



HEIDELBERG
CENTER
FOR AMERICAN
STUDIES



UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386

HEIDELBERG CENTER FOR AMERICAN STUDIES

Bulletin



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1.

HCA



Founded in 2004, the Heidelberg Center for American Studies is a research and teaching institution at Heidelberg University. The HCA engages with the United States from eight disciplinary perspectives. The institute offers programs in American Studies at the BA, MA, and PhD levels. It produces cutting-edge research with a unique expertise in area studies. The HCA also reaches out to the public through numerous events, facilitating networks across the Atlantic and beyond.



● DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

Dear Reader,

The new HCA Bulletin reaches you in turbulent times. We are witnessing dramatic and unprecedented changes in American politics and society, as well as a profound transformation of the United States' global role – with far-reaching implications for Europe.

We are convinced that our work serves the public interest more than ever in these challenging times. For more than two decades, the Heidelberg Center for American Studies has dedicated itself to analyzing and teaching about the United States from multiple disciplinary perspectives. Our institute will continue to examine crucial developments, exploring their political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions from both contemporary and historical viewpoints. And we will certainly closely follow the authoritarian trend within American democracy and the US government's distancing from Europe.

This Bulletin presents the HCA's activities in teaching, research, and knowledge transfer. Of course, it can only offer a select glimpse into the center's activities. To gain a more comprehensive picture, we invite you to visit our website – or, even better, attend one of our events at the HCA.

Without its students, faculty, and staff, the HCA would not have become what it is today: one of Europe's foremost institutes for American Studies. We want to express our gratitude to our associates, sponsors, and our founding director, to whom we pay a special tribute on the last page of this Bulletin.

Among our sponsors, we are deeply indebted to Honorary Senators Curt and Heidemarie Engelhorn. The late Curt Engelhorn's vision and generosity, combined with Heidemarie Engelhorn's ongoing commitment, laid the foundation for the institute's remarkable development and continue to inspire our work today. Their support enables the HCA to reside in its beautiful home in Heidelberg's Old Town – the Curt and Heidemarie Engelhorn Palais.


 Prof. Dr. Welf Werner
 Director, HCA

BENEFACTORS

While the HCA is a central academic institution at Heidelberg University, both institutionally and financially, it originated as a public-private partnership. The HCA would not have come into existence without the esprit of its founding director, Professor Detlef Junker, the support of dedicated benefactors, and the generosity of many individuals, corporations, and institutions. The university's Honorary Senators Curt Engelhorn (†) and Heidemarie Engelhorn sowed the seeds which enabled the HCA to make its mark in the field of American Studies. In 2008, they committed to support the institute with 400,000 Euros annually for ten years. In addition, in 2006, the Engelhorn family purchased a baroque townhouse adjacent to Heidelberg's University Square and dedicated it to the HCA. To this day, Heidemarie Engelhorn continues the family's work as a major benefactor of American Studies at Heidelberg. We are sincerely grateful for her exceptional generosity.



Curt & Heidemarie Engelhorn

The Schurman Foundation

BASF

Elfie & Ray Carrell

John Deere Company

Deutsche Bank AG

Dr. med. Andreas Dienerowitz

Friends of the Heidelberg Center for American Studies, New York

Herbert A. Jung

Rolf Kentner (†)

Manfred Lautenschläger Foundation

MLP

Dr. Hans-Peter Wild & the Leonie Wild Foundation

CO — OPERATION

JOHN DEERE MANNHEIM

Since 2005, the Spring Academy has brought PhD candidates in American history, culture, and politics to the HCA for a one-week interdisciplinary conference. The Spring Academy has been generously supported by John Deere, an iconic American company and the leading manufacturer of agricultural machinery worldwide.

Corporate Cooperation

- American Chamber of Commerce in Germany
- Baier Druck, Heidelberg
- SAP, Walldorf

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY BERLIN

In 2007, the HCA launched its first lecture series, the Baden-Württemberg Seminar, bringing fellows of the American Academy in Berlin to the state of Baden-Württemberg. While the series has since been expanded to include other distinguished speakers, the American Academy remains a highly valued partner for public events at the HCA.

Heidelberg University Cooperation

- Heidelberg Center for Ibero-American Studies (HCIAS)
- Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (CATS)
- Käte Hamburger Centre for Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Studies (CAPAS)
- Heidelberg University Association, New York
- Heidelberg Alumni US (HAUS)
- Heidelberg Alumni International (HAI)

GERMAN HISTORICAL INSTITUTE WASHINGTON D.C.

In 2024, the HCA and the GHI launched the online series “The Bigger Picture,” which explores the historical dimensions of current events in the US against the backdrop of American history. Panels in this series bring together experts and audiences from both sides of the Atlantic to shed light on recent political and cultural developments.

German-American Cooperation

- German-American Fulbright Commission
- United States Consulate General Frankfurt/M.
- Max Kade Foundation
- German American Institute Heidelberg (dai)
- Mark Twain Center for Transatlantic Relations, Heidelberg
- German Association for American Studies (DGfA)

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME INDIANA

The cooperation between the HCA and the University of Notre Dame is especially productive. It encompasses, among other things, a faculty exchange, as well as an international PhD workshop in history, jointly organized with the Universities of Oxford and Edinburgh – the Global Dome.

Academic Cooperation

- Yale Divinity School
- Harvard University
- Loyola University Chicago
- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

● VISITING SCHOLARS



Michelle Nickerson
Loyola University Chicago
Fulbright Professor 2021

Coming to Heidelberg in the midst of the Covid pandemic was a challenge! My classes were mostly online, but I enjoyed many “coffee-walks” with my students, learning about Heidelberg geography and their favorite cafes. When I was not teaching, I worked on my book *Spiritual Criminals: How the Camden 28 Put the Vietnam War on Trial*. I had such a good experience at the HCA that I have returned twice, to deliver my first public lecture on *Spiritual Criminals* and to appear with Manfred Berg on a panel co-sponsored by the German Historical Institute called “Whatever Happened to American Conservatism.”



Lerone A. Martin
Stanford University
James W.C. Pennington
Fellow 2025

Receiving the 2025 Pennington Award was an honor and a recognition of my work that I will always treasure. It was an unforgettable experience to spend the summer in Heidelberg and become part of the university community. Co-teaching a class on “Religion and Politics in Modern American History” with Jan Stievernann to engaged and motivated students was delightful. Studying and teaching about the US while away from its shores provided me with new insights into the American experience. The HCA’s commitment to academic excellence is impressive, and I feel fortunate to have been part of it.



Ted Beatty
University of Notre Dame
Max Kade Visiting
Professor 2025

The HCA was a terrific host for my stay as a Max Kade Visiting Professor. In my small seminar, I could test out several new themes for my standard courses with an internationally diverse group of students. I was also able to make significant progress on my writing projects and interact with faculty and graduate students across several disciplines. I am extremely grateful to the HCA community for such a warm and stimulating academic environment.

Seth Johnston, Georgetown University (2025 et al.) | Ted Beatty, University of Notre Dame (2025) | Lerone A. Martin, Stanford University (2025) | Christopher Cameron, University of North Carolina at Charlotte (2024) | Melvin L. Rogers, Brown University (2023) | David Komline, Western Theological Seminary (2022) | Manisha Sinha, University of Connecticut (2022) | Susan Herbst, University of Connecticut (2022) | Carol Anderson, Emory University (2022) | Michelle Nickerson, Loyola University Chicago (2021) | Paul Harvey, University of Colorado (2019) | Caitlin Smith, University of Notre Dame (2018) | Eddie S. Glaude Jr., Princeton University (2018) | Kenyon Gradert, Samford University (2017) | James Strasburg, University of Notre Dame (2017) | Harry Stout, Yale Divinity School (2017) | Ridvan Askin, University of Basel (2016) | David Wilson, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (2016) | Curtis Urban, University of Notre Dame (2016) | Adam Seipp, Texas A&M (2016) | John Witte Jr., Emory University (2016) | James Cook, United States Air Force Academy (2015) | Robert Lemon, University of Texas at Austin (2015) | William L. Andrews, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2015) | Giovanni Bernadini, Italian-German Historical Institute, Trient (2015) | Matthew Sutton, Washington State University (2014) | Laurie Maffly-Kipp, Washington University, St. Louis (2014) | John Turner, George Mason University (2013) | Mark Wilson, University of North Carolina at Charlotte (2013) | Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Harvard University (2013) | Saje Mathieu, University of Minnesota (2012) | Albert Raboteau, Princeton University (2012) | Charles Postel, San Francisco State University (2011) | Kirsten Fischer, University of Minnesota (2011) | Kenneth Minkema, Yale University (2011) | Rachel Wheeler, Indiana University Purdue (2011) | Patrick Roberts, Virginia Tech University (2010) | William Grange, University of Nebraska Lincoln (2010) | Jeremy Suri, University of Texas (2010) | Rashida Braggs, Williams College (2009) | Robert Cherny, San Francisco State University (2009) | Elisabeth Borgwardt, Washington University, St. Louis (2008) | Jeannette E. Jones, University of Nebraska Lincoln (2007) | César N. Caviedes, University of Florida (2005) | Richard Lehne, Rutgers University (2005) | William Funk, Lewis & Clark Law School, Portland (2004).

NEW FACES



With a background in translation, I enjoy working at the intersection of languages and cultures in the institute's main office. The HCA's interdisciplinary and international environment keeps things dynamic in the interplay of administrative matters and the ever-changing rhythm of the main office. Supporting the structure behind it all is what makes this role rewarding and enjoyable – and never dull as I deal with international students and scholars, support our faculty and staff, and facilitate events.

As a political scientist specializing in US politics, my research focuses on the relationship between the President and Congress, transatlantic security policy, and the role of trust in international politics. As a leading center for American Studies in Europe, the HCA is the ideal place to explore these topics from an interdisciplinary perspective. Discussions with my students demonstrate the importance of addressing transatlantic challenges and exploring options for action.



As a native of Korea, I bring a particular perspective to American and global political developments in my research. I completed a substantial part of my academic training in political science in the German academic system and have always found it fascinating for its holistic approach. At the HCA, I contribute to building knowledge bridges between Asia, the US, and Europe.



FACULTY & STAFF

At the HCA, a dedicated team of researchers, administrators, and student assistants collaborates to promote academic excellence. In just two decades, their combined experience and expertise have helped establish the institute as one of the leading centers for American Studies in Europe.

Director

Welf Werner

Executive Director

Wilfried Mausbach

Professors

Manfred Berg

Ulrike Gerhard

Yaatsil Guevara González

Detlef Junker

Günter Leypoldt

Jan Stievermann

Senior Research Associates

Florian Böller

Philipp Löffler

Research Associates

Teddy Delwiche

Jonas Faust

Juhee Jeong

Everett Messamore

Anja Schüller

Ryan Tobler

Student Assistants

Eléna Brandão Mecker

Lena Brasen

Jonas Buchholz

Jakob Handwerk

Sina Lohmeier

Luisa Mayerle

Sami Mekonen

Joshua Wolf

Virginia Zentgraf

Staff

Theresa Klecker

Michaela Neidig

Michael Tröger

2.

STUDY PROGRAMS



ABOUT

At Heidelberg University, the HCA prepares students for careers in the public and private sectors as well as in academia. The institute's programs offer an interdisciplinary curriculum with a focus on the United States, attracting students from around the world. Classes are usually small and often take place in the congenial setting of the Curt and Heidemarie Engelhorn Palais, a baroque townhouse situated in the center of the Old Town. Students graduate with a Bachelor's or Master's degree in American Studies.



Entangled Geographies: Migration, Urban Space, and Infrastructures of Contemporary México

In February 2024, 15 students of Heidelberg University explored five cities in Central America in 14 days. Starting in the border region of El Paso-Ciudad Juárez, they continued to México City and the Yucatán Peninsula, experiencing different climates, urban forms, and city sizes. In their “search for traces,” they also identified common patterns of globalization, migration, and social inequalities.

The impact of global economic change was most evident at the border between México and the US, where migratory movements from Central America converge. Globalization has also led to the emergence of a vast industrial landscape, known as the Maquiladora industries, in Ciudad Juárez. In contrast, México City and Cancún are heavily marked by the tourist industry. All cities on the itinerary displayed considerable social inequalities, which are influenced by and shape the cityscape. Gentrification of former working-class neighborhoods, such as La Roma in México City, further contributes to this disequilibrium.

The excursion facilitated a deeper understanding of the issues students had discussed in class during the winter semester. Led by professors Hamid Abud and Ulrike Gerhard, the group profited from insightful input by local experts.



El Paso



México City



Cancún

Religion

Geography

Politics

History

Literature

BASIC MODULES

LAW

SPECIALIZATION
MODULEINTERDISCIPLINARY
MODULEEXTRA
CURRICULAR

INTERNSHIP

BA THESIS
MODULE

THE BACHELOR IN AMERICAN STUDIES

Students in the six-semester BA program engage with the politics, literature, culture, economy, history, and society of North America, as well as its ethnic diversity and religious influences. Opportunities to focus on the human geography and religious history of the US, as well as to acquire a legal certificate, are unique features of the HCA's study programs.



Sara Metzger, Germany

I began my degree program at the HCA during the COVID-19 pandemic, and everyone there did their best to support us and maintain a sense of normalcy. Classes provided an opportunity to connect with fellow students from upper classes and different disciplines. HCA events honed my networking skills. I still walk by its beautiful building with a smile on my face.

Maxine Wildenstein, Germany

I will forever cherish my time in the HCA's BA program. It deepened my understanding of US culture, literature, law, politics, and history and spawned some great friendships. This program allowed me to explore my long-standing interest in the United States from multiple angles and perspectives.

SPECIALIZATION
MODULE

INTERDISCIPLINARY
MODULE

SUBJECT FOCUS

EXTRA
CURRICULAR

RESEARCH
MODULE

MOBILITY
MODULE

MA THESIS
MODULE

THE MASTER IN AMERICAN STUDIES

The MA program in American Studies offers exemplary teaching for ambitious graduate students from around the world. It features six main disciplines: geography, history, literary and cultural studies, political science, economics, and religious history, each with a particular focus on the United States and its global reach. Students tailor their course of study individually with the option to focus on disciplines in the humanities, the social sciences, or a combination of both.



Matthew Niebes, USA

Since being accepted into the program, I have been bombarded by the question, “Why are you going to Germany to study America?” The question says it all. In America, we often take ourselves, our values, and our communities for granted, assuming that we can and do completely understand ourselves. On my journey of self-discovery, I tackle my biases in the hopes of becoming a better, more conscientious member of the American community.

Nan Zhang, China

Since 1386, Heidelberg has been one of the most important universities in Germany and the world. Its long history, brilliant professors, and students past and present make it a world-class institution. I feel honored and thankful to be part of it.

Emine Türkmen, Turkey

When I decided to study American Studies in Germany, Heidelberg seemed the best option. The Master’s program at the HCA encompasses a broad range of subjects and offers an excellent opportunity to explore the USA. Heidelberg’s rich history, academic prestige, and international learning environment inspired me to embark on my career there. Moreover, I encountered different cultures and found friends from all around the world. Heidelberg’s historic Old Town and natural beauty made me feel calm and serene.



● COMMENCEMENT

Each fall, the HCA honors its graduates with a commencement ceremony in the Great Hall of Heidelberg University. Dressed in traditional academic gowns, participants, along with their families and friends, gather to hear the address of a distinguished speaker and celebrate their achievements at a festive reception.



SPEAKERS

Since 2006, renowned commencement speakers have inspired our students and offered guidance for their next career steps:

2006 – Anne Applebaum, journalist

2007 – Gen. Klaus Naumann, Chairman of the North Atlantic Military Committee

2008 – Katja Gelinsky, journalist

2009 – Hope Harrison, George Washington University

2011 – His Excellency Philip Murphy, US ambassador to Germany

2012 – Christopher Bigsby, East Anglia University

2013 – David Frum, journalist

2014 – George Packer, journalist

2015 – James D. Bindenagel, Bonn University

2016 – Steven Hill, New America Foundation

2017 – Heidi Crebo Rediker, Council on Foreign Relations

2018 – Karen Donfried, President, German Marshall Fund of the United States

2019 – David Greenbaum, Rutgers University

2021 – Amb. Daniel Benjamin, President, The American Academy in Berlin

2022 – Steven Sokol, President, American Council on Germany

2023 – Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, Former Federal Minister of Defense

2024 – Ian Lesser, Vice President, German Marshall Fund of the United States

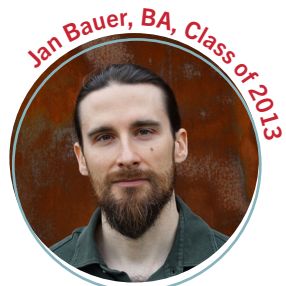
2025 – Detlef Junker, Heidelberg Center for American Studies

GRADUATES' PERSPECTIVES



Program Coordinator The American Academy in Berlin

After graduation and an internship at the Brussels office of the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, I began working at the American Academy in Berlin. I support fellows throughout their stay – from handling administrative matters and facilitating their integration into German everyday life to organizing lectures at the Academy and across Germany and Europe. One of the many perks of my job is that it allows me to return to Heidelberg and the HCA occasionally with our fellows. The interdisciplinary Master's in American Studies at the HCA equipped me with a solid foundation in American history and politics, as well as strong analytical skills – tools I now rely on daily in my interactions with the scholars at the Academy.



Director Communications Channel Management Axel Springer SE

What I appreciated most about studying at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies was the mix: a small, focused group of students, genuine exchange with dedicated faculty, and the freedom to shape my own path. Spending an academic year in Arizona added a new perspective – in more ways than one. Looking back, my Bachelor's was precisely the kind of preparation I needed for my career in communications at a transatlantic media company.



Marketing and Social Selling Specialist Cairo AG

During my studies at the HCA, I learned to navigate complex topics through an interdisciplinary and global lens. This sparked my interest in communications and understanding what connects people across cultures. During the program, I interned at SAP SE Global Communications, which allowed me to contribute creatively to articles and explore topics related to people and culture within a German-American team. I also had the opportunity to demonstrate and refine my writing skills. My academic experience at the HCA shaped not only how I think, but also how I work today at Cairo AG.

EMPLOYERS

The HCA trains its students for a wide range of professions. Graduates from the BA and MA programs have launched their careers in international organizations, media and public relations, cultural institutions, political consulting, urban and regional planning, adult education, academia, and not least with prominent companies from the Rhein Neckar region. Employers of our graduates include:

The American Academy in Berlin

Alexander von Humboldt Foundation

Alfred Wegener Institute

Atlantikbrücke e.V.

Axel Springer Communications

BCW Group

De Gruyter Publishers

Elbkind

Fotoware

Hello Fresh

Hochschule Fresenius

Iowa Economic Development Authority

Members of the European Parliament

Member of the German Parliament

SAP

Stepstone Group

Studio 71

Table Briefings

United Nations University – Institute for Environment and Human Security

3.

RESEARCH



ABOUT

As an interdisciplinary research center, the HCA facilitates a wide range of scholarly activities – from individual pursuits to large-scale collaborative projects.



Philipp Löffler, Literature
From Patronage to the Mass
Market: Institutionalizing
Literary Knowledge Cultures
in the 19th-Century US

This joint research project, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), examines the connection between sites of institutionalized knowledge and central developments within 19th-century American literature. Grounded in extensive archival work, it traces the evolution of the literary field from a narrow patronage system in the 1810s and 1820s to a broad and expanding commercial literary market around 1900. Rather than reaffirming traditional period distinctions, this perspective brought to light a variety of writing formats and of literary publishing, as well as private and public modes of circulating literary texts.

About

Philipp Löffler teaches American literary and cultural history (Revolution to Present). His fields of specialization include the history and sociology of reading, literary patronage, the professionalization of authorship, and the history of US higher education. He has (co)-edited several books, most recently *The Handbook of American Romanticism* (2021), *How to Read the Literary Market* (2021), and *Participation in American Culture and Society* (2024).

RECENT



Manfred Berg, History
Amerikas Demokratie:
Eine kurze Geschichte
von der Unabhängigkeit
bis Donald Trump

Americans boast the oldest democracy in the modern world. From colonial self-government to the present, this book takes a critical look at how American democracy has unfolded and how it has come under pressure today. It highlights the contradictions, myths, and global ramifications of a political experiment that vacillates between role model and cautionary tale. Written for a German audience, *Amerikas Demokratie* provides a historically grounded analysis of the current political crisis and ends with a first assessment of Donald Trump's second term in office.

About

Manfred Berg is the Curt Engelhorn Chair in American History at Heidelberg University and serves as the deputy director of the HCA. His research focuses on the history of the African American civil rights movement, race relations, popular violence, and US political history. He is the author and editor of twenty books, among them *The Ticket to Freedom: The NAACP and the Struggle for Black Political Integration* (2005) and *Das gespaltene Haus. Eine Geschichte der USA von 1950 bis heute* (2024).

PROJECTS



Yaatsil Guevara González
Historical Anthropology
Kinning-Practices among
Chinese Migrants en route
across the Americas

This collaborative project with Zhenwei Wang at the Heidelberg Center for Ibero American Studies (HCIAS) is funded by the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Research, and Art within the framework of the Margarete von Wrangell-Juniorprofessorinnen-Programm. This project primarily examines new forms of “doing family” through kinning and care practices along migration routes. Research involves the use of multi-sited and digital ethnography.

About

Yaatsil Guevara González is Junior Professor of Migration and the Americas at the HCIAS and the HCA. Previously, she served as the coordinator of the project “Misrecognition of Minorities in Europe” and the coordinator of the project “African Trajectories across Central America,” both funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG). She holds a PhD in Sociology from Bielefeld University.



Sebastian Harnisch
Political Science
The European Repository
of Cyber Incidents: The United
States as a Target of and
Responder to Malicious
Cyberattacks since 2000

Supported by the German and Danish Foreign Offices and Allianz SE, the European Repository of Cyber Incidents is an independent research consortium dedicated to providing evidence-based scientific analysis of cyber incidents for a better understanding of the current cyber threat environment. Its resources include user-specific, reliable data. Launched in November 2022, its key objectives are to promote data-driven discussions and policymaking within the field of cybersecurity, as well as raise awareness of cybersecurity threats.

About

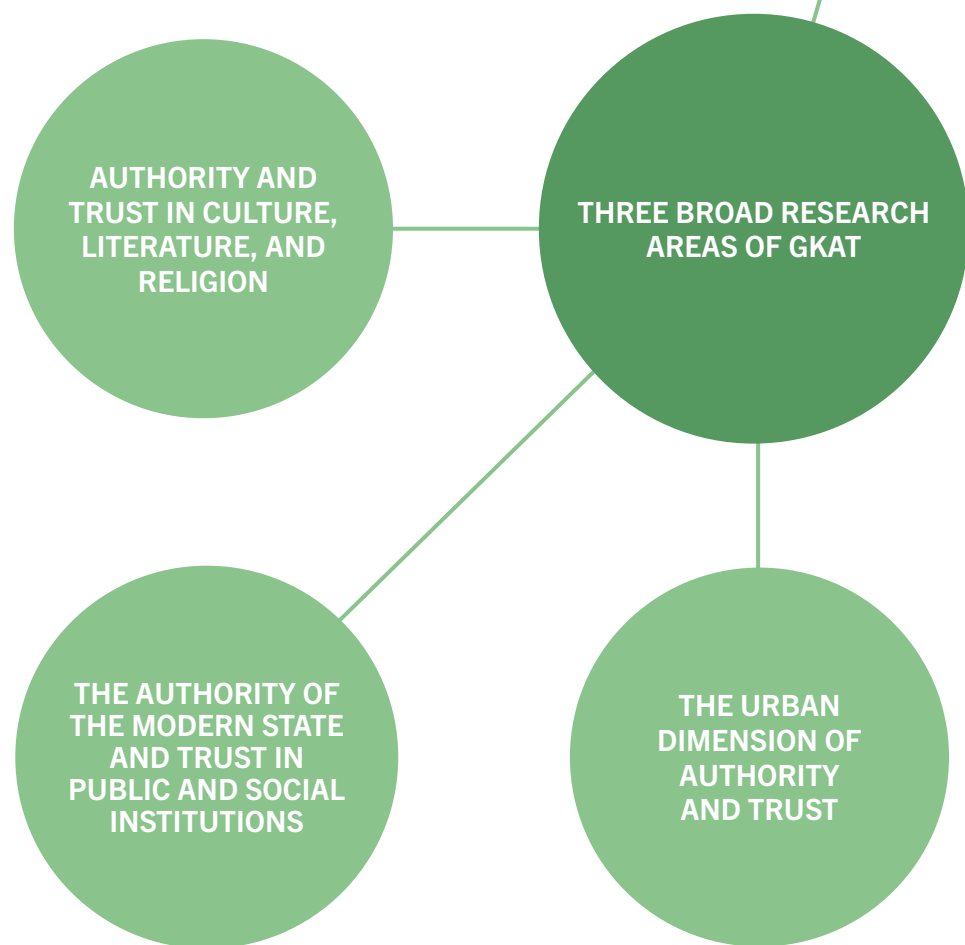
Sebastian Harnisch teaches International Relations and (US) Foreign and Security Policy analysis at the Institute of Political Science. His fields of expertise include comparative foreign and security policy, international relations theories, cybersecurity, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and climate change policy. He has (co)-edited a number of books, most recently *Asymmetries in Cyberconflicts* (2022).

GKAT

DFG GRADUIERTENKOLLEG

AUTHORITY AND TRUST

GKAT is a research training group at the HCA, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) with over eight million Euros from 2017 to 2026. Each of the three GKAT cohorts comprises ten PhD candidates and two postdoctoral fellows, who conduct research in American Studies. The focus of GKAT's research program is the emergence and transformation of authority and trust in American politics, geography, religion, literature, and culture from the nineteenth century to the present. Three broad research areas facilitate collaboration among the disciplines.



GKAT



IN THE DOLLAR WE (MUST) TRUST? A Socialist Perspective on the Emergence of International Finance During the Cold War

Markus Dietrich, Economics, Cohort of 2023

In his dissertation, Marcus Dietrich examines the integration of socialist banks into international financial markets, known as the Eurodollar markets, during the Cold War. He is interested in how these financial institutions maneuvered the intersection of capitalism and socialism. Situated at the intersection of Cold War history and international political economy, the dissertation contributes to the understanding of the relationship between Eurodollar markets and socialist institutions, as well as how the development of a Dollar-based financial globalization was viewed from the socialist East.



PRESTIGE, IDENTITY, AND LITERARY AUTHORSHIP Situating Colson Whitehead in the Literary Field

Valentina López Liendo, Literature, Cohort of 2020

Drawing on Colson Whitehead as a case study, this dissertation examines processes of authorization in contemporary literature. Beginning with his debut in 1999, and ending with his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Nickel Boys* (2019), it examines how Whitehead legitimizes himself as a writer, how he navigates his position as an African American author, and what forms of literary authority critics and academics ascribe to him.



NEW SACRED WRITING AND CHARISMA The Transformation of Religious Authority in Nineteenth-Century America

Claudia Jetter, Religious History, Cohort of 2017

This study examines the lives and works of Mormon founder Joseph Smith Jr., Methodist revivalist Phoebe Palmer, and Transcendentalist R. W. Emerson, analyzing how their textual productions contributed to a discourse community contending with a perceived crisis of religious authority. It identifies the shared motifs and rhetorical strategies that these modern prophets employed to establish new vehicles for religious legitimacy and explores the concept of religious authority, emphasizing the dynamic ascription processes between charismatic leaders and their respective followers.

PENNINGTON AWARD

In 2011, the Heidelberg Center for American Studies and the Faculty of Theology of Heidelberg University established the James W.C. Pennington Award. It pays tribute to the churchman and former slave, who in 1849 was the first African American to receive an honorary doctorate from Heidelberg University. The James W.C. Pennington Award is presented to scholars who have produced distinguished work on topics important to Pennington, including slavery, emancipation, peace, education, reform, civil rights, religion, and intercultural understanding. The award is generously supported by the Manfred Lautenschläger Foundation.

Manfred Lautenschläger Foundation

The Manfred Lautenschläger Foundation has supported the James W.C. Pennington Award since its inception. The founder and the two executive directors of the Foundation, Catharina Seegelken and Markus Lautenschläger, are deeply impressed by Pennington's life and achievements and fascinated by his connection to Heidelberg University. They consider Pennington's fight for freedom and human dignity well worth remembering and his writings and ideas highly relevant for our time. The values and ideals that informed Pennington's extraordinary life and work closely align with those of the Foundation and the projects it supports.

Recipients

2025 – Lerone A. Martin
 2024 – Christopher Cameron
 2023 – Melvin L. Rogers
 2022 – Manisha Sinha
 2021 – Carol Anderson
 2019 – Paul Harvey
 2018 – Eddie S. Glaude, Jr.
 2017 – Harry S. Stout
 2016 – John Witte, Jr.
 2015 – William L. Andrews
 2014 – Laurie Maffly-Kipp
 2013 – Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham
 2012 – Albert J. Raboteau



Jan Stievermann Religious History

Pennington Fellows come to Heidelberg to advance their research, collaborate with experts in their field, and teach a graduate seminar. Students have profited immensely from studying with these renowned scholars. In 2021, an international conference shed light on previously unknown facets of Pennington's life and work, as well as their continuing relevance for today's debates on racial and social justice. The award has also generated new publications:

- Jan Stievermann, ed. (2016). *The Pennington Lectures*.
- Eddie Glaude Jr., Caitlin B. Smith, and Jan Stievermann, eds. (2025). *The Fugitive Blacksmith and Other Essential Writings by James W.C. Pennington*.
- Eddie Glaude Jr., Caitlin B. Smith and Jan Stievermann, eds. (2025). *James W.C. Pennington: Essays Toward Rediscovering a Great African American Intellectual and Reformer*.

About

Jan Stievermann has been instrumental in establishing the Pennington Award and has been facilitating the fellows' visits. He holds the Chair for the History of Christianity in the US at the HCA and the Faculty of Theology at Heidelberg University.

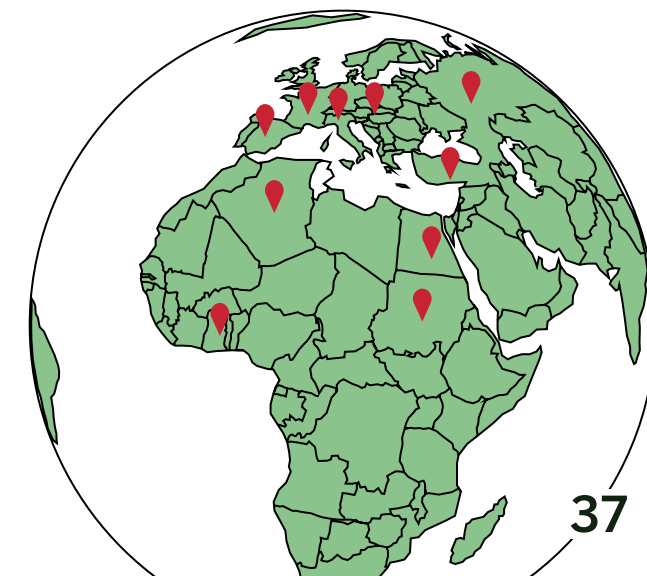


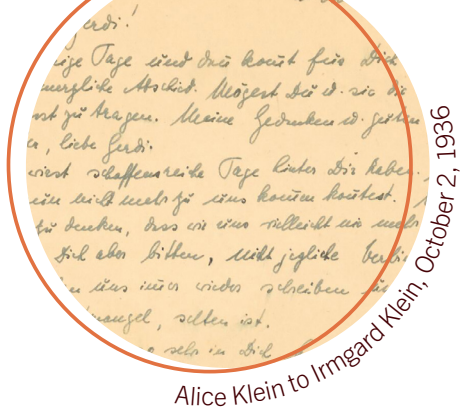
JOHN DEERE

SPRING ACADEMY

The Spring Academy on American History, Culture & Politics is an annual one-week interdisciplinary conference for PhD candidates at the HCA. It welcomes early-stage researchers in American Studies for an exciting cross-disciplinary and intercultural dialogue. Every year, twenty outstanding doctoral candidates chosen from more than 120 applicants come to Heidelberg to present and discuss their dissertation projects in American Studies. They become part of the Spring Academy Network, a unique international network of aspiring scholars.

Since 2005, the HCA's Spring Academy has been generously supported by John Deere, an iconic American company and the world's leading manufacturer of agricultural machinery.





Alice Klein to Irmgard Klein, October 2, 1936

THE US AND THE HOLOCAUST

Walldorf, Baden, 1936-1938

The three siblings Irmgard, Kurt, and Max Klein managed to emigrate to the United States and escaped the Nazi terror against German Jews. They tried desperately, but unsuccessfully, to organize the emigration of their parents. Alice and Ludwig Klein were deported to Gurs (France) in 1940 and murdered two years later in Auschwitz. Kurt Klein (1920-2002) returned to Europe in the final months of World War II as a "Ritchie Boy" with the US Army.

Since 2020, the HCA has been part of a local initiative that focuses on the fate of the Klein family.

In 2022, the institute contributed to the commemoration of Kurt Klein's 100th birthday with a panel discussion at the Engelhorn Palais. In 2023, it remembered the anniversary of the 1938 November pogroms alongside the Kurfürst Friedrich Gymnasium and the Stadttheater Heidelberg at the Alte Aula of Heidelberg University.

In 2024, in collaboration with Heidelberg University Library, the HCA completed a digital edition of Alice and Ludwig Klein's letters to their children in the USA (1936-1942), making them available to scholars and the public.



Kurt Klein to his parents, September 3, 1942



Alte Aula, November 9, 2023

Volary, Czechoslovakia, May 1945

When Kurt Klein returned to Europe as a "Ritchie Boy," his unit liberated a group of young Jewish women who had survived labor camps and death marches. Among them was Gerda Weissmann (1924-2022). The two married a year later in Paris, moved to the United States, and began teaching about the Holocaust and the importance of tolerance and civic engagement.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum documents Gerda Weissmann Klein's story in its permanent exhibition. On the occasion of the first International Holocaust Remembrance Day, she addressed the United Nations General Assembly.

In 2023, the HCA facilitated the publication of a new German edition of Gerda Weissmann Klein's remarkable memoir *All But My Life* with Metropol Verlag Berlin.



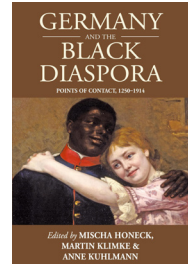
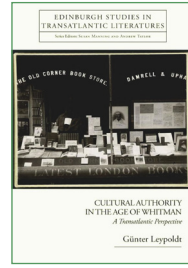
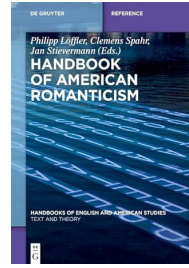
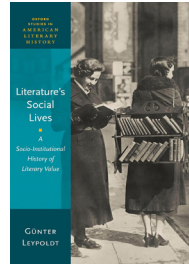
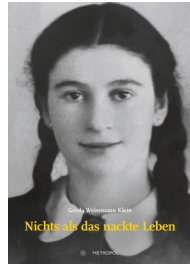
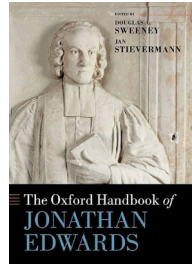
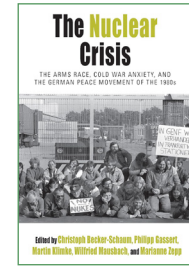
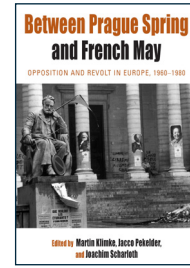
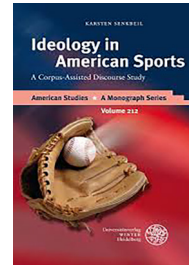
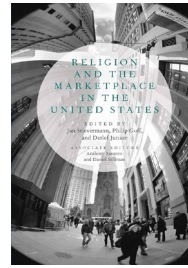
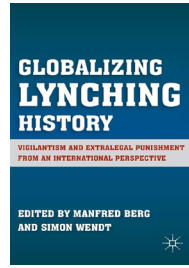
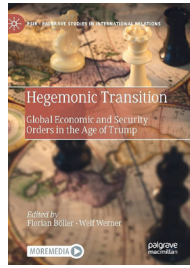
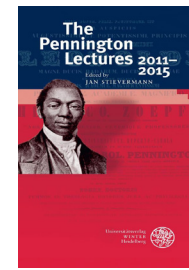
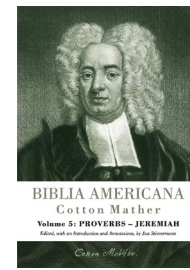
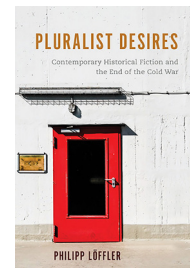
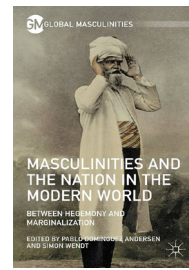
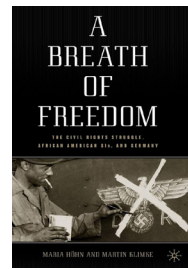
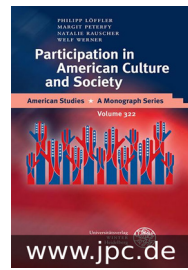
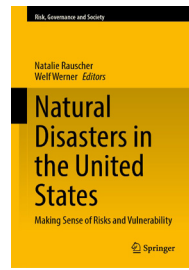
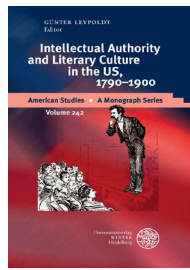
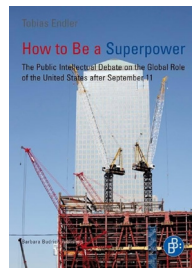
Gerda Weissmann, 1939



Gerda Weissmann Klein and Kurt Klein, 1946

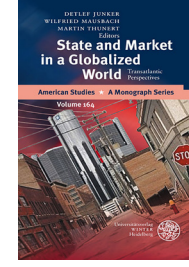
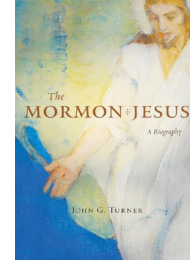
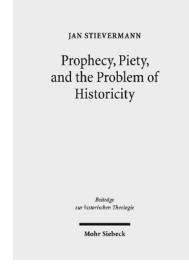
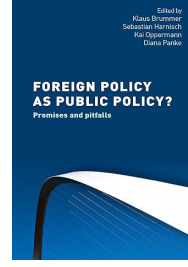
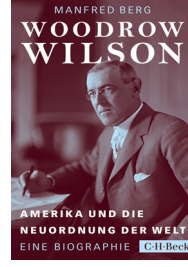
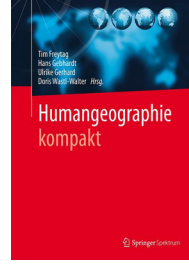
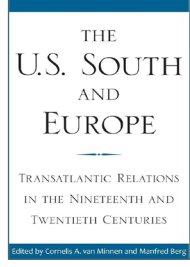
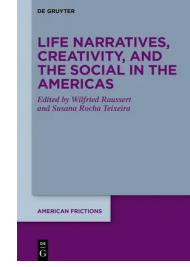
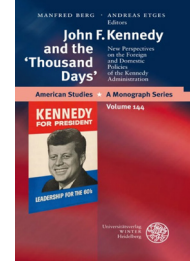
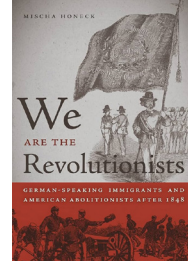
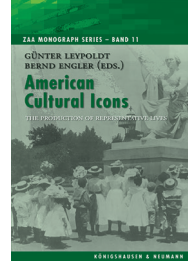
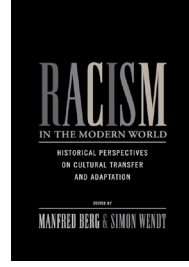
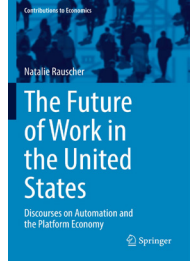
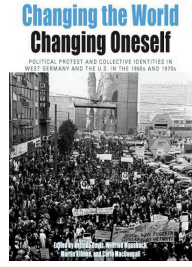
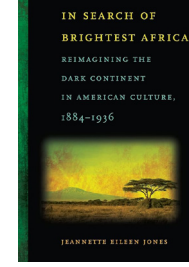
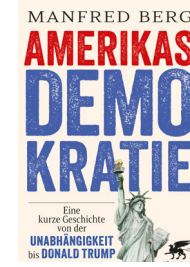
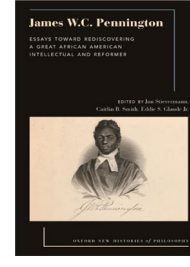
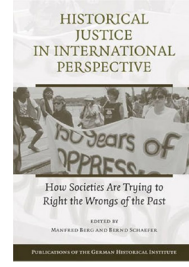
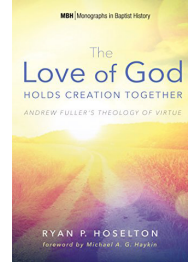
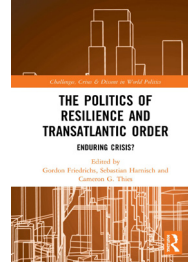
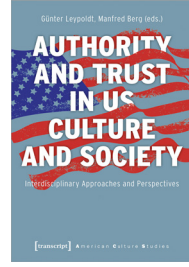
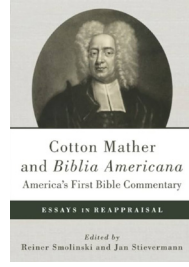
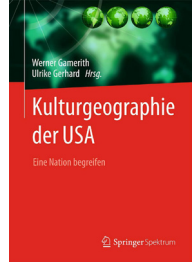


Gerda Weissmann Klein receives the Presidential Medal of Freedom, 2011



HCA PUBLICATIONS

Since its founding in 2004, the HCA has reported about 800 articles and 120 books to the bibliography of the German Association for American Studies.



4.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER



ABOUT

With its numerous lectures, panel discussions, and lecture series, the HCA facilitates a dialogue between academia and the general public. Among its lecture series are *Encounters*, which sheds light on the relationship between the USA and Asia, and *Migration and the Americas*, which focuses on interchange with Latin America. In addition, the HCA regularly welcomes public figures as speakers, including federal ministers and US ambassadors. The HCA podcast offers a platform for scholars and other experts on the US to discuss current issues and share their research with the public.

ENCOUNTERS

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON ASIA, AMERICA, AND EUROPE

This series of dialogues focuses on the relationship between the two superpowers of the twenty-first century – the United States and China. One of its key questions is how Europe will position itself in this new era of superpower competition and conflict. In cooperation with the Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies (CATS) at Heidelberg University, *Encounters: New Perspectives on Asia, America, and Europe* brings prominent Asian and American academics, authors, activists, and artists to Heidelberg, where they engage with scholars from the HCA and the CATS.

2025 NATO, THE UNITED STATES, AND CHINA: NEW CHALLENGES FOR EUROPE

Thomas De Mazière, Bundesminister a.D.
In conversation with Florian Böller, HCA

2022 RIVALS OR ENEMIES: THE UNITED STATES, RUSSIA, AND CHINA

Fiona Hill, Brookings Institution
In conversation with Martin Thunert, HCA

2022 THE COMMON ROOTS OF CENTRAL AMERICAN MIGRATION: INEQUALITIES AND VIOLENCE IN THE REGION

Cecilia Menjivar, UCLA

2023 BEYOND TRUST: MIGRANTS AND THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH SMUGGLING FACILITATORS ON THE US-MEXICO BORDER

Gabriella Sanchez, Georgetown University

MIGRATION AND THE AMERICAS

Migration movements pose a particular challenge in the twenty-first century in many regions of the world. The HCA addresses this topic in cooperation with the Heidelberg Center for Ibero-American Studies (HCIAS) and the Institute of Geography with the lecture series *Migration and the Americas*. Speakers in this series present a wide range of topics with a special focus on the United States and Latin America.

THE FUTURE OF US DEMOCRACY

Since its establishment over two centuries ago, American democracy has served as a beacon of political participation and societal progress – despite its historical imperfections. However, in recent years, it has faced significant challenges. Political polarization has intensified, the media landscape often spreads misinformation, and key democratic institutions are under pressure. This lecture series examines the current state of American democracy, explores its most pressing challenges, and considers possible paths forward. How can the United States preserve and strengthen its democratic institutions to ensure a fair, responsive, and equitable society?

2024

THE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS: WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Michael Kimmage, The Catholic University of America
In conversation with
Robert Saldin, University of Montana

2025

BEGGAR THY NEIGHBOUR? THE IMPACT OF AMERICA FIRST ON CANADIAN POLITICS AND US ALLIANCES

Daniel Bellánd, McGill University
In conversation with Florian Böller, HCA

GEOPOLITICS

IN THE AGE OF TRUMP

This series features experts in international relations, economics, and security policies to explore the shifting patterns of geopolitics in the age of Trump. In a new era of uncertainty, marked by the unilateral and transactional policies of the 47th president, US allies in Europe and Asia are reassessing their strategic options. Talks in this series analyze these trajectories, discuss their underlying causes, and weigh policy implications.

2024

VANCE VS. WALZ: DIE NUMMER ZWEI IM US WAHLKAMPF

Marc Debus, University of Mannheim

2025

DIALOG MIT DEM DRACHEN? DER US-CHINESISCHE KONFLIKT UND EUROPAS HANDLUNGSOPTIONEN

Marina Rudyak, Heidelberg University

SELECTED EPISODES

90 – Trumps Sicherheitsstrategie 2025 – Europas strategische Bewährungsprobe?

Jakob Wiedekind, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

88 – Wie gefährdet ist die Wissenschaftsfreiheit in den USA?

Agnes Mueller, University of South Carolina

87 – It's a Man's World? Die Inszenierung von Männlichkeiten in der US Politik

Susana Rocha Teixeira, HCA

85 – Nach den Präsidentschaftswahlen – Folgen für die US Sicherheitspolitik

Florian Böller, HCA

83 – Attentat auf Trump – Wie dramatisch wird der US Wahlkampf?

Martin Thunert, HCA

79 – Master of Diplomacy? Henry Kissinger, 1923-2023

Jeremi Suri, University of Texas at Austin

69 – Nach dem Ende von Roe – Wie mächtig ist der amerikanische Supreme Court?

Manfred Berg, Heidelberg University

66 – Fatally Unequal – Race and Guns in America

Carol Anderson, Emory University

56 – Pox, Populism, and Politics – Three Centuries of American Vaccination Controversies

Robert Johnston, University of Illinois Chicago

53 – Welt im Lockdown – Die globale Krise und ihre Folgen

Adam Tooze, Columbia University

38 – Seuchen kennen keine Grenzen – Zur Geschichte von Epidemien im American Empire

Andrea Wiegeschoff, Marburg University

22 – Kamala Harris – The Woman a Heartbeat Away From the Presidency?

Manisha Sinha, University of Connecticut

16 – #BlackLivesMatter – Eine neue Bürgerrechtsbewegung in den USA?

Britta Waldschmidt-Nelson, Augsburg University

6 – Corona and American Diplomacy

Robert Zoellick, Former President of the World Bank

HCA PODCAST

Quo Vadis USA?, the podcast of the Heidelberg Center for American Studies, takes a look at American society, politics, business, culture, and academia. It provides a forum for scholars and other experts on the US to discuss these issues from the perspective of their respective disciplines and to share their research findings with the public. Moderated by Anja Schüler, *Quo Vadis USA?* is the successor to the weekly podcast *Corona in den USA*, which highlighted the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic across the Atlantic from April 2020 to March 2021.



From May 5 to July 11, 2025, an exhibition at the HCA showcased images by the British-American photographer Leonard McCombe (1923-2015) as part of the university's commemoration of the end of World War II. Born and raised on the Isle of Man, McCombe started taking photographs as a teenager.

At the age of 18, he became a war correspondent with the English *Picture Post*; three years later, in 1944, he reported on the Allied advance in Normandy. In the same year, he was elected the youngest member of the Royal Photographic Society. Our exhibition featured pictures McCombe took in Normandy, Paris, Berlin, and Warsaw between 1944 and 1946.

EXHIBITION • AFTERMATH OF WAR

They appeared in British and Swiss magazines, as well as in the iconic American *LIFE Magazine*. The images documented the end of the war in Europe, the destruction of the cities, the suffering, and hopelessness. They also show the determination to survive and rebuild.

In 1946, Leonard McCombe moved to the United States to work for *LIFE*, which published his photographs at regular intervals until its last issue in 1972, including almost sixty cover images. His pictures are preserved on his farm on Long Island in hundreds of boxes and scrapbooks. The HCA exhibit was the first time these images were shown in Germany since the rolls of film were developed eighty years ago.

HCA IN THE MEDIA

Florian Böller

**Trump wird immer reicher,
durch exklusive Clubs und
krude Deals**

**Berliner Morgenpost
June 10, 2025**

While Donald Trump is in office, his family business is generating high returns – with country clubs, golf courses, and Trump skyscrapers in the Middle East.

Detlef Junker

**„America First“ gefährdet
die Sicherheit Europas**

**Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung
April 12, 2025**

Once again, the old continent is being left behind – A historical analysis in the age of Donald Trump.

Manfred Berg

**Entsendung der Nationalgarde –
„Trump strebt ein autoritäres
Präsidialsystem an“**

**Tagesschau.de
June 11, 2025**

Protests in LA – and the US president sends in the National Guard. Behind this, historian Berg sees Trump's desire to rule with as few restrictions as possible.

Martin Thunert

**Die Regierungskrise in Kanada
und ihre Folgen –
„Es dürfte mehr Schnittmengen
mit Trumps Amerika geben“**

**Der Tagesspiegel
January 7, 2025**

Why did Trudeau resign? Is Canada facing a takeover by a right-wing populist? And what are the consequences for relations with Germany?

Michaela Roßner

**Zeilen voller Fürsorge –
Wie ein Elternpaar die
Nazigräuel in Codes fasste**

**Mannheimer Morgen
October 9, 2024**

Heidelberg University Library and the HCA digitize 438 letters sent by Alice and Ludwig Klein between 1936 and 1942 to their children, who had emigrated to the United States.

Interview with Günter Leypoldt

**Oprah Winfrey,
US Talkshowmoderatorin**

**WDR Zeitzeichen
January 29, 2024**

A conversation about the American icon. Oprah Winfrey's gift of encouraging people to open up on camera has turned her into an American icon and a billionaire. Günter Leypoldt and Andrea Klasen discuss Oprah's biography, her business model, and her courage in sharing her own weaknesses and problems during conversations.



SPECIAL THANKS TO THE FOUNDING DIRECTOR

The Heidelberg Center for American Studies would not have gained its position as one of Europe's leading teaching and research institutions for the United States without the tireless work of its founding director, Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Detlef Junker. His efforts to establish American Studies at Heidelberg University date back to 1986, when he initiated a fundraising drive for the Schurman Library for American History, which is now a renowned resource at the History Department. Detlef Junker went on to lead the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC, from 1994 to 1999. Upon his return, he facilitated the establishment of an endowed chair for American History, backed by Curt Engelhorn, honorary senator of Heidelberg University. He then convinced the Engelhorn family and other benefactors to generously support an interdisciplinary center for American Studies.

From 2004 to 2018, Detlef Junker was the driving force behind the institute's numerous activities and its ascent, including the development of its undergraduate and graduate programs, the conception of many international conferences, the expansion and increased visibility of its lecture series, the hosting of dozens of visiting scholars, and the occasional festive event. Over the decades, he has consistently advocated for an "open door policy," welcoming scholars and the general public alike. Well beyond his eightieth birthday, Detlef Junker continues his work as a scholar and mentor with remarkable energy and dedication.

IMPRESSUM

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