

The Conference

From March 21 to March 26, 2010, the Heidelberg Center for American Studies hosted the Spring Academy for the seventh time. Out of 128 applications 21 participants from Europe and the United States were invited to present and discuss their dissertation projects at this international conference on *American history, culture, and politics*.

Doctoral students from nine different countries attended this year's Spring Academy: Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Poland, and the United States. Several different research areas such as African American literature, cultural studies, economics, history, law, and political science were represented. The conference aimed to give Ph.D. candidates the opportunity to introduce their research projects in ten themed panels: National Security and the Cultures of Political Elites, Intellectual Elites, Slavery and Urbanization, Race and Urban Space, Atlantic Crossings in the Nineteenth Century, Transatlantic Cultural Diplomacy, Mediating Native American Cultures, Race and Performance, State and Religion, The USA and the World.

In addition, four experts in the fields of African American studies, cultural studies, history, and literature each held a workshop related to the topics represented. Thus, participants were able to debate different themes connected to American Studies in a historical, as well as contemporary, context. Several social events gave participants the opportunity to continue their discussions informally and to establish future contacts.

Support

One of the world's largest producers of agricultural and consumer equipment, the John Deere Corporation, has graciously been a longtime supporter of the HCA Spring Academy. John Deere operates one of its major tractor-production factories in the neighboring city of Mannheim. Since 2005, the John Deere European Headquarters has offered generous financial support for the conference. John Deere also invited the participants to visit the Mannheim factory and learn more about the company and its work.

Report on the HCA Spring Academy 2010

Most of the participants of the HCA Spring Academy 2010 arrived in Heidelberg on **Sunday, March 20**. After checking in at the Hotel am Rathaus, they joined up for an *informal dinner* at the nearby restaurant "Regie," where they had a chance to get to know each other in person and swap ideas on their respective research.

On **Monday, March 21**, the conference started with an Opening Session and Reception at the HCA's new annex. Founding Director Prof. Dr. Detlef Junker welcomed the participants to the 2010 Spring Academy and gave them a short

introduction to the Heidelberg Center for American Studies and the evolution of the Spring Academy over the past seven years. Dr. Dorothea Fischer-Hornung also gave a warm welcome and wished the participants an exciting and informative week.

After the Opening, the conference continued in the Bel Étage. Dr. Dorothea Fischer-Hornung started the conference program with the first workshop "What is/are the American Studies?" Dr. Fischer-Hornung is senior lecturer at the Heidelberg University's English Department and has nourished and cherished the Spring Academy from its very inception to the point that she has been dubbed "Ms. Spring Academy." To start off the proceedings, she provided a summary of some basic aspects of American Studies, for example "American exceptionalism," American history, and the development of democracy. After a short analysis of terms such as "melting pot," "multiculturalism," and "polyculturalism," participants were asked to give their definition of "globalization," which resulted in a lively discussion about the relevance of American Studies, its economic implications in Germany and the United States, as well as its relevance for Women's Studies. Participants also raised the issue of job possibilities in American Studies or the humanities in general, speculating that a Ph.D. degree today is comparable to an M.A. in the past, at times making a person holding a doctoral degree overqualified for today's job market.

The first panel of the conference, chaired by Dr. habil. Martin Thunert, addressed the topic of "National Security and the Cultures of Political Elites." Daniel Bessner (History, Duke University) introduced his project, "The Social Science of War: German Exiles and the Making of the American National Security State, 1919-1989." In order to track the role German exiles had in the making of the American national-security state, which began with the passage of the 1947 National Security Act, Bessner analyzes the biographies of three representative émigré intellectuals who occupied positions of authority in foreign policymaking institutions in the early Cold War years: Hans Speier, Hans Morgenthau, and Walter Kotschnig. By studying these three émigrés, he examines how German exiles influenced the three institutional spaces that defined Cold War American foreign policymaking: the government, think tanks, and universities. Doing so illuminates a network characterized by informal and occasionally formal connections between such institutions, which Bessner terms the "military-intellectual complex."

In his project, "'The Welles of Loneliness': Sexuality and the U.S. State Department, 1920-1950," second speaker Chris Parkes (American Studies, King's College London) examines the life and career of former Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles as part of a broader discussion about sexuality and politics in the United States. Parkes examines Welles' personal life as it relates to his professional career, highlighting key episodes and narratives which effected political discourses at the time. He argues that the contours of Welles' career laid the foundation of a discourse about homosexuality and the threat it posed that matured into the McCarthy-era purge of queer people from the State Department. By exploring the sexual locations and identities that Welles inhabited, this project brings greater insight to the study of early twentieth century American sexuality and the history of the Roosevelt Administration. The focus is on Welles' tenure in the State Department, stretching from his first diplomatic post to Japan in 1917 to his resignation in 1943. Parkes analyzes how Welles established the reputation of a highly effective, but conspicuously ostentatious, diplomatic officer and how this reputation, combined with

rumors about his sexuality, created a persona that embodied conservative criticisms of New Deal liberalism and the State Department.

The second panel, also chaired by Dr. Thunert, examined different aspects of “Intellectual Elites.” Stephan Isernhagen (History, University of Bielefeld) presented his dissertation project on “Critique and Intervention: The Politics of Susan Sontag,” which examines “positions” that Sontag as an intellectual took throughout her lifetime. Isernhagen’s project is not a biography, but an in-depth analysis of Sontag’s political writing and critique. He is interested in the relationship between Sontag’s writings on political subjects and her aesthetics, and discusses this relationship in his project from the 1960s to the 1990s/2000s. By focussing on Sontag as a political activist, he retraces some of the intersections between politics and art in post-WWII New York. In his dissertation, Isernhagen seeks to write about the structure and conditions of Sontag’s political interventions. His work is inspired by recently published scholarship that addresses various aspects of her writings and life. Moreover, Isernhagen argues that we gain a more nuanced, complex, and potentially new understanding of Sontag by looking at her personal papers, which he includes in his research.

Jonathan Koefoed’s (History, Boston University) dissertation about “Cautious Romantics: Antebellum Intellectuals in a Democratic Society” seeks to examine certain antebellum American intellectuals who have remained largely unexamined in the field of American history. Koefoed has tentatively labeled these intellectuals Cautious Romantics. They share the singular quality of imbibing the same transatlantic, Romantic influences – German as well as English - as such well known Transcendentalists as Emerson, Thoreau, or Margaret Fuller. However, they came to different epistemological and religious conclusions, and as professors, ministers, and university presidents their influence was extensive. At this early stage, Koefoed’s research has identified James Marsh (publisher of Coleridge in America and President of the University of Vermont) and Horace Bushnell (linguistic theorist and Congregational minister) as key figures. His research will also discuss several university professors and presidents, including William Allen at Bowden College, Francis Wayland at Brown, and George Ticknor at Harvard among many others. Finally, there are various religiously specific figures that will become relevant.

In the evening, participants were invited to a wine-and-cheese reception at the HCA. This event provided an opportunity to continue the lively discussions that had followed each presentation. It also gave participants the chance to come to know each other more closely outside the conference room.

The second day of the Spring Academy, **Tuesday, March 22**, began with the third panel “Slavery and Urbanization,” chaired by “Ms. Spring Academy”, Dr. Fischer-Hornung. The first presenter, Paul Musselwhite (American History, College of William and Mary), talked about “Towns in Mind: Debating Urbanization and Empire in the Colonial Chesapeake, 1650-1750.” Musselwhite’s dissertation suggests that Jefferson’s assertion (“We have no towns of any consequence”), while rooted in an important political and social perspective from the early Republic, fails to recognize a vital and contested debate over towns, cities, boroughs, and corporations played out in the colonial Chesapeake. This debate, as much cultural as economic, was critical in constructing the region’s political culture, defining the American colonies’

relationship to the empire and incubating a distinct American urban ideal. Between the years 1650-1710, Virginia and Maryland, despite very different political circumstances, passed seventeen distinct but similar “cohabitation” acts designed to lay-out and promote towns; they also both eventually moved their capital cities and inspired the publication of numerous reports and pamphlets on the virtues of urban development. Musselwhite’s dissertation views the Chesapeake town-building as an imperial variant on this English urban experience.

In part two of this panel, Melissa Maestri’s (History, University of Delaware) introduced her research on “Oh What A Tangled Web We Weave: 18th Century Slavery in New York City and Charles Town,” which focuses on slavery in the urban centers of New York, Charles Town, and these ports’ connections with the larger Atlantic World. While many historians focus on slavery in rural areas and on plantations, Maestri is researching and comparing slavery in the cities of New York and Charles Town focusing mostly on the 1700s. Her main goal for the dissertation is to heighten the importance of slavery in urban areas and demonstrate how significant slavery was in both New York City and Charles Town. According to Maestri, studying urban slavery helps us understand the wide variety of conditions that existed under slavery. She seeks to compare labor and working conditions in New York City and Charles Town and their surrounding hinterlands to test whether these cities were slave societies heavily reliant on slave labor. In reference to slave labor, Maestri researches and compares the typical workday for urban slave workers, the manual labor required of urban tasks, and how dependent these two cities were on slave labor to illustrate the importance of slavery in these ports.

The fourth panel on “Race and Urban Space,” also chaired by Dr. Fischer-Hornung, opened with Nicole Frisone’s (History, University of Minnesota) presentation. In her dissertation about “Modern Community Developments: Morris Milgram and Privately Developed Integrated Housing,” she examines the post-war urban and suburban landscape with regards to African Americans. Historian Andrew Wiese has argued that historians have done a better job of excluding African Americans from American suburbia than any white suburbanite could have. In 1958, two developments began advertising their ranch and split level homes. Planned by the Princeton Housing Associates and constructed by Morris Milgram, Glen Acres and Maplecrest resembled most other subdivisions. The ethos behind it, however, differed distinctly from that of developers such as William Levitt. Glen Acres and Maplecrest were supposed to stop and lead to the ultimate eradication of the racial segregation and redlining practices that had come to define Princeton’s housing market. What is interesting about these developments is how they deviate from while simultaneously exemplifying the traditional understandings of race and housing. Examining the two communities allows for valuable insight into issues of class, race, consumption, and homeownership in the larger context of American Cold War capitalism.

In his project entitled “Righteous Politics in the Black Metropolis: Race, Religion, and Urban Space in Post-War Chicago,” D. Clinton Williams (History of American Civilization, Harvard Divinity School) analyzes how interracial and ecumenical religious communities worked together to create grassroots alliances that protested post-World War II urban redevelopment projects that negatively affected poor minority communities in Chicago. Throughout Righteous Politics in the Black Metropolis, Williams highlights how clergy and their parishioners worked alongside

planners, architects, policy officials, and politicians to create urban revitalization projects that benefited all parties involved. Using an interdisciplinary approach, Williams' study argues that the flaws of post-World War II political culture - such as the failures of the New Deal welfare state, the breakdown of the Great Society Programs, the growth of machine politics, and the weaknesses of the War on Poverty - necessitated that diverse urban religious communities build alliances to ensure minority communities were heard in the public sphere. Ultimately, this project provides the long-history to indigenous political mobilizations emerging out of Chicago's religious communities and emphasizes the strategies clergies and parishioners employed to engage the public sphere.

The fourth panel's final speaker was Stefanie Weymann (American Studies, Heidelberg Center for American Studies). Her dissertation project, "Poetics of Absence: The City in Contemporary American Literature," deals with urban space in contemporary American literature. Although a number of critical works are dedicated to the study of the city in fiction, Weymann's approach seeks to leave the traditional patterns of reading the city in literature as either overarching symbol that drives the narrative or backdrop to a character's movements within fictional space. Her interdisciplinary approach is based on theories of space, combining the areas of geography and sociology with literary studies. Whereas other literary studies, drawing on spatial theories themselves, do not seem to leave the constraints of the city-as-text equation, Weymann wants to accomplish just that by suggesting a way into the realm of urban fictions that privileges the production of urban space over a mere reading of it: by looking at the city in recent American literature as a spatial performance, Weymann's approach fathoms the permeability of the urban text in that it sees the movements of fictional characters as a creative orchestration of space. She understands the term 'performance' in this context as an activation of a city's many texts: its districts, sidewalks, buildings, memorials, people, both strangers and friends; facets which fictional characters manage to creatively connect and weave together through a variety of spatial practices. As a result, the city in literature not only encompasses a subjective experience, but also a realization of space that sparks an immensely creative power.

After these two thought-provoking panels, Dr. David Goldfield held the second workshop on "Race, History, and Memory, 1840-2010." Dr. Goldfield is Robert Lee Bailey Professor of History at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, and editor of the *Journal of Urban History*. In his workshop, Goldfield discussed that the way white Americans view African Americans today is a produce of both history and memory. Three historical themes are apparent in the formation of contemporary racial perspectives. Beginning in the 1840s, vast numbers of immigrants came to America to pursue their dreams. The immigration stream led to the American self-perception as "a nation of immigrants." African Americans were not part of this narrative. The second theme is the portrayal of African Americans as victims. While writers have often depicted the stories of immigrants in heroic terms, the stories about African Americans have often focused on their victimization. The third theme is black agency. Until the 1960s, depictions of black agency were essentially invisible in history books. Thereafter, new perspectives on the role of blacks in stealing their freedom during the Civil War, in forging a community in the age of Jim Crow, of being patriotic Americans during the world wars, and of initiating the civil rights movement have altered the picture of passive African Americans. Goldfield suggests that the

dichotomy between the stories of immigrants and African Americans, the portrayal of blacks as victims, and the revelations of black agency through history came together in the candidacy and election of Barack Obama. The Obama campaign, Goldfield explains, played on all three themes to broaden the candidate's appeal in the white community.

The sessions on **Wednesday, March 23**, chaired by Dr. Wilfried Mausbach, Executive Director of the HCA and "Mr. Spring Academy, commenced with a panel on "Atlantic Crossings in the 19th Century." Yohanna Alimi (American Studies, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris III) introduced her research on "The reception in Jacksonian America of the revolutions of 1830 and 1848 in France." Although they took place an ocean apart, the American and French Revolutions have often been referred to as "Sister Revolutions" due to their chronological and ideological proximity. However, when two new revolutions successively broke out in France in 1830 and in 1848, Americans of the early 19th century were led to reconsider the legacy of their own revolution. They had to re-examine the promises of 1776 and make a critical assessment of the political and social order more than fifty years later. Alimi will show how crucial issues such as participation, inclusion or exclusion were dealt with on each side of the Atlantic as a consequence of those two revolutions. Indeed, the response of Americans to these revolutionary movements provided an opportunity to interpret those foreign events in a domestic context. Alimi intends to examine the way in which the French situation reverberated in America and how the very notion of "revolution," revived by the events in France, participated in the national definition of the United States. She chose to look at Jacksonian America in a transnational perspective in order to decenter the classical approach to this period, which is usually studied from the inside and to examine the Atlantic circulation of ideas between France and the United States.

The next panel, entitled "Transatlantic Cultural Diplomacy," opened with Alessandra Bitumi's presentation (History of European Integration, University of Pavia) on "The European Union Visitors Program: Public Diplomacy in the Transatlantic Crisis of the '70s - In Search of a European Identity." Bitumi's research concentrates on one of the oldest and most explicit examples of the EU's attempts at public diplomacy: the European Union Visitors Program (EUVP). Originated as an initiative of the European Parliament, it has been jointly administered by both the Parliament and the Commission since 1974. The research develops in three stages, with transatlantic crisis as the starting point. The traditional analysis of economic factors, as well as the examination of strategic and political issues will enable an understanding of the nature of the crisis, thus the meaning of the political and intellectual debate within the US and Europe over the supposed end of Atlanticism. The second level focuses on the project through the description of its background and functioning until the mid-80s. Finally, the debate over the American public diplomacy will help to identify the influence it has played in shaping some aspects of the European political culture.

Subsequently, Jacob Eder (History, University of Pennsylvania) talked about "Sanitizing the Nazi Past? West German Cultural Diplomacy versus the 'Americanization of the Holocaust.'" Eder's dissertation project is designed as an analysis of West German diplomatic initiatives in the United States from ca. 1977 to 1990, which aimed at reducing tensions between Germany and the United States on a political, societal, and cultural level. He assumes that the "Americanization of the

Holocaust”—the Holocaust’s growing impact on many aspects of American life, its incorporation into American popular culture, the construction of numerous museums and monuments, and its presence in the mass media—supplied the primary catalyst of such initiatives. From a German perspective, this development posed a serious threat to Germany’s reputation abroad and to German-American relations in particular. Should the Holocaust become their predominant mental association with Germany, Americans could call their close alliance with the Federal Republic into question—on which the latter depended politically, economically, and, above all, militarily. However, Eder does not limit his study to this point of conflict, but takes other sources of tension into consideration, such as the passing-away of the generation that had rebuilt German-American relations after 1945, or the disagreement about rearmament strategies which caused anti-German sentiment in the United States.

Since Wednesday afternoons are traditionally reserved for a group excursion, the participants went on a small sightseeing tour called “Heidelberg: In the footsteps of Mark Twain.” The tour, set up in memory of Twain’s sojourn to Heidelberg, highlighted popular sights of the old town. The evening ended with a dinner at the “Palmbräugasse” where all participants had the opportunity to taste traditional German food.

Thursday, March 25, began with the seventh panel chaired by Dr. Fischer-Hornung on “Mediating Native American Cultures,” starting with the presentation of Marja-Liisa Helenius (English Literature, University of Helsinki). In her dissertation project entitled “Mediating Cultures through Storytelling in the Novels by Leslie Marmon Silko,” she examines Silko’s novels and the theme of creating hybrid discourse through the theoretical tool of mediation. Helenius analyzes Silko’s three novels, *Ceremony*, *Almanac of the Dead*, and *Gardens in the Dunes* and the continuum they present. In all of these novels, Silko mixes history and myth, Western and Native American stories and culture, and thus seems determined to abolish the borders not only between time and place but between all forms of storytelling. She adopts Western literary forms to convey conventional oral storytelling tradition to contemporary audiences, and vice versa. All of the novels display a variety of mythologies and beliefs, and Silko draws on abundant amounts of cultural (anthropological as well as literary) material from numerous cultures, both Western and indigenous, showing that the American continent has always been a mixing ground for not only cultures but stories. Helenius intends to scrutinize the hybrid dialogue and mediational approach in Silko’s novels, focusing on how she makes use of the various cultural materials. She uses theory on mediation and hybridity by critics such as James Ruppert, Louis Owens, Blanca Schorcht, Paula Gunn Allen, as well as critic Robert M. Nelson’s concept of homology to indicate the parallels found in the texts between Native American and Western cultural motifs.

The second presenter, Marta Lysik (English and American Studies, Humboldt-Universität Berlin), introduced her dissertation on “Religion, Gender and the Narrative in the Works of Louise Erdrich,” in which she plans to probe the nexus of the novel, the narrative, and religion and gender. Taking her cue from Bakhtinian concepts of dialogism and of the novel, Lysik looks for parallels between the novel and protagonists in the process of transforming and becoming, highlighting the process, not the product. She wants to investigate how and to what effect the narrative

techniques in Louise Erdrich's novels are interwoven with and reflected by the logic of the thematic scope of the works, and how the malleability of the narrative structure is mirrored by the multiple metamorphoses of the protagonists. She maintains that Erdrich's work engages in multiple dialogues: it is inter-generic and inter-lingual, inter-textual and intra-textual, inter-faith and intergender. To emphasize the inter-textuality of Erdrich's novels, a comparison to Olga Tokarczuk's work could be forged. Lysik aims at theorizing and exploring the productive tension sparked by this comparison between two writers analyzed almost exclusively in the Native American and Polish literary contexts respectively.

The eighth panel entitled "Race and Performance," also chaired by Dr. Dorothea Fischer-Hornung, started with the presentation of Hannah Durkin (American Studies, University of Nottingham) who introduced her dissertation project called "Constructions of the Black Female Dancing Body in the Films and Writings of Josephine Baker and Katherine Dunham." She re-examines the film careers of African American dancers Josephine Baker (1906-1975) and Katherine Dunham (1909-2006) as dynamic sites of identity construction, utilizing a comparative perspective to illuminate the conflicting ways in which individual performances complicate notions of "race" and "gender." Durkin's research scrutinizes the performative images generated within these artists' films and writings, revealing them to have been key players in twentieth-century cultural history. In this respect, her research deals with the hidden – or what Brenda Dixon Gottschild (1996) refers to as the "invisibilized" – African diasporic presences in American and transatlantic cultures by investigating why Baker and Dunham have been left out of traditional mainstream dance histories. Central to Durkin's thesis is an examination of the ways in which fixed representations of racial identities help to both obscure and categorize artistic expression into fictional boundaries of "high" and "low" cultures. Her interdisciplinary study also differs from previous work in the sense that it adopts a comparative examination of performers and cultural forms to consider the manifold ways in which dancing bodies highlight the cultural connections between film, dance and writing. Durkin critically analyzes the connections between Baker and Dunham's films and writings to reveal the translations, mediations and connections between textual and embodied performance, and to highlight the complex, and often ambivalent ways in which identity is staged and enacted. Her project interrogates questions of authorship and authenticity while providing vital insights into intercultural and transnational formations that reveal black female bodily performance to be a cultural battleground in which struggles for control over meanings have been both played out and contested.

As the last presenter in this session, Katharina Gerund (American Studies, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf) talked about her project on "Transatlantic Cultural Exchange: African American Women's Art and Activism in Germany," which deals with the reception of African American women's art and activism in post-war (West) Germany. It relies on a notion of active – rather than passive – reception processes that foreground the mutual interactions of cultural exchange. Therefore, while the main focus of the project is the reception of specific African American cultural products and representatives in Germany, the reciprocity of these encounters will be included in the argument as well as a broader historical dimension. Focusing on Josephine Baker and other female African American show stars, singers, dancers etc. who toured Europe and Germany during the first half of the 20th century and

paying attention to the particular setting provided by the post-war American occupation for the engagement of Germans with (African) American culture, Gerund provides a broad context for the central case studies of her project. In an approach drawing particularly though not exclusively on new historicism, discourse analysis, the history of ideas, and (cultural) mobility studies, she analyzes the German reception and, consequently, the German constructions, appropriations and negotiations of the art and activism of four African American women: Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison.

After the two panels, Dr. Rashida Braggs, Ghaemian Junior Scholar-in-Residence, introduced by Dr. Fischer-Hornung, led the third workshop on “Seeing Through Performance: A Useful Lens for American Studies?” This workshop introduced a historical account of the Performance Studies discipline, detailed some seminal shifts and works, and posited the effectiveness of Performance Studies strategies in American Studies research. The workshop was divided into 3 sections, starting with background on the field, followed by a relevant case study from Braggs’ research, and ending with a student group exercise that considered connections between Performance Studies and American Studies. After the lecture, students met in small groups to explore how Performance Studies approach and methodology could elucidate their own topics.

In the evening, the participants took a trip to Mannheim to visit the John Deere Factory, where participants were greeted by Dr. Oliver Neumann, Public Relations Manager of John Deere Europe and Africa. John Deere has not only been a long-time supporter of the HCA, but has been particularly supportive of the Spring Academy, to which it has generously contributed since 2005. During the guided tour of the factory, everybody had the opportunity to observe how John Deere tractors are produced. The visit concluded at the visitor center, where a small reception awaited the participants.

The last day of the Spring Academy, **Friday, March 26**, started with the ninth panel called “The USA and the World” and was chaired by Dr. Fischer-Hornung. David Bassano (American History, University at Albany) presented his dissertation project entitled “The Central America Peace Movement in the United States: A Comparative Analysis of Operations.” The purpose of his dissertation is to examine the peace and human rights movement in the United States in the 1980s which was dedicated to changing the foreign policy of the United States towards Central America – specifically, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Bassano’s main objectives are: to address deficiencies in the existing literature, mainly in the area of comparative studies of NGOs; to examine a theory of international NGO action apropos of the movement, the “boomerang theory” set forth by Keck and Sikkink; and to introduce the contributions of Amnesty International USA and Human Rights Watch to the discourse. The contributions of Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are critical to the story of the Peace Movement in both Central and North America. These two human rights NGOs were well established by the time the Central America movement began. Their contributions have barely been mentioned, however, because their archives were only made available to the public in October 2007. Bassano also examines the operations and contributions of four other NGOs involved in the movement: the National Lawyers Guild (a professional group), Ventana (an arts association), the Communist Party of the USA, and the Albert Einstein Institution

(a world peace group). While he analyzes various aspects of their organization, ideologies, memberships, and operations, he is particularly interested in their credibility with the American public and the U.S. Congress.

The tenth panel on “State and Religion”, chaired by Dr. Mausbach, commenced with the presentation of Amandine Barb (CERI, Sciences Po Paris) who introduced her dissertation project entitled “Church/State Relations in the United States since the 1980s,” in which she examines how the relations between the State and religion have evolved in the United States over the past three decades. The main goal of Barb’s research is to better understand the consequences that the increasing religious diversity of the American society and the rising importance of religious rhetoric in the public sphere have had on the supposedly “traditional” “separationist” model of Church/State relations upheld by the Supreme Court from the 1940’s. The objective is to find out to what extent the “traditional” conception of the separation between religion and the state has been questioned, challenged and redefined in the United States since the 1980’s. Her current research focuses on the growing interest in the concept of “spirituality” in the United States and on how public institutions are gradually applying this concept as a new means to deal with religious issues that is acceptable and legitimate in a secular state. Barb’s research is based on the assumption that the idea of “spirituality” is indeed being increasingly taken into consideration in many areas traditionally considered as “secularized” in the United States, such as public health care settings, social work practice, and public universities.

The last presenter at the Spring Academy 2010 was Paulina Napierala (American Studies, Jagiellonian University Krakow). In her dissertation on “G.W. Bush’s Policy Towards Faith-Based Initiatives in 2001-2008,” she analyzes the 43rd President’s faith-based initiatives policy, which can be defined as “efforts by the federal government to broaden funding and support for the charitable efforts of religious organizations”. This policy was designed to increase participation of religious charities in American welfare programs, let them retain their religious character while providing services and even accept religious elements in their programs. The ideological base for this policy was “compassionate conservatism” promoted by Marvin Olasky, which was presented as a new way of thinking about the poor. According to Olasky, what the poor need is to hear the message of personal responsibility and self-reliance. He underlined that “man is sinful and likely to want something for nothing” and that “man’s sinful nature leads to indolence” and therefore the message of personal responsibility can be brought to people only by religious charities. Therefore, when G. W. Bush was elected President, one of his first actions was to issue two executive orders on January 29, 2001, creating the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives and additional Centers for FBCI within five federal agencies. President Bush’s decisions sought to reduce barriers in the federal grant-making process and to boost participation among religious organizations, especially smaller faith-based groups, in providing social services.

After the break, Prof. Jan Stievermann held his workshop on “Supernatural Experiences and the Search for Religious Identity in Contemporary Ethnic Fiction.” Dr. Stievermann is Junior Professor for American Culture and Literature at the English Department at the University of Tübingen. During his workshop he first gave a lecture on his current book project “The Ethnic Fantastic.” It examines the growing

body of novels by contemporary minority writers from the U.S. in which characters of various ethnic origins are confronted with disturbing intrusions of the supernatural into their largely secularized and assimilated lives. Subsequently, the participants split up into two groups and looked at selected passages from two exemplary novels, Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983) and Louise Erdrich's *The Painted Drum* (2005), and discussed some of the theoretical texts that have influenced Stievermann's project.

The conference concluded with a panel discussion during which the participants and all contributors discussed the future of American Studies. Despite the diversity of projects and research fields presented during this conference week, all participants gained new and fruitful insights into the fundamental trans- and interdisciplinary nature of American Studies, while, at the same time, receiving helpful feedback for their specific dissertation projects.

This last panel discussion was, however, only marked the close of the official, academic segment of the week. Afterwards, participants and contributors were invited to enjoy a farewell dinner at the HCA, which gave everybody a last opportunity to talk about the presentations, give some advice or make useful remarks and, of course, exchange e-mail addresses and phone numbers -- an appropriate ending to an exceptional week.

As in previous years, the Spring Academy 2010 was successful in bringing together outstanding young international scholars and giving them the opportunity to meet and exchange thoughts and ideas. In addition to celebrating its seventh anniversary, the Spring Academy has thus achieved its goal of providing a transnational forum for young researchers from all over the world. This would be impossible, however, without the commitment of the contributors, the HCA staff, and, of course, the enthusiastic involvement of the participants themselves. We, therefore, would like to thank them all for supporting and assisting the conference.