Studies can be employed to reframe US cultural hegemony through innovative methods. For instance, by abandoning well-established narratives and focusing on less debated aspects of US history, we favour a better critical understanding of both its past and present – and we can do this precisely because US history and its mass culture are so popular and American cultural products are already familiar to European students, as stressed by Parker. Just this pervasiveness and appeal of US popular culture is seen by Izzo as crucial for the revival of the humanities in an education system crippled by budget cuts and neoliberal policies. Ultimately, for all their differences, the contributions focus on two key aspects of American Studies in Europe: transnationalism and interdisciplinarity. As evidenced most clearly by Messmer, European American Studies are in fact ideally positioned to cultivate and strengthen these two aspects of the field, and hence guarantee their ability to encapsulate the multiplicity of the American experience in a period rife with cultural, political and social changes.

JOE MERTON

Teaching American Studies in 21st-Century Europe: Three Reflections from Britain

American studies and American culture

The wider perception and popularity of American Studies in Europe has long been tied to political and cultural developments within the United States. Fewer developments have had as much impact as the recent election of Donald Trump. On the one hand, Trump's election has, contrary to the discipline's initial fears, stimulated a degree of interest in and engagement with American history – including historical fields such as conservatism, economic change, or whiteness studies previously ignored or unloved by students – almost unprecedented in my teaching career.[1] Yet the impact of this fascination has also been to initiate what one might describe as "Trump reductionism": the idea that almost every significant trend or phenomenon in contemporary American history can be traced back (or forward) to the 45th President. While this may be wonderful news for his considerable ego, it presents us with considerable pedagogical challenges.

My own final-year undergraduate teaching on narratives of crisis and decline in the 1970s has been significantly affected by this trend. A course which uses the political and cultural transformations of the 1970s to explain or understand our own times cannot escape the shadow of the Donald: topics as diverse as antifeminism, affirmative action or the punitive turn have each ended with the question "How does this get us to Trump?," and writing new weekly lectures has offered tempting opportunities for concluding reflections on this theme. Yet this reductionism is deeply problematic, discouraging students from exploring complexities or discontinuities in recent American history and inhibiting the kinds of transformations of thought or qualities of mind we might hope to develop in our teaching.

So how to disrupt or circumvent this phenomenon while still acknowledging the contemporary, even presentist, connections and

meanings students find in the past; connections and meanings which, as Alan Booth attests, are critical for developing their learning, insight and enthusiasm for their subject? (7-9). The provision and discussion of sources which foreground "ordinary" or "familiar" experiences – personal testimonies of joblessness and de-industrialization, depictions of 1970s discotheques or EST self-help seminars, subway riders' experiences of crime and graffiti – offer one such route. Learning activities which enable students to establish their own connections with the past and thus grow to empathize or understand its complexity or messiness, such as a "solving the 'urban crisis'" role play or a class debate over affirmative action, offer another. I have also found that Jefferson Cowie's *Stayin' Alive* (2010) offers a powerful, compelling and enduringly popular metanarrative or framework for both contemporary American history and, relatedly, our own political and cultural times that can explain Trump without reducing recent American history to him and him alone.[2] The book's powerful exposition of the decline of class – a concept which engages students as they affirm its both increasing *and* diminishing importance to their lives – during the 1970s, its use of an individual Detroit autoworker, Dewey Burton, as a personal vehicle for many of the social, cultural and political changes it explores, its adroit blending of politics with culture, elite and working-class agency, each make it a valuable conceptual (and interdisciplinary) framework for teaching contemporary American history and encouraging critical reflection on both the past and oneself. The fact that Trump rode many of these trends to the White House is testament to its power, significance, and relevance.

The challenges of transnationalism

The transnational turn has had a significant impact on not only the historiography of the 20th-century United States, but also the pedagogical approaches to it.[3] Increasingly, scholars of American Studies are using this theoretical framework to encourage their students to explore the interaction of American histories with those of the wider world, and the ways in which the exchange of ideas, people and movements across borders can help to

reshape our understanding of the United States. My own second-year undergraduate teaching on the contemporary history of race and rights, both within and beyond the United States, has been designed with these intellectual aims in mind, exploring the links between movements for racial reform and equality – and those who resisted them – across the globe, from Detroit to Addis Ababa, Little Rock to Leningrad, Smethwick to Soweto. To do this, we examine a variety of sources, from the art and iconography of the Black Panthers Party or Chicano anti-war movement to the music of Hugh Masekela and Eddy Grant. Taking such an approach allows us to understand the explicitly global nature of racial injustice and the global power of those movements which confronted it, and appreciate the increasingly global quality of American history – and histories of race – in the post-1945 world; a period in which, as Mary Dudziak writes, "an event that is local is at the same time international" (17).

Transnational approaches to teaching American Studies present considerable challenges, however. The breadth and range of transnational histories of race can be unsettling for those students accustomed to the neatly-packaged historical topics and narratives prescribed by the exam-oriented demands of pre-university education. Students must read widely and be willing to independently think, reflect and identify broad themes across diverse topics and regions, but many voice concern that thinking transnationally is difficult or unwieldy, that they lack historical context or knowledge, that they will be underprepared for the end-of-module exam. One must ensure there is a strong theoretical basis to the course, and several recurrent themes which cut across to it, to assuage these fears. It is not only hard work for students; academic staff must demonstrate a dexterity with sources, methods and content from a variety of diverse historical contexts, some of them from outside their own research specialisms or regions. Most importantly, while the transnational turn has been largely successful in questioning, even collapsing, a long-standing scholarly commitment to American exceptionalism, it still runs headlong into a far more entrenched cultural perception of exceptionalism – both American and our own – held deeply by students and the wider public alike. An activity in which students design African American and black British history curricula reveals that while students often possess extensive knowledge of the former, their ability

to conceptualize the latter – at least beyond 1833 – is extremely limited. Racial inequality continues to be perceived by many British students as something which happens in the United States, not here; British histories of migration, anti-colonialism and race-based social movements, each of which were and are distinctly transnational, are barely imagined. Despite the value and import of transnational approaches, these perceptions of exceptionalism are difficult to supplant, especially in a post-Brexit era where government ministers demand history reflect "our island story" and global citizens are purportedly "citizens of nowhere" (Gove n.pag.). While as teachers we must acknowledge these problematic cultural assumptions, for they are what continue to fascinate our students and draw them to American Studies, we must also always work to challenge and unpick them, moving our students on to new and more complex understandings of contemporary American history.

American Studies in an age of uncertainty (and metrics)

The sustained marketization, even neoliberalization, of British universities over the past decade presents a considerable challenge to the future of many academic disciplines, not least American Studies.[4] A vision of universities as competitive entities and "driver[s] of economic growth" and students as economic agents, their degree programs the means to a career-oriented end, has come to predominate over personal and intellectual fulfillment and development (BIS, *Securing a Sustainable Future*). Such a trend is exemplified by the arrival of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), two of whose six metrics of teaching "excellence" measure the percentage of students in full employment six months after graduation. The TEF, and its associated "employability" agenda, presents a considerable challenge to the interdisciplinary quality of American Studies, even though that commitment to inter- or multidisciplinarity is explicitly embedded in the Quality Assurance Agency [QAA]'s subject benchmark statement for area studies (QAA 2016). How can a subject which aims to further core "qualities of mind" such as "a critical awareness of diversity," the ability to make "transnational links" and the development of "intercultural

competences", align itself with that agenda, especially in a context also defined by Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populist nationalism? (ibid.).

This emergent context poses a number of problems for American Studies. Interdisciplinarity can often be daunting for existing students, who have been trained up to university in rigidly-defined subject areas with little opportunity or incentive – in fact, often active discouragement – to cross disciplinary boundaries. Even working in a discrete disciplinary field such as History, but with a diverse range of sources drawn from across different disciplines, from literature and film to art and photography, can be difficult for students, who can look on such approaches with suspicion. "How will this help prepare me for the exam?," I recall one student asking of a series of film clips from 1980s nostalgia cinema (the relative lack of innovation in assessment in Humanities subjects, with an emphasis still placed on the traditional essay-exam model, perhaps does not help matters). Negative sentiments such as these can often manifest themselves in lower SET (Student Evaluation of Teaching) scores, universities' preferred internal measure for teaching "excellence," perhaps discouraging teaching staff from the kind of interdisciplinary innovation intrinsic to American Studies. The difficulty of promoting interdisciplinary programs to prospective students is reflected in the increasing number of discrete American Studies departments now "reorganized" into larger schools or departments, or the shrinking number of American Studies graduates, which has fallen by 40 percent between 2003 and 2015 (Phelps). More broadly, and perhaps most troublingly, the emergence of an environment in which departments and even disciplines actively compete to demonstrate "excellence" and recruit students has often served to inhibit the development of genuine collaboration and exchange between or across disciplines.

Yet by way of conclusion, perhaps there are opportunities for American Studies despite, or even within, this transformative context. Many long-standing American Studies departments in Britain continue to thrive, providing the institutional foundations for scholarly and pedagogical exchange which transcends disciplinary boundaries. Not only this, but Americanists are now expanding into departments previously off-limits to them, a testament to the enduring vitality and popularity of American studies and its potential to reach large groups of students. The discipline

continues to thrive through active subject organizations such as the British Association of American Studies (BAAS) and Historians of the Twentieth Century United States (HOTCUS), both of which have pioneered practice-sharing initiatives in the area of pedagogy and teaching innovation in recent years and are currently collaborating on the first survey of the American Studies profession in Britain in decades. Finally, the case today, both pedagogically and practically, for the interdisciplinarity of American Studies has perhaps never been stronger. The QAA's subject benchmark statement suggests that, through such an approach, "students learn to appreciate and work with diversity, complexity, and change." In an age of global crisis and uncertainty, it is difficult to imagine a more useful set of qualities.

Anna Pochmara-Ryžko

Cultural Studies as a Dominant, Literary Analysis as a Residual: Teaching American Studies in Poland in the Age of Populism

There are 15 institutions listed in the 2016 annual Polish Association for American Studies (PAAS) newsletter, and only two are not part of an English Department or philological studies.[5] Thus, although the field of American Studies in Poland, as I will show, is predominantly interdisciplinary and to a large extent synonymous with cultural studies, at its roots there is the English Department and literary analysis. The majority of today's instructors wrote their dissertations in literary studies, and its residual echoes are visible both in our research and teaching practice, even though many teaching courses are about Hollywood movies rather than modernist poetry.[6]

As a result of the continuing influence of the English Department in American studies, both in our classrooms and at our conferences, literary

research looms large, whereas the purely historical or purely political sciences are almost absent. At the 2017 PAAS conference, whose title "Performing America" encouraged a focus on culture, almost 30 out of 42 papers were devoted to literary analysis, and there was not a single paper on politics or history. Even the keynote lecture that examined the 2016 victory of Donald Trump – "Exclusion, Resistance, and Populism: Interpreting the Presidential Election of 2016 through Southern Literature" – as its title suggests used literature to talk about politics. The previous conference, held at the American Studies Center, which is institutionally unrelated to philology, at the University of Warsaw (ASC, UW) exhibited an analogous tendency. Although there were 6 papers on politics, presentations based on literary analysis constituted more than 60 % of all 63 talks. This generally reflects the make-up of the faculty and their research interests at different American Studies institutions, and it is well exemplified by Warsaw's American Studies centers.[7] In the Institute of English Studies, University of Warsaw (IES, UW), 8 out of 14 Americanists are literary scholars, and only 1 out of the remaining 6 declares himself/herself to be a historian, whereas the rest identify with cultural studies. Likewise in the Institute of English Studies, SWPS University, the majority of American scholars were primarily trained and still largely specialize in literary scholarship. Even at the largest and most diverse of the institutions associated in the PAAS, the ASC, literary scholars (though today more often than not they teach film rather than literature) comprise almost half of the faculty. Research interests of the PAAS members in turn translate into the topics of elective courses and MA or BA seminars. At the IA, UW, since January 2016, roughly 130 theses in American studies have been defended; out of these, over 120 carried out cultural and literary analyses, half of which were exclusively devoted to works of American literature. At the more diverse ASC, where students can choose from three thematic clusters – 1) literature, art, media 2) social history and society, and 3) political sciences – almost half of the theses are still devoted to cultural studies and literary analysis.

Such a strong residual influence of literature among Polish American Studies scholars largely stems from the fact that most of us were trained in English Departments in the late twentieth century, when cultural studies was not yet recognized as an independent scholarly discipline in Poland.

This meant that all MA and BA theses as well as doctoral dissertations in American Studies had to include literary analysis until *kulturoznawstwo* (cultural studies) was added to the list of independent disciplines in 2003 (Sójka 98). This, however, is not to say that American studies in Poland became fossilized in the 1950s and have not progressed since then. On the contrary, most literary scholars have welcomed the cultural turn and have embraced many newly emerging critical perspectives. When I was a student in the English Department in the mid-1990s, not only did we read articles from gender studies and critical race studies alongside works by Aristotle and Plato, but in the first-year survey course of American literature, we read Henry James's "The Beast in the Jungle" and James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* and through these texts, we were introduced to the then emerging queer theory. In the twenty-first century, we, in turn, have familiarized our students with the most recent perspectives and methodologies from whiteness studies to masculinity studies, to affect theory, to new materialism, to ecocriticism, to animal studies, to posthumanism. American studies has emerged as the critical avant-garde of the humanities in Poland.

Outside the classroom, a significant part of our effort has been devoted to translation and popularization of new methodologies. For example, in *Kultura, tekst, ideologia. Dyskursy współczesnej amerykanistyki* (Culture, Text, Ideology: The Discourses of Contemporary American Studies, 2004) edited by Agata Preis-Smith, Polish Americanists translated key texts by authors, such as Edward Said, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Myra Jehlen, Toni Morrison, and bell hooks, thus making them available to Polish scholars and students. Four years later, Karolina Krasuska translated Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (*Uwikłani w Płeć*). In 2015, Julia Fiedorczuk popularized ecocriticism in her *Cyborg w ogrodzie: wprowadzenie do ekokrytyki* (Cyborg in the Garden: An Introduction to Ecocriticism) and Zuzanna Ładyga and Justyna Włodarczyk edited a volume on posthumanism *Po humanizmie. Od technokrytyki do animal studies* (After Humanism: From Technocriticism to Animal Studies). Such publications and our courses on related topics have been instrumental in the introduction of these methodologies into other Polish humanities departments.

Thus, despite the strong residual presence of literary studies in our teaching, American literature scholars were among the first to introduce the

cultural turn and have welcomed the new critical perspectives in the field. As a result, most literary departments in the PAAS offer interdisciplinary studies. In today's Poland, governed by nationalist populists, however, this position is under fire. The critical or political aspect of cultural studies – especially its strong connection to Marxism and gender studies (Sójka 100-101; Włodarczyk 37-38)[8] – have been recognized not only by Polish scholars but also by policymakers. As "leftism" (*lewactwo*) and "gender" have become the public enemies of Polish nationalist rhetoric (Graff and Korolczuk), Cultural Studies has also attracted the government's attention. The Ministry of Science has recently announced that the field is likely to be deleted from the list of scholarly disciplines in Poland ("Gowin"). Such anti-intellectualist and populist gestures are among many parallels between Poland's populist nationalist government and Trump's America. Thus, although an examination of Southern literature can definitely help us better understand the unexpected US election results of 2016, today's Polish public discourse might prove to be similarly eye-opening.

Whereas the dominance of cultural studies and the residual component of literary scholarship are characteristic of most American Studies institutions in Poland, an important part of teaching experience in my case is the juxtaposition of my main academic interest – that is African American studies – and the Polish perspective.[9] At first sight, race may seem to be a completely alien and abstract topic in a country that, according to the last census, is ethnically homogeneous, and where the notion of racial identity is absent from the questionnaires altogether (97,10% citizens have identified their nationality and ethnicity as Polish, and the first two largest national/ethnic minorities are Silesians and Kashubians, ethnicities representing regions in Poland rather than independent foreign states; 98,5% of the people who declare themselves to be religious are Roman Catholic; GUS 29, 93). In practice, however, courses that demonstrate the historically changeable and context-dependent character of racial definitions enable my students to critically view their own identities and understand that these are necessarily racial. Although there do not exist any extensive studies of the historical changes in the perception of Polish Americans – such as the canonical *How the Irish Became White by* Noel Ignatiev, *How Jews Became White* by Karen Brodkin, or *The Wages of Whiteness* by David R. Roediger

– it is easy to find convincing evidence of the analogous situation of Polish immigrants to the US in the late nineteenth century.

Sometimes, when introducing critical race theory, in order to show its relevance to my students, I read a transcript of interviews with late-19th-century black factory workers from the Midwest, who – to the question if there are any white people they work with – answer that there are some Poles, but they are not white. Since students in Poland are educated to identify with Polish 19th-century immigrants (such as, for example, the many Polish Romantic poets who were exiles in Paris), such stories help them reconsider the absence of race and seeming racial transparency in Polish discourse as an element of their white and colonial privilege. These critical self-examinations are especially crucial today in the face of the refugee crisis and the Polish government's total lack of commitment to its relief. The anti-refugee and anti-immigrant attitudes, more or less explicitly supported by the politicians in power, were loudly expressed during the celebrations of the 2017 Independence Day, which made the headlines of international press from *The Daily Mail* to *The Guardian*, from CNN to *The New York* Times, from *Die Zeit* to *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. I strongly hope that the students' identification with their imaginary forefathers and an awareness of their racialization and dehumanization in US anti-immigrant discourse will translate into more critical and more empathic responses to the contemporary situation in Europe. Fortunately, this belief in the power of teaching literature and culture is not only a figment of my optimistic imagination, but it finds support in the findings of social psychologists David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano published in *Science* in 2013, according to which "reading literary fiction temporarily enhances" the "understanding of others' mental state," "a crucial skill that enables the complex social relationships that characterize human societies" (1). Thus, the continuing presence of literature in our teaching practice is far from a fossil of the previous era and, when used critically and combined with new methodologies, it can contribute meaningfully to social change.

JOSHUA PARKER

Historicizing America in Teaching American Studies in Europe

As American Studies proliferated (or was proliferated) in postwar Western Block nations, Austria found itself in a unique position. A former empire with tightly-restricted borders before the First World War, it held few large-scale emigrant connections with the United States from the previous century, as Germany, Russia, Poland, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Scandinavia had, and few longer historical patterns of immigration to North America, as had Spain, Portugal, Africa, England, France, the Netherlands and Scotland. The Austrian Empire was among the last European governments to recognize the United States (in 1797, a full fourteen years after the US War for Independence's conclusion). North America's original populations, its colonization, early governance and social forms often remain a blind spot in Austrians' popular imagination of "America" even today. Here, "America" is still often deeply confounded with notions of modernity, and imagined as a place "without history."

Meanwhile, with Germany, Austria was the country most closely influenced by American media models during the occupation following the Second World War. AP and Reuters were central sources of foreign news. The tone and format of domestic reporting was influenced by the fact that, before US armed forces left the country in 1955, hundreds of Austrian journalists had been trained in American-style journalism. Postwar Austrian press and radio may not always have been direct at telling readers and listeners *what* to think about contemporary US political and social issues, but they were, modeled on US media structures and press conventions, very good at telling listeners and readers *what to think about* (Wagnleitner 100), and specifically what and how to think about the United States and what was going on *there*.

American Studies encourages critical analysis of cultural, artistic, social and political paradigms. American Studies, like America itself, has always

been about shaking up paradigms. Teaching in Europe, you'll find students often all too willing and able to consume the narratives contemporary American media produces through these forms. American narratives are easily enough digested. European students have already been trained from an early age to consume them. University students in Europe often come to the American Studies classroom prepared to see narratives or issues presented as perhaps dramatic and edgy, thought-provoking or upsetting, but – as narratives – ultimately as comedies. It's what American narrative forms are famous for: the moralizing happy ending. As a teacher, perhaps one's best tactic is to render its narratives more uncanny – as Russian Formalists might say, to "make [the familiar] strange." Historicization ("historicize, historicize, historicize") is often called on as one remedy. The "unfamiliar" is found in an almost over-obvious place: history. Specifically, America's long history: early colonial politics and governance, Native American societies, literatures and practices, and the ecological history of the land.

When I started teaching politics and government in a "North American Civilization" lecture several years ago, my default instinct was to begin where my own US-based classrooms had started: the Declaration of Independence (drawn from Enlightenment ideals), and from there moving on to cover the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the formation of the branches of the US federal government. I quickly saw my approach ignored colonial communities, as much as Native ones, largely self-governing for three centuries prior to the first Continental Congress. One prescription I'd give is to focus on unexpected or unknown aspects of American history.

Teaching long history or distant history today may seem like an ostrich sticking its head in the sand, a flight from a flashing, frightening, electrifying political present, the immediate relevancy of daily cascades of falling "norms" in news from the United States. We try to focus on immediate history and contemporary trends, while covering centuries of founding mythologies and policies of "early" America and Americans. We want to find interstices between the two. Classroom time is limited. We hesitate over giving time to one or the other.

American Studies can be criticized as being too interdisciplinary. Its introduction in postwar Europe exposed an intentional (understandable)

attempt to project (and promote) America as a unified, holistic idea. Or as a palette of interconnected, complimentary directions and impulses. In short, a successful state, expert at (and unchallenged in) adapting its various cultural strands to a modernist project. As Lorenzo Costaguta and Virginia Pignagnoli write in their call for papers for this issue, "the perception of American Studies as a discipline, and the way in which scholars approach it, is tightly connected to the image of the United States as a country." Logical enough. True enough. We've been soaking in it. Yet the regions, peoples, and the span of history under our scope of vision, for some 14,000 years (or more), hardly formed one country, much less a nation.

"I have never read, nor will I ever write, an alternate history as creative and thoroughly wrought as the one I read in high school," writes Sarah Gailey. "I studied this particular book for a full year – in a display of singular dedication to an idea, the teacher designed her entire district-approved curriculum around it. The premise of this particular alternate history was 'what if everything was fine?'" It was something, she writes,

> that didn't boil history down to a single pivotal event, but that instead boiled it down to a feeling, to an idea . . . What if, the book supposed, America had been entirely undiscovered prior to 1492? What if the Pilgrims had been a peaceful, God-loving people? What if they had worked together with the Native population, rather than slaughtering them and stealing their land? What if voyages of exploration were driven by a pure, heartfelt desire to expand the map of the world, and nobody had ever been interested in gold or drugs or slaves? What if everything was fine? (n. pag.)

What I suggest as a necessary way of grappling with the contemporary American scene, is not to represent the over-arching narrative of "America" or "Americanness" as tragedy, or farce. But to encourage classrooms to analyze and discuss "America" as it always was: a human experiment, fragile, fallible, itself by turns cynical and hopeful. It offers many "directions." Yet few of them are "new." What Barack Obama said of the United States in his first inaugural speech in 2009 might apply well to our approaches to teaching American Studies today: "Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends – hard work and honesty, courage and fair play,

tolerance and curiosity" – for us, in our classrooms and research, too – "these things are old."

If, comedian Dave Chappelle recently suggested, "Trump is a bad DJ at a good party," does this mean scholars should bury ourselves in our archives? It's "the intellectual's task," regarding "the consensus on group or national identity," Edward Said remarked, "to show how the group is not a natural or god-given object, but is constructed, manufactured, even, in some cases, an invented object, with a history of struggle and conquest behind it, that is sometimes important to represent." (n. pag.)

So, my suggestions for teaching American Studies in Europe in the twenty-first century:

Let's keep abreast of archeology and paleontology, as we're able. Discoveries revamping the ways we imagine human history playing out on the North American continent are being made in these fields almost annually.

We all do it, but I'll say it again: let's watch and study the ways in which American history, and its traditions, are being treated in the media and press today. They often deserve careful rhetorical deconstruction. Let's reflect on American narration – that of the newscaster, the headline, the punch line, the political tragedy presented as high drama. America remains a stage for the world. Let's also keep an eye on how American policy affects things on the ground, where the world feels it. Its ripples and repercussions echo in film, music, literature and reporting from the four corners of the globe.

So many good American novels, short stories, essays and poems have come out in the last year alone. It's hard to keep track of one's favorites. Sherman Alexie's poem "Hymn" was shared millions of times within a few days of appearance on Facebook (that other Netherworld of American narrations). *Harper's* and *The Atlantic*, with (respectively) 167-year-old and 160-year-old archives, still pour out monthly breathtaking lines today (as if a subscription weren't worth it, just for access to their archives). Magazines like *n+1*, *A Public Space*, *The Literary Review* and countless others continue to offer a mix of literature and political reflection. Follow a local weekly. NPR, *Slate* and *The New Yorker* (you may know others) produce high-quality podcasts – perhaps the great verbal form of the early twenty-first century – unless you prefer the tweet.

In visual arts reflecting on American life, ideas and mythologies, Gregory Crewdson, Myra Greene and Matika Wilbur are artists I'm currently following with baited breath. Encourage students to explore internet archives. Diverse, clear historical images are easier than ever to find: portraits, posters, maps, artifacts, diaries – everything from Paul Revere's silver to George Washington's ledgers, to Dred Scott's studio photo, to Harriet Tubman's shawl, to Zelda Fitzgerald's parting gift to F. Scott as he decamped for the First World War (an engraved whiskey flask). Music from the dawn of recording is accessible (and free) as never before. We live, in a sense, in a golden era.

America, it's said, constantly reinvents itself. We Americanists in Europe, as numerous as in any other era, have networks more vast and diverse. We work in a stimulating field. We may, at times, be wary of our object of study, but have no reason to be weary of our task.

MARIETTA MESSMER

Teaching American Studies in the "Age of Trump": How Transnational and Interdisciplinary Paradigms Can Help Us Negotiate Some of the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century

The election of Donald Trump as 45th President of the United States poses a particular challenge to (European) American Studies scholars at this point in time as we are frequently asked to explain developments, such as the intensification of (white) nationalism in the US, the proliferation of openly racist discourses and exclusionary policies (directed, in particular, against undocumented workers and immigrants), or Trump's radical stance on international trade and diplomatic relations. While Trump's positions are no doubt extreme, one should not forget that similar shifts to the

political right can also be noticed throughout Europe. As Sabine Kim and Greg Robinson have observed:

> In some respects, ironically, the Trump administration forms part of a transnational movement. One can see similar trends of hostility over immigration in the Brexit campaign in Great Britain in 2016, as well as in political campaigns across the continent of Europe – with refugees as the chief targets of outrage and suspicion – and in the dismissive attitudes regarding international alliances. (2)

I would argue that the discipline of American Studies is ideally suited to negotiate and explain such highly complex developments due to its critical interdisciplinarity as well as its transnational outlook. Many of the socio-political challenges that we face today, including the threat of terrorism, the consequences of economic globalization and global warming, or the increasing mobility of people and commodities, require an integration of interdisciplinary and transnational perspectives, and the discipline of American Studies can offer us some highly enabling tools in this context. I will use the example of one of my upper-level BA research seminars on the topic of migration and mobility to illustrate the synergy effects that an interplay between critical interdisciplinarity and transnationalism can have on understanding current developments in the US and elsewhere.

Due to its origins as an area studies program during the 1930s, American Studies was from the start characterized by a degree of interdisciplinarity because of its "attempt to focus multiple disciplinary perspectives on a single geographic area" (Lattuca 8). This early form of interdisciplinarity, however, relied heavily on the category of the nation state, which further contributed to naturalizing US notions of exceptionalism. This changed with the opening up of American Studies to a much wider range of (new) disciplines from the 1960s on until today, including ethnic studies, cultural studies, border studies, critical race studies, diaspora studies, gender and LGBT studies, disability studies, film and media studies, environmental studies, critical legal studies, or critical justice studies. While some scholars have expressed concerns about the extent to which this proliferation of sub-fields within American Studies may have led to a fragmentation of

the discipline, I would argue that, during the 1980s and 1990s, this development went hand in hand with a highly productive move towards a much more radical and subversive form of interdisciplinarity under the influence of post-structuralism, postmodernism and post-colonialism. This form of critical interdisciplinarity that shapes many of the topics taught and researched by American Studies scholars today queries "the conditions and consequences of knowledge production" (Parker and Samantrai 1) as it is built on the premise that all knowledge production is inherently political (Lattuca 16). It furthermore acknowledges that Enlightenment conceptualizations of knowledge as neutral, objective, universal, and therefore generalizable (Lattuca 10) had in fact led to systemic (race, class, and gender) biases and inequalities – "inequalities [that were] naturalized by the truth claims of the academy" itself (Parker and Samantrai 7). Critical interdisciplinarity can thus be said to have "returned critique to the center of the educational enterprise" (Parker and Samantrai 6). Ultimately, it can also "assist efforts by members of marginal groups to claim subject status and political agency" (Parker and Samantrai 16). For this reason, Lisa Lattuca sees interdisciplinary approaches as "the only routes to genuine understanding and equality" (Lattuca 16) because they have the power to "transform social relations, broaden access for the disenfranchised, and thereby change the agents and the consequences of knowledge production" (Parker and Samantrai 1).

The form of critical interdisciplinarity that currently shapes much of the teaching and research done in American Studies can thus be described as a means through which "competing academic protocols, standards, and logics, together with the goals and values of social justice movements, are made explicit in order to be debated, interrogated, and reshaped" (Parker and Samantrai 18). For the seminar I teach on migration and mobility, this means, in very concrete terms, that we study Central American and Mexican migratory movements to the US from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives (including their historical, social, political, economic, cultural, legal, and media dimensions) as well as from the points of view of a wide range of actors involved on both sides of the US-Mexican border: government officials (including politicians, border patrol agents and local police officers) who try to justify current immigration policy decisions;

private vigilante groups and neighborhood-watch organizations in US border states that wish to take the protection of their communities into their own hands; US employers who prefer to recruit undocumented migrants to keep their companies afloat; human rights organizations working in Mexico and along the US-Mexican border to help migrants survive their often risky journey; representatives of the Mexican government who criticize the US for systemic human rights violations; Mexican and Central American sociologists who explain the socio-economic push factors that drive migrants to leave their home countries (poverty, drug and gang violence, but also the negative effects of US-induced economic policies such as NAFTA); Mexican villagers who profit substantially from the remittances sent home by family members working in the US; the role of US-funded detention centers in Mexico whose task it is to deport migrants back to their home countries; and of course migrants themselves who talk about the effects of the increasing border militarization, including a heightened exposure to violence, rape, and corrupt officials. Such an attempt to include the voices of as many agents as possible allows us to develop a much more complex and complete picture of the contemporary dynamics of Central American-US migration.

This turn towards a more critical interdisciplinarity has, since the 1990s, also been accompanied by a transnational turn within American Studies. Increasingly harsh critiques of US-American notions of exceptionalism as well as vocal condemnations of some of its neo-imperialist foreign policy decisions, combined with geopolitical shifts such as the end of the Cold War that reduced the US's central role as promoter of American Studies programs in Europe, have, in some of the more radical variants, started to displace the US from the center of the field. Instead, closer attention is being paid to the hemispheric relations between North, Central, and South America, or the US's complex role in international cultural contexts and politico-historical conflicts. Several critics have noted that this transnational turn is not without potential pitfalls as a hemispheric study of the Americas, for example, can also be seen as a form of neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism, especially from the perspective of Latin American or Canadian Studies programs. I would maintain, however, that the advantages of this tectonic shift towards a critical transnationalism

outweigh the potential difficulties in many ways: "[A] US-centric version of American Studies simply tends to foreground certain research paradigms that fall within the interests of the United States while at the same time obscuring at least as many alternative paradigms that concern other American nations' interests" (Messmer, "Introduction" 11).

A critical transnationalist understanding of American Studies, on the other hand, "transcends the limitations inherent in studying one nation in isolation and can successfully address the multifaceted economic, political, and cultural interrelations of the Americas in an age of global interconnectedness and migratory movements" (Messmer, "Introduction" 12). By drawing on a wide range of migration theories in our seminar which focus on transnational interrelations (including classical economic, network, dual labor market, world systems, and cumulative causation theory), we can thus analyze to what extent historical events (the US's military interventions in Mexico and other Latin American countries) as well as contemporary political and economic measures (immigration acts focusing on family reunification, increasing border militarization, the Bracero guest worker program, NAFTA) actually contribute to producing the very streams of migrants that the US so desperately and ineffectively tries to control.

In recent years, transnational American Studies approaches have also started to draw on many of the highly enabling premises of the new field of trans-area studies that can help us understand territorial areas as political, historical and cultural constructs through which a particular community defines its (cultural or national) identity. In this way, spaces (including national spaces) can be more easily recognized as shaped by multiple centers, dialectical interrelations, as well as global transborder processes, i.e. as spaces of interaction without a stable, permanent meaning, which in turn facilitates a critique of the seeming boundedness fixity of traditional categories such as "nation" or "state" (Mielke and Hornidge 5, 12, 14-15). This approach can also further our understanding of boundaries (including political borders) as fluid socio-spatial constructs that constantly undergo renegotiations. Embracing some of these paradigms has allowed American Studies scholars to explain some of the seemingly paradoxical developments that shape our current geopolitical situation: the fact that the sovereignty

of nation states is both infringed upon as well as reaffirmed at the same time; or the fact that boundaries and borders are both weakened and reinforced simultaneously as certain forms of de-bordering inevitably lead to new forms of re-bordering. Moreover, borders themselves (not just borderlands) have become more complex; it is well known that borders do not always coincide with cultures, languages, or religions, but they also do not necessarily always coincide with geopolitical territories anymore either.

Migratory movements across the US-Mexican border constitute a useful case study to illustrate this dynamic as they allow us to challenge some of the US's hegemonic national narratives and discourses of (non-) belonging that have recently been revived so effectively by President Trump. Trump's restrictive definitions of national identity, which are then translated into ever more rigorously exclusionary immigration policies, often evoke images of an autochthonous American nation that prevents migrants' integration into the national imaginary while obscuring the fact that the United States has been an immigrant nation right from its inception. Moreover, a critically interdisciplinary and transnational approach within American Studies can highlight the "larger refusal of United States leaders in recent years to admit any connection between refugee crises and the nation's foreign policy" (Kim and Robinson 4). Kim and Robinson remind us that throughout "the Cold War era, the United States made acceptance of refugees a rhetorical cornerstone of its foreign policy. . . . {It} made a point of opening its doors to people fleeing persecution" (Kim and Robinson 4). The end of the Cold War, however, also marked the end of this humanitarian approach, a development that was further reinforced after 9/11, when foreignness started to be perceived as a threat to national security. This notion, according to Kim and Robinson, "prefigure[s] the current administration's 'America First' sloganeering, wholesale denunciation of Muslims, and rejection of all forms of immigration" (Kim and Robinson 5). Since 2014, this has also had a highly detrimental effect on thousands of families and unaccompanied minors seeking refuge in the US after escaping from the violent conditions prevalent in their home countries Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador. Many of them have been placed in immigrant detention centers where they

await deportation back to their home countries without any chance of ever being granted asylum in the US.

To facilitate these deportations, the US administration has also started to outsource many of its migration management measures to Mexico, which has led to what can be termed a southward movement of the US-Mexican border far into Mexican territory as migrants are often apprehended, detained and deported by Mexican authorities long before they have reached the US-Mexican border. This development, as we have been able to observe in our migration seminar, has created a substantial rights vacuum for migrants and refugees because many human rights obligations are not applicable extraterritorially, but it has also started to "redefine the boundaries of state control" as this form of outsourcing simultaneously increases "the US government's legal reach over vulnerable non-citizen populations" even beyond national borders "while at the same time decreasing [its] direct liability and accountability" (Messmer, "Detention" 3, 2). As American Studies teachers and scholars, we are at the forefront of addressing these developments, and the interdisciplinary and transnational orientation of our field – while it can be daunting at times – can provide us with highly enabling tools that will prepare our students in the best possible way to negotiate many of the multifaceted challenges of the 21st century.

DONATELLA IZZO

American Studies in Europe/European American Studies: Local and Global Challenges

Let me start with a not altogether superfluous specification: unlike other participants in this forum, I do *not* teach American Studies – at least nominally – for the excellent reason that there is no such institutional field in the Italian university system. We have teachings of Anglo-American Literature (a somewhat ambiguous label mainly covering the study and

teaching of US literature), hosted in departments and degree programs in foreign languages, and teachings of North-American History, mostly in political sciences departments and programs. There is not a single official American Studies course, or degree, or department in the whole country, and nothing like that comprehensive project integrating literary, historical, theoretical, cultural, visual, anthropological, sociological, and political approaches, and aimed at a multi- and interdisciplinary study of the United States.

That already highlights a distinction: what we understand as American Studies varies from the USA to Europe and from one European country to another. Academic frameworks affect the ways in which we see our work, the institutional space available for doing it, and the scholarly agendas we set ourselves. This in turn conditions the possibility for exchange and collaborative work, which in turn impacts the creation of a shared intellectual pursuit. The diversity of local conditions complicates the possibility of talking about "American Studies" as if it were a stable signifier. But even assuming that a field loosely recognizable as "American Studies" exists everywhere in Europe, is there such a thing as a "European American Studies"? And what would that label designate – a shared scholarly space within Europe, a specific difference between European and American understandings of and practices in the field, or both? And how would it relate to the call for internationalization coming from sectors of US American Studies, and to Transnational American Studies as the now prevalent epistemology of the field?

As I have noted elsewhere, the disciplinary identity of Americanists in Europe is the result of a complex negotiation, involving processes of interpellation from disparate sites – one's local academic culture and traditions, on the one hand; the hegemonic disciplinary paradigms of the field as globally legislated from within US American Studies, on the other. At a historical moment marked by accelerated global flows of cultural and academic no less than financial capital, the homogenizing pressures of "globalization as Americanization" might prove particularly strong in a field whose inherent raison d'être involves an intimate dialogue with US culture, US-produced scholarship, and US institutions of knowledge – especially at a time when many European countries (as is certainly the case

in Italy) have adopted internationalization and marketization as a mantra, and look to the US for models of neoliberal governance and the downsizing of higher education.

Where does that leave us as European Americanists? I see our challenges for the 21st century as manifold. Let me start from the last – but certainly not least – challenge I mentioned above: the onslaught of neo-liberalism on European academia, and its specific impact on Americanist scholarly pursuits. I will briefly focus on Italy – probably a worse case than others, but somewhat representative of the challenges currently faced by at least some of the European countries. In one of those time-travel paradoxes that are so familiar to Americanists, the university "reforms" of the 21st century instantly propelled Italian academia from its tardy but well-ordered 19th century epistemology straight into the middle of academic marketization and neoliberal paucity, without really affording it the time for a critical institutional reconfiguration of its received knowledge, and thus leaving it helpless to defend that knowledge in the face of the ongoing gutting of the public university. How did that affect the field I know best, American Literature? Still widely regarded as an ancillary field carrying less cultural and educational capital than its European competitor, British Literature, American Literature has fallen an easy prey to budget cuts and the replacement of retired professors with contingent faculty. Of twenty-eight full professors of American literature in 2006, only seven were left in 2016; of an overall eighty-one university teachers (professors, associate professors, assistant professors) in 2006, there were fifty-three left in 2016 – as I write, they are reduced to a mere forty-nine (two on non-tenure track jobs): well above the general 20% ratio of downsizing that has affected the Italian university system over the last decade. With its academic and institutional weight thus reduced, it may very well be that the field's most pressing task for the 21st century is simply to survive.

But let's go back to intellectual challenges, and specifically to pedagogical ones. American Studies (where it exists as an integrated interdisciplinary configuration) and American literary studies (as a teaching frequently adept at smuggling historical, cultural, visual, philosophical, political, and theoretical content into courses putatively devoted strictly to literature) have the potential for playing a crucial role in the revival and

strikeback of the humanities. One of the ways in which they can do so is by capitalizing on the pervasiveness of US popular culture. Song lyrics or TV series elicit instant recognition by otherwise disparate groups of students: for many of them, they may provide their prevalent access to cultural narratives about the USA, even creating some of the basic knowledge of the country's history and culture that is usually missing from the nation-centered, Europe-centered syllabi of our high school education. Of course this cultural material may also convey the kind of pseudo-knowledge or self-serving ideological representation whose pre-suppositions we, as scholars and teachers, wish to critically challenge and refine (but so does, after all, much canonical literature). Still, it fosters interest, while offering a great opportunity of working backwards from contemporary popular representation to a more established historical, cultural, and artistic legacy, alerting the students to those textual cruxes, historical nexus, and conceptual ramifications that point beyond the consumption of slick entertainment products, to a more self-aware understanding of their discursive entanglements – and frequently, their actual complexity. Conversely, a complementary smuggling act concerns the way in which American Studies and American literary studies, with the theoretical self-awareness that has been the field's mark for several decades, enable teachers to deploy their titular courses, whatever their ostensible disciplinary content, to expose students to that exciting contemporary intellectual domain that includes not just US popular culture, but also eco-criticism, women and gender studies, queer studies, critical race studies, disability studies, critical finance studies – theoretical discourses whose circulation in European academia is overwhelmingly entrusted to Americanist scholars.

In sum, the constitutive features of American Studies as a disciplinary field might prove precious in the current predicament of European academia. On the one hand, it can contribute to redeeming the humanities – and in particular literary studies – from charges of irrelevance (now routine in the current, market-driven rather than *Bildung*-oriented understanding of higher education), by injecting their supposed antiquarian orientation with robust doses of reflection on our present-day concerns. On the other hand, it can capitalize on the expertise of literary and cultural scholars to train the students in the analytical skills traditionally honed on literature,

and much needed in order to develop a critical approach to many aspects of contemporary culture, from serial drama to the social media or political rhetoric.

The mention of political rhetoric leads me to one final comment. As I mentioned earlier, one of the main thrusts of US American Studies over the last twenty years has been on the one hand, the internationalization of the field, and on the other, the call for the transnational. The transnational in Donald Pease's view names an "[i]nherently relational" deconstructive operator, an "undecidable economic, political, or social formation that is neither in nor out of the nation-state," involving "a double move: to the inside, to core constituents of a given nation, and to an outside, whatever forces introduce a new configuration" (Pease 5-6). By preventing the nation's closure in the assumed fusion of territory and people, the transnational would thus disaffiliate American Studies from the logic of exceptionality, opening up instead alternative identifications with all the "excepted" communities historically suppressed and discursively disavowed by exceptionalist America (Pease 27). Thus, within the symbolic and intellectual economy of the transnational, US American Studies purporting to embrace the oppressed in a history of global conflicts and multiple inequalities, no longer looks at Europe as its privileged partner and mirror, as it did throughout the Cold War. Where does that leave European American Studies, and what role might it play in this expanded reconfiguration?

Remarkably, as Transnational American Studies repositioned itself within a geo-political scene marked by the demise of national sovereignty as a result of the combined pressure of global capitalism and the post-9/11 world security state, the Trump era was ushering in a new/old form of nationalistic unilateralism. Its rallying cries – "Make America Great Again," "America First," "Pittsburgh, not Paris" – would seem to doom the transnational to oblivion along with other obsolete technologies, possibly dictating the agenda of a newly introverted US American Studies. The US Americanists' moral and political urgency to critique the new administration's nationalism, nativism, and xenophobia seems to be creating a renewed focus on the domestic dimension, paradoxically installing a mirror image of Donald Trump's "America first" at the center

of their concerns. This trend emerged in the wake of the 2016 elections, when, with an obsessive introspection, scholars and analysts sought the causes of Trump's election in a range of endogenous factors, without once extending their ken to the international scene, where, as shown by Marco Morini, the political ascent of questionable billionaires with a populist agenda had been an ongoing phenomenon for some time. Perhaps this will prove to be an opportunity for European Americanists to reclaim a role within a refashioned transnational approach, capable of comparatively contextualizing and interpreting the US within an expanded worldwide framework. At this historical moment, this would perhaps be an antidote not just against US exceptionalism and populism, but also against our own, hardly less troubling local versions.

Notes

[1] The value of this trend has been fiercely debated by historians. For examples of this debate, see Temkin, Jacobson.

[2] Equally valuable meta-narratives include Rodgers and, although written to explain contemporary British history, Robinson et al.

[3] See Tyrrell.

[4] For examples of this process, see Department of Business, Innovation & Skills [BIS], *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education* (2010), and Department of Business, Innovation & Skills [BIS], *Success as a Knowledge Economy* (2016). For a critique, see Collini, *Speaking of Universities*, or Collini, "Who Are the Spongers Now?"

[5] The two institutions that are not related to philological departments are the American Studies Center, University of Warsaw, and the American and Media Studies, University of Łódź. There is also a transatlantic studies program at the American Studies Institute, Jagiellonian University, which stresses political and social sciences, but it's not part of the PAAS. I would like to thank Prof. Marek Paryż, Prof. Agnieszka Graff, Dr. Sylwia Kuźma, and Dr. Justyna Wierzchowska, whose constructive comments helped me improve this article.

[6] Significantly, when contrasted with English Departments and American Studies Institutes in Germany and the UK (the two countries I have most frequently visited as an academic) the position of American studies in Poland appears to bear more resemblance to the one in Germany – where, even though American culture is paid slightly less attention than British, the discrepancy is slight – in contrast to English Departments in the UK, especially in Oxford and Cambridge, where, unsurprisingly, there is by far more space,

time, and attention devoted to British culture. By contrast, in Poland, most of us need to defend ourselves against the predominance of linguistics in the philological curriculum rather than beat off the competition from Shakespeare scholars. This comparison is based on a variety of my personal academic experiences: I was an Erasmus exchange student in the JFK Institute, Free University, Berlin in 2006 and a visiting lecturer in the Department of British, North American, and Anglophone Studies, Saarbrucken, as well as in a number of conferences in the UK in Oxford, Cambridge, York, and Liverpool.

[7] As an analysis of all institutions would be beyond the scope of this article, I have decided to focus on the most significant institutions in Warsaw. I am also most familiar with them personally as a former or present teacher in all three and as a graduate of the Institute of English Studies and American Studies Center.

[8] Jacek Sójka examines the development of Polish cultural studies and contrasts them with their Western European and American counterparts with respect to the Marxist dominant; in the post-war decades, while scholars in the US and Western Europe criticized capitalism through neo-Marxism, in the Soviet Bloc Marxism was an imposed authoritarian ideology rather than a critical tool (102).

[9] The significant position of African American, ethnic, and race studies in Polish American studies in general is evidenced by the publication of *Czarno na Białym. Afroamerykanie, którzy poruszyli Amerykę (In Black and White: African Americans Who Changed America*), edited by Ewa Łuczak and Andrzej Antoszek (2009), numerous workshops and conferences on race and ethnicity organized in Poland, and the fact that in the American Literature Department, UW, 3 out of 8 scholars are predominantly interested in non-white literatures.

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