

Border Close-ups: Film and Everyday Lives in the Borderlands

UdS American Studies Graduate Forum (Hybrid: on-site and on-line)

Saarland University, Saarbrücken, December 2-4, 2021

Venue: Saarland U (Campus Saarbrücken) and on Zoom

Call for Papers Deadline: October 31, 2021

In cooperation with the *German-American Institute Saarland*, the Chair of North American Literary and Cultural Studies at Saarland University (UdS) will hold a 3-day American Studies Graduate Forum that invites advanced Master students, doctoral candidates, as well as junior and senior scholars to present their current work-in-progress in a workshop-style setting. The forum will offer participants a chance to discuss their research with peers as well as with more advanced scholars. This year, we invite submissions dealing with the construction, representation, and assessment of borderlands in film.

Borderlands have proven to be highly productive sites and settings for the visual arts. The historically mobile and not rarely volatile nature of borders as well as the stories of the people who both shape and are invariably shaped by these borders have long held a somewhat universal appeal especially to filmmakers. Ranging from the longstanding, globally circulating trope of *the frontier*¹ to recent dramatizations of border crossings² to even more recent depictions of forced migration³: Borderland films cover a wide spectrum of both fictional and non-fictional contemplations about human(e) (co-)existence.

¹ Cf. Klein, Thomas. *Geschichte – Mythos – Identität: Zur Globalen Zirkulation des Western-Genres*. Berlin: Bertz + Fischer, 2015.

² See, for example, *LITTLE WOODS* (Nia DaCosta 2018).

³ See, for example, *PURPLE SEA* (Amel Alzakout & Khaled Abdulwahed 2020).

As such, borderland films represent (and are perpetually represented as) insightful loci of a complex network of discourses, the interpretation of which allows us to (re-)experience key aspects of human identity. Border films document – irrespective of their respective vantage points – the perpetual and processual (re-)constitution of contact zones, retracing where boundaries are simultaneously and, perhaps, reciprocally redrawn and dissolved. “As a result,” writes Hamid Naficy in *An Accented Cinema*, “the best of the border films are hybridized and experimental – characterized by multifocality, multilinguality, asynchronicity, critical distance, fragmented or multiple subjectivity, and transborder amphibolic characters (32).”

The Uds American Studies Graduate Forum 2021 offers a setting in which a decidedly humanities-driven, film studies, cultural studies and literary studies approach to issues of borderlands will be discussed. We also welcome creative contributions from the visual arts.

Topics can include but are not limited to:

- Border films and corporeality
- Processes of hybridization in border films
- B/orders, films, and containing entropy
- Border films and decolonial epistemologies
- Narratives of migration and border crossings in film
- Constructions of borders across time and space
- The cultural construction of borders represented in film
- The im/materiality of borders in film
- Borders, border films, and anthropocentrism
- Borders and more-than-human lifeworlds

Presentations should be approximately 20 minutes in length and will be followed by a discussion and feedback round with all participants and experts. Saarland U will seek to offer assistance in travel funding to selected presenters; recipients of the funding will be selected based on their proposals.

In order to submit a proposal, please send an email, including a title, a 250-word abstract and a short biographical note to

amerikanistik@mx.uni-saarland.de by October 31, 2021.