

25th AISNA Biennial Conference

Gate(d)Ways. Enclosures, Breaches and Mobilities Across U.S. Boundaries and Beyond
SDS of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Ragusa, September 26-28, 2019

Panel Proposal

Crossing Borders, Challenging America: Political Space and Women's Authorship as an Act of Resistance

Coordinators for AISNA Graduate Forum

Serena Mocci (University of Bologna), serena.mocci2@unibo.it

Marta Gara (Catholic University, Milan), marta.gara@unicatt.it

The relationship between women and political space in the United States has been characterized by alternate processes of inclusion and exclusion that, when historically analyzed, reveal the ambiguity of women's condition: citizens but not fully included in citizenship. Indeed, while on the founding of the United States the Constitution formally recognized women as citizens, the law subjected them to the doctrine of coverture that effectively established their exclusion from the public sphere. Nevertheless, how many strategies of resistance have women used since then to gradually acquire political spaces of agency for social change? They made their voices heard in women's rights, abolitionist, suffragist and labor movements, muckraking journalism, second wave feminism, intersectional struggles - to mention just some of their main efforts throughout US history. At the root of this challenging attitude there was authorship, meant as an important means to reach and persuade a wide audience.

The panel especially aims at exploring the different forms of the complex relationship between female authorship and border crossing in the United States. On the one hand, female authorship allowed women to challenge social gender boundaries, to embrace spaces of autonomy of thought and action and finally enter the public debate as political subjects, agents or leaders. It happened in literature, journalism, academic research and teaching, political and social activism, as well as at grass-roots and top-down politics. On the other hand, female authorship has also been a way to cross the material borders of the State. Women migrants and travelers produced dissenting narratives of American domestic and foreign policy that contributed to make public opinion aware of the intrinsic contradictions of the American government and its international leadership, encouraging reforms and creating new fluid spaces of national and racial identities, both inside and outside the US borders.

The panel welcome papers that intend - by mainly using historical and interdisciplinary analysis - to raise questions on the ways in which female authorship, including different genres and pseudonyms, has served as a powerful rhetorical tool to challenge the status quo of American borders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Short bios of coordinators

Serena Mocci is a PhD student in Global Histories, Cultures and Politics at the University of Bologna, with a project on the political thought of the nineteenth-century American intellectuals Margaret Fuller and Lydia Maria Child. Her main research interests include the relationship between women reformers, Atlantic abolitionism and American political culture in the nineteenth century. Between 2015 and 2017 she worked as Research Affiliate at the Massachusetts Historical Society (Boston, USA) and at the Centre for Gender History of Glasgow University (Glasgow, UK). She has recently finished a research period as a Visiting Scholar at the Department of History of Columbia University (New York City, USA).

Marta Gara is a PhD student in Politics and Institutions at Catholic University of Milan. Her research project aims at analyzing the institutional impact (at local, state and federal level) of left-wing radical constituencies generated by the “Long 1960s” in United States. Her main research interests concern social movements studies, with an interdisciplinary approach - history, sociology and political theory. She currently is William P. Heidrich Research Fellow at Joseph A. Labadie Collection at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She has edited and introduced a guide to the Fondazione Feltrinelli’s 1960s-1970s underground press collection (2018). After her MA in History and Society (2014), she has obtained an MA in Public History (2016). She has been actively engaged since 2014 with several early-career networks.

Workshop Proposal

The Political and Socio-Cultural Relevance of Frontiers

Coordinators for the AISNA Graduate Forum

Roberta Meloni (Independent Scholar) roberta.meloni90@gmail.com

Chiara Migliori (Freie Universität Berlin) chiaramigliori@yahoo.com

This panel invites contributors to reflect on the political relevance of frontiers in the United States and Europe; its aim is to foster a discussion on the contrasting forces that seem to increasingly dominate our world: expansion and isolation, mobility and constraint.

In particular, we encourage proposals dealing with the evolution of the frontier as pillar of the American identity, e.g. Indian Removal Act (1830)/The Winning of the West (1880); Manifest Destiny (1845)/The Turner Thesis (1893); The California Gold Rush (1848)/Mexican Cession (1848). How is the concept of frontier related to that of the wall, particularly when the latter is deployed as tool for raising political consensus, e.g. in the recent political discourse on the U.S.-Mexico border wall?

Moreover, we are interested in essays that investigate possible links between the American and the European refugee crisis: Are there any social, ethical or cultural similarities? The objective is to highlight challenges and possible scenarios that the loosening and/or fortifying up of borders trigger on either the American and European stages. We invite proposals belonging to different disciplines, from history to literary studies, from cultural studies to sociology and politics.

Contributions are welcome on topics including, but not restricted to:

- The representation of walls in American and non-American art (e.g. frontier paintings, Ai Weiwei’s Gilded Cage);
- The challenge of protectionism in Trump’s American foreign policy;
- Rhetoric of isolationism in American and European politics: the refugee crisis in Italy;
- Geographical mobility, redistribution, and political polarization;
- Human flows: the contemporary narrative between political interests and human rights violation in novels/movies/plays;
- Freedom from want and freedom from fear: how America is shaping its democratic future;
- Walls and public discontent: protests and marches as spaces of empowerment;
- Social Media and the new digital frontiers 4.0: how artificial intelligence is shaping the world’s boundaries.

Three slots for papers are available.

Short bios of coordinators

Roberta Meloni is an independent scholar specialized in International Studies at the University of Roma Tre. Her research focuses primarily on Sino-American relations from 1968 to the present day. In July 2018, she conducted a research at the archives of the Nixon Presidential Library and the Reagan Presidential Library, in California, in order to analyze the legacy of Nixon's opening to China on the Obama and Trump's Administrations. Previously, she received a Bachelor's degree in Linguistic and Intercultural Mediation at La Sapienza University of Rome, and a Master's degree in European Studies at the Luiss School of Government. Currently, she writes of United States history and Sino-American relations for "E-go Times", an online magazine, as an external contributor.

Chiara Migliori is a third-year PhD candidate at the Graduate School of North American Studies at the Freie Universität in Berlin. Her research focuses on the triangular relationship “Donald Trump – his supportive Religious Right organizations – his white, conservative Christian voter.” Her work investigates the ways Trump is publicly depicted as savior of Christian values by the Religious Right and what role the president has in the imaginary of his religious, “ordinary” voters. In 2017 and 2018, she had the chance to make several research trips to the U.S. to conduct individual interviews and focus groups. Chiara holds a BA and MA in Foreign Languages and Literatures and European and Panamerican Languages and Literatures from the University of Bergamo.