



Call for Papers Multidisciplinary Student Conference

What	A multidisciplinary student conference designed to host graduate scholars as well as to give undergraduate students the opportunity to participate in and experience an academic exchange platform
Where	Heidelberg Center for American Studies, Hauptstraße 120, 69117 Heidelberg
When	Friday, July 1 & Saturday, July 2, 2016
Topics	The American Dream: alive and well or sick and dying? Social mobility among minority groups, history and effectiveness of affirmative action, the LGBTQ movement's fight for equal rights and opportunities, education and economic status vs opportunity, self-perception, success stories, and images of the American society, and many more

Waking up to Reality - America's Struggle to Realize the Promised Land

"For many, the American Dream has become a nightmare." (Bernie Sanders)

The American Dream: perhaps the most recognizable symbol associated with the United States. A myth so powerful it exceeds national borders and identities, and creates a steady influx of immigrants. The "land of opportunity" supposedly guarantees success and material wealth to all those willing to work hard enough. In theory, this may sound promising, how much of it, however, is reality in contemporary America?

Criticism of the American Dream is becoming ever more predominant in the academic discourse. Scholars such as Peter McClelland and Robert Putnam have recently argued that the American Dream is in crisis, or even dying. What kind of people can still succeed in the American society today? Is upward mobility only possible for white, heterosexual men? How does one's social, ethnic, and economic origin influence the chances to live the American Dream?

Intolerance and bias also affect America's LGBTQ community. The William Institute found that programs aimed at helping poverty stricken as well as homeless youth reported between 30-43% of their clients to be members of the LGBTQ community.

Familial ostracism was the prime reason, according to the Williams Institute, due to which LGBTQ teens were driven to poverty and homelessness.

A lack of fundamental social support is a major obstacle that members of all minority groups pursuing the American Dream have to face. In order to support disadvantaged groups, Affirmative Action was created. However, this program is now widely criticized as discriminatory against the majority. If the principle behind Affirmative Action worked, could such a program support groups that have no ethnic markers such as the LGBTQ community?

In our interdisciplinary approach, we want to evaluate the possibilities of succeeding in the American society today through the academic perspectives of literary studies, history, and political science. Are we experiencing a revival of the Civil Rights Movement in the 21st century? For whom today could obtaining the American Dream still be a reality, and for whom has the American Dream become a nightmare?

We are looking forward to abstracts of no more than 300 words in either English or German by **May 15, 2016**. Please submit your abstract to Emma Wolf via ewolf@hca.uni-heidelberg.de