

Q&A

Teaching American History and Culture in Europe in an Age of Uncertainty

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This is the first in a two-part Q&A series that explores the particular challenges and unique opportunities that historians face while researching, writing, and teaching American history and culture outside the United States. With war in Ukraine looming and economic and institutional pressures mounting, the challenges certainly appear to be all the greater as of late for those teaching in European academic contexts. The second instalment in this series will pose a similar set of questions to historians who work on other continents and in other global settings.

To evaluate the unique dynamics of teaching U.S. history in Europe, Darren Dochuk and Emma Long posted a set of questions to leading teachers and scholars Dario Fazzi, William R. Glass, Benita Heiskanen, and Martin Lüthe, with Long offering perspective as well.

Your investment in American studies in Europe connects you to an educational initiative and institutional structure stretching back decades to the heart of the twentieth century. In your estimation, what are (and should be) the priorities of American Studies programs in Europe today, and—with an eye both to the longer history but also current circumstances of such programs—how have these priorities shifted over time? What particular programmatic goals do you and your institution focus on most, and how do they reflect the particularities of the constituencies and locales you engage?

Benita Heiskanen: Although practiced in multiple ways in different institutional contexts—and by individual scholars—the key differentiating feature is that American studies is not a discipline but a field of study. Whether we delineate it as an inter-, multi-, post-, or transdisciplinary practice, it explores historical, societal, and cultural phenomena in dialogue with multiple disciplines without privileging singular methodological or theoretical approaches. Similarly, the geographic framing of American studies is continuously evolving. While the United States has always been the focus of the field, the role of other nations within the continent—as well as transnational relations—has become increasingly important over the past few decades. At the John Morton Center for North American Studies, we focus on analyzing historical, societal, and cultural phenomena related to the United States, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean from various transnational perspectives.

Emma Long: The broad umbrella of American studies is what attracted me as a young scholar. The ability, indeed encouragement, to think and work across disciplinary boundaries was challenging and exciting, and, for me, has always been central to American studies generally and to

American history as part of the broader program. While the focus might be on the United States, or the Americas broadly depending on the program, the cross-disciplinary ethos encourages critical thinking, openness to different perspectives, and diversity of skills. It supports seeing the full complexity of topics and eschewing easy answers.

American Studies in the United Kingdom developed after World War II as part of the emergence of the “special relationship” that had developed between Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill during the war. Initially intended to build greater friendship through better understanding of the United States, its history, politics, and culture, American studies developed over time a more analytical, critical edge more appropriate to the disciplines that fell within its remit. It is still interested in better understanding, which may now come as much through critique as support. Like most fields of study, we consider what went wrong as well as what went right, and seek to understand why. The focus has expanded to include not only the United States but the Americas, north and south, as well as the Caribbean, although the United States remains the dominant topic of study.

In the Department of American Studies at the University of East Anglia (UEA), and within the Arthur Miller Institute for American Studies, which is based here, we have specialisms in indigenous, First Nations culture and history, African American history and culture, gender studies, U.S. foreign policy and transnational connections, and U.S. legal and constitutional history. We thus reflect many of the broader developments within the academy.

Martin Lüthe: I consider American studies a continuously evolving and dynamic field of scholarly inquiry and as intrinsically connected to the political, social, and cultural histories of the transatlantic global North (and arguably beyond). While European Americanists have quite comfortably situated themselves as scholarly experts but geographic outsiders looking onto the United States and North America, I feel that young academics in Europe and the current generation of European Americanists indeed also feel more immediately entangled with and invested in the scholarly developments, but also the politics, of American Studies in North America. Finally, the liberal, futurist, and affirmative-optimistic view of the political, socio-economic, and cultural developments in the United States that once shaped the field in Europe have become widely problematized, both by Americanists in North America and in Europe (critical university studies, critical theory, critical race studies all come to mind in said context).

Heiskanen: One of the most appealing aspects of American studies to me has always been that it reacts to and changes alongside sociopolitical, economic, and cultural trends. In continuously evolving, the field also re-evaluates, redefines, and reinvents itself. The foci of the first American studies programs in the United States almost a century ago were very different from those of today, but even so, they share a similar rejection of strict disciplinary boundaries and formalism associated with established monodisciplinary frameworks. Whereas the conceptualization of the United States as a nation is more diverse and pluralistic than in the early days of the field, the backlash we are seeing today in many contexts—both societal and academic—speaks to the ways in which understandings of “American-ness” continue to shape politics and culture.

Dario Fazzi: In 1958, when Sigmund Skard edited his two-volume collection of essays on the state-of-the-art of American studies in Europe, the consensus was that Great Britain, France, and Germany were setting the standard for the analysis of American history, politics, and culture in Europe, thus contributing to codifying a wider and supposedly homogeneous western civilization, while other European countries, from the Scandinavian ones to the ones facing the Mediterranean Sea, were just offering slight variations of themes, concepts, and methods

that originated in British, German, or French academic circles. Since then, much has changed, and what was at that time considered to be Europe's periphery has become part and parcel of a scholarly conversation on American studies that has progressively transcended national borders and cultures and has become genuinely transnational as well as transdisciplinary.

The origins of such a transformation should be traced back to the 1960s crisis of the liberal consensus, when Europe's polycentric perspectives on the United States contributed to further questioning of the viability and sustainability of a U.S.-led model of development. It was in these years that the field of American studies blossomed in the Netherlands, the country where I currently work. American studies programs were created in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Leiden, Groningen, and Nijmegen, and courses on U.S. history and culture started being offered in several different curricula across the country. The rising interest toward the United States went hand in glove with the increasing problematization of Washington's rising influence on the broader Dutch social and cultural milieu. The main achievement of this first generation of scholars was the institutionalization of genuinely interdisciplinary American studies programs in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Leiden, Groningen, and Nijmegen, along with an abundant historiographical production that complemented a top-down study of the transatlantic relations with analyses grounded in informal and cultural exchanges.

The Roosevelt Study Center (today, the Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, or RIAS) was established in the mid-1980s against the backdrop of the tensions of the so-called second Cold War and increased dissatisfaction with U.S. policies, as embodied by the Euromissile crises. RIAS sought to mitigate this through the active promotion of mutual transatlantic understanding via an ever-expanding offer of sources, collections, and academic gatherings.

My home-base institutions, namely Leiden University and the RIAS, are actively promoting the study of America's history and culture in a way that emphasizes the relevance of discourses and practices of marginalization, critically dissecting such U.S.-centered phenomena as neoliberalism, settler colonialism, industrial capitalism, and militarism. Our students are constantly invited to challenge oversimplifying narratives of American influence and look at the role that nonstate actors and institutions, people and individuals, ideals and technologies have played and keep playing in the definition and constant renegotiation of the transatlantic exchange. Our goal is to historicize more broadly, de-provincialize, and enrich our understanding of contemporary America.

William R. Glass: The American Studies Center (ASC) of the University of Warsaw (UW) began in 1976 as a research center with a library, and its members helped facilitate the visits of American scholars to UW. Its creation came at the initiative of Polish historians of the United States and reflected a more general openness to the West during the era of *détente*. Our curriculum is broader than many other programs in Europe, and the ASC is one of the largest American studies programs in Europe. The BA degree is focused mainly on the United States with students taking a variety of introductory lectures in not just the usual American studies disciplines of history, literature, and culture, but also in sociology, geography, cinema, politics, economics, and foreign policy. BA students then pursue their interests in a broad offering of elective courses. In many ways, it is similar to the curriculum of private liberal arts colleges in the United States but without the hard sciences. The MA degree broadens the field to the Western Hemisphere and offers a concentration in Latin America. The program is more research oriented and is designed to allow students to research topics in depth while introducing them to hemispheric and transnational American Studies.

Heiskanen: As far as my own scholarly trajectory is concerned, I got my PhD in American studies in the United States in 2004, but as I have built my career in Europe, I have seen the multiple ways in which scholars understand and conduct American studies. In the spirit of American studies as “a work in progress,” I have continuously assessed and re-evaluated my own scholarly position and research practices. In my early career work, I took the nondisciplinary ethos seriously and sought to push the field’s methodological understanding and its epistemological consequences. In my research involving fieldwork and oral history, I have particularly emphasized the ethical ramifications that our methodological choices entail. I have called attention to interviewing as an ongoing negotiation between the questions posed and the overall research objectives, with important consequences not only for the interviewees, but also for the researcher and broader academic knowledge formation processes. At the post-doctoral stage, when I became more invested in transnational American studies, my work called attention to the field’s de facto geographic boundaries by decentering the United States as the geographic core of the field. Through the transnational optic, my point has not been to reject the importance of the nation-state, or the relevance of national power relations, but to reframe them from new spatial perspectives. In all of my research and teaching today, I underscore the possibilities that transdisciplinary and multimethodological lenses provide us for the understanding of both history and the current moment.

Considering the volatility of our moment (both inside and beyond the walls of the academy), what do you consider to be the most daunting challenges facing American studies programs in Europe? Economics and politics certainly weigh heavily on history and American studies departments stateside; have budgetary restraints and/or political pressures forced you and your institution to adjust your approach to research, writing, and intellectual engagement? If so, how, and toward what end?

Lütke: In general, the humanities, and American studies departments specifically, have been under attack as part of the neoliberal reconfiguration of education in Germany (where I am based) and Europe. The conceived (and frequently articulated) pressures to study a discipline that easily and automatically translates into a well-paid job postgraduation certainly has caused discursive damage. Also, the economic concerns of this student generation are legitimate, probably more so than the discursive “bad rep” of the humanities and social sciences. Luckily, largely “free” education as well as the appeal of a major European city [Berlin] have actually led to large numbers of students from the United States enrolling at the institute where I teach. This, probably, also has a lot to do with the general consensus of the entanglement of Western European and North American cultures in general, and cultures of higher education more specifically.

Glass: The place of the ASC in UW’s structure is relatively secure. The trend to starve the humanities and feed STEM [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] is not occurring here, though the Ministry of Education is tightening the general funding of all public universities and programs, in part because the ruling party perceives a general resistance to its policies from the academy. The ASC budget largely depends on enrollment, and enrollment continues to be strong. Interest in the MA program is rebounding after a slump during the pandemic. UW’s administration values the ASC in part because it is one of a handful of programs at UW taught entirely in English, a point used to attract international students either through short-term exchanges like Erasmus or for enrolling in other degree programs. In terms of broader social/political pressure on our program, the ASC seems to have flown under the radar of Polish cultural warriors concerned about hot-button issues concerning gender, family, religion, and sexuality.

Heiskanen: During my career, it has been quite remarkable to see how quickly circumstances within academia change, contingent upon external circumstances. I have also experienced the change in attitudes toward American studies research and teaching that is directly relatable to whoever occupies the White House. During the George W. Bush administration's "War on Terror," for example, I remember frequently hearing negative views about the United States, some of which (at least implicitly) seemed to spill over to research funding decisions, student interests, and foci, as well as attitudes toward American studies more broadly. During the Barack Obama presidency, by contrast, it seemed that in the eyes of many foreigners, his administration could do nothing wrong, as "hope and change" became aspirations attached to the United States. After Donald Trump became President, there was a tangible boom in American studies in Finland, one reflected in research funding, media requests, and the interest of the public and students alike. After the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Finland reversed its long-held pledge of military non-alignment by joining NATO in 2023, a decision that has boosted interest in American studies on multiple fronts again. This ebb-and-flow has been somewhat perplexing, but I have tried to make the case that it is precisely because of such fluidity that we need to invest in American studies programs long-term. How else are we able to draw connections between the past and the present as well as history, politics, and culture? I see these shifting attitudes toward each presidency as reason for students to question fixed, preconceived notions of "American-ness" and to consider how identities, nationhood, and citizenship form in relation to different sociohistorical eras, political discourses, cultural representations, and ideological mechanisms.

Long: Interest in American history in the United Kingdom, like trends noted by other colleagues, has waxed and waned in relation to wider events: the election of President Obama in 2008 saw a definite upswing in interest, while the "War on Terror" and the presidency of George W. Bush saw the opposite. Donald Trump's election saw a decline in interest, arguably more than in previous downturns, while movements like Black Lives Matter and climate change activism have brought interest from new groups of students. That said, interest in American history *modules* has remained more robust than interest in American history or American studies *degrees*.

Part of the reason for this (similar to that noted above) is the British government's heavy focus on STEM subjects and the degrading of humanities subjects as unlikely to lead to well-paying, fulfilling employment. While there is pushback against this in the form of the British Academy initiative, SHAPE [Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy], the argument that vocationally oriented courses are better has been powerful, especially with the introduction of college tuition fees in the United Kingdom, and subsequently the financial crises of 2008 and the COVID-19 pandemic. Changes to high school curricula in recent years, which have seen a significant reduction in American history, politics, and literature-related subjects, have also had an impact. Students discover American topics later in their education than in previous years. The combination means that while students may be enticed to take a module or two in American history, there is less interest in making it the focus of their study.

Fazzi: To a large extent, academia operates as a segment of a global, fully integrated market. I do not wish to enter the debate on whether this should be contested, reimagined, or just exploited, yet, what is interesting to observe here is that the academic institutionalization of a series of neoliberal tendencies has transformed the ways in which we engage with American studies. Oftentimes, this means that funds are distributed exclusively on the basis of student enrolments, which quite physiologically privileges national studies over those inter- and transnational ones that would structurally require larger research investments. At the same time, American studies scholars in the Netherlands may have a slight competitive

advantage in the inherently interdisciplinary nature of their field of study, insofar as both national and regional grant schemes tend to—at least formally—value such approaches. The next step, in this regard, may be to try to integrate even more disciplinary methods and perspectives into our research, cross-pollinating our approaches with studies coming from such different fields as law, medicine, and environmental sciences.

Perhaps (but not necessarily) with such restraints and pressures in mind: how has your pedagogy and your program’s approach to teaching in general been reshaped by recent economic, cultural, and political trends in Europe? Have momentous events such as the war in Ukraine opened up or demanded new lines of inquiry and instruction, research and intellectual engagement among faculty and students? Have foundational methods of “doing” American studies in Europe changed as a result?

Glass: The biggest challenge I had in adjusting from teaching in U.S. universities to Polish universities was the reduction by over a third of the contact hours in the classroom. Not only were Polish “hours” shorter (45 minutes), but the classes met once a week for two hours (90 minutes versus 150 in the U.S.). This circumstance had the most impact on my lectures of U.S. History I and II. In both courses, I had to shorten and refocus the narrative, and in the end the effort paid off in a more thematically coherent set of lectures even if many details were lost.

On some topics, I found that I had to push harder to disabuse Polish students of their myths about American history. For example, I needed to demonstrate that there was more to American origins than the Puritans. On other topics, I did not have to work as hard to convince my ASC students of my interpretation as I did for university students in the American South, where I taught for a time. Here, the best example is arguing that slavery was at the root of the Civil War. To Poles, it seems obvious; to my southern students steeped in the Lost Cause, it was heresy. Moreover, there were topics where my Polish students balked at my interpretations, particularly and not surprisingly, of the origins and development of the Cold War. Finally, as a historian of religion and region, I have to slow down and carefully explain some aspects of U.S. history that utterly baffle some of my students, like the chaos of American denomination-ism and the contradictions of southern culture.

Long: Students often come with preconceived ideas of the United States or “America,” shaped by popular culture and the limited range of American subjects available to them before college, and by the types of news stories covered in the media and how they are portrayed here in the United Kingdom. Our job is often to disabuse our students of certain notions, or at least to contextualize and problematize those concepts, and encourage them to think critically about what they see and hear through TV, movies, music, books, social media, or the news. Hopefully they take these skills with them into other areas of their lives!

Outside factors and changing society have shaped the questions that we ask of and are asked by our students. We focus more now than in the past on questions of race, gender, sexuality, identity, power relations, cultural history, and transnationalism, among many others, even though the broad framework of U.S. history remains the same. The resonances of these histories change for students over time too, subject to the events with which they are surrounded. For example, in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crash, students were more attuned to the problems and experiences of the Great Depression and the history of Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal. The start of the war in Ukraine has focused students’ attention on the history of the Cold War and the United States’s role on the global stage, as protagonist and antagonist, as a way of seeking a better understanding of current events.

Heiskanen: For me, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine really reinforced the rationale of the transnational American studies focus, underscoring the multiple ways in which we are, across the Atlantic, in the same boat in many ways. By highlighting interactions, liaisons, and networks that explicate transnational connections, we can look at the same phenomenon through different lenses and geographic foci. Similarly, the transdisciplinary and multimethodological approaches are particularly apt to emphasize the rationale of a phenomenon-based *modus operandi* of American studies teaching.

Fazzi: The resurgence of transatlantic relations in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, especially striking if one considers that NATO had been declared brain dead by both the current French and the former U.S. president, is something that has revamped interest in American studies too, within and beyond academia. The very fact that Russia's aggressive behavior and expansionist policies have gained traction I would say *in spite of* NATO, and that both American and European responses have had to navigate across several tensions and fractures, testifies to the complexity and the problematic development of recent transatlantic relations. On the one hand, discourses about shared interests, collective security, and mutual protection are still central in the diplomatic rendering of European–American relations. On the other, as many fellow colleagues have pointed out, there still are numerous contradictions that affect the (moral and political) integrity of a common, democratic, transatlantic front. Calls to unity around democratic ideas need in fact to be tested against the (transatlantic) rise of illiberal tendencies, undemocratic policies, nationalism, and ecological demands. What I try to do with my research is to investigate these shadows of uneven developments in the hope that a better understanding of them can cultivate the antibodies that properly working democratic systems need to resist the advancement of new forms of authoritarianism.

Glass: One might think that, being next door to the war in Ukraine, it would loom large, but after the initial refugee crisis passed, it remains a constant presence but not a consuming one. The war has not fundamentally reshaped our curriculum, nor have we added new courses, but it has given new resonance to old topics and discussions in our classes. For example, I have taught *Dr. Strangelove* for nearly twenty years, and over those years it seemed to be losing its relevance, becoming more of an artifact illustrating a bygone mindset. But the discourse about the possibility of Russia's use of tactical nuclear weapons and subsequent escalation reinvigorated the film's satire of “nuclear combat toe to toe with the Rooskies.”

I wouldn't say that our methods have changed; each discipline represented among our faculty follows the practices of their field. But over the last twenty years, our program has followed the broader trends in American studies through adding courses that include transnational and hemispheric perspectives and ones that consider the intersectionality of race, class, gender, and sexuality and branching into disability and animal studies.

Lüthe: The major shift that I have noticed and that I also try to take into account in my pedagogy at all times is that the situation students find themselves in—something akin to what Lauren Berlant might refer to as “crisis ordinariness”—at times causes them to be more sensitive and careful, especially in the context of the complex power dynamics of higher education and any kind of pedagogy.

What about your students and student culture: what currently draws students to your and your colleagues' classes in American history and culture? How are the circumstances and spirit of our moment encouraging them to engage American history and culture in new

ways, with new questions, critiques, methods, and end-goals (including professional) in mind? How do you seek to nurture that generative potential?

Heiskanen: The most frequent feedback we get from students is that our classes are exciting. Because we use multiple sources, and take both societal and popular discourses seriously, students find it easy to engage in critical thinking and analysis. As far as history classes are concerned, seeing the continuation of contemporary phenomena all the way from the colonial period up to the present, as in my “Race, Class, and Gender in U.S. History and Culture” course, is eye opening for students.

Digitalization has been a major game changer in the past twenty years. Whereas I searched for sources for my doctoral work through microfilms, nowadays the digitalization of historical sources is extensive and easily accessible anywhere. Moreover, through resources from the Library of Congress, and other such sites, it is easy to teach primary source assignments from afar.

The pandemic was very tough for students, though. Many of those beginning their studies when remote learning was the order of the day found it hard to integrate and adjust to the post-pandemic teaching mode, also creating a bit of a culture of underachievement amongst students. I have tried to be extra sensitive to the students’ challenges by adopting the use of various tools to facilitate classroom discussions, including study questions for the students, students’ written questions to the instructor, and online forums as tools for critical thinking, hoping that these will help students transition to the “new normal.”

Lüthe: I have also tried to keep my classes accessible through hybrid learning options at all times now, because I do not want to presuppose that every student will be able to make it to campus at all times—for good and varying reasons.

Fazzi: While addressing a few thousand French and German students in 2009, Barack Obama acknowledged that, for many years, Americans had failed “to appreciate Europe’s leading role in the world,” stressing that this had brought many in the United States to take a “dismissive, even derisive” stance toward Europe. At the same time, he pointed the finger at the persistent and insidious anti-Americanism that had induced many Europeans to blame the United States for much of what was bad in the world. Obama’s analysis went straight to the point: mutual misunderstandings and mistrust have been an integral part of what has been, historically, a very complex relationship between the two shores of the Atlantic. The narrative of an unquestioned transatlantic alliance, a homogenous Western culture, a persistent unity of intents is far too dismissive of this complexity, and this is what my colleagues and I are trying to teach in our programs. Our students, though, keep being attracted to American studies in the same polarizing way that Obama described in his speech. They are simultaneously fascinated and appalled by what the U.S. (government) is capable of doing both to its citizens and to people all over the world. From the ubiquity of American cultural and technological products to the irreversibility of the American century and its racial and cultural contradictions, our students embark on their American studies journey mostly looking for a compass to better navigate the age they live in.

Glass: A good number of our BA students enter our program because they want to continue improving their English, which they see contributing to finding a better job. They choose American studies over the English institute because their interests are not in literature and philology. Secondarily we attract students because there also remains in Poland a fascination with and appreciation of American culture, society, and politics.

Long: While here in the United Kingdom students gain a less formal introduction to American topics through schools, they do look to understand what they see and hear in popular culture, be it a reference in song lyrics or a partial story told in a favorite movie. The subjects that are less familiar to them often appear increasingly exciting and different; there's a "newness" to American history that attracts students to these modules. At the same time, the opportunity to study in the United States remains a big draw. There's a world of difference between visiting somewhere on vacation and living there for a semester or a year, and the opportunity to do that at a U.S.-based partner institution attracts students to American history and American studies.

Approaches to teaching and learning have changed as we learn more about inclusive learning approaches. We use an increasingly diverse range of assignment types that both help develop traditional academic skills while also engaging with formats that may be useful to students in their post-college lives. Essays and close readings of sources still exist, but now they're accompanied by podcasts, posters, and blog posts, encouraging students to think about how to convey ideas in different formats and for varied audiences. Our students are also more and more technologically literate, and so making use of the wealth of online, digital archives and learning platforms opens up opportunities for scholarship that simply were not possible when I was an undergraduate. As students studying another country, the ability to access materials virtually makes that process much easier and offers a far more diverse range of materials than in the past.

Lüthe: I find we have a very interested group of students in our BA and MA programs, and here I actually feel that what brings them to the program and my classes is the same kind of intellectual curiosity that drew me to particular classes as a student as well. Also, as I am growing older and middle-aged, I also learn a lot about the students' life-worlds, and on the whole this student generation makes me feel very optimistic about our futures inside and beyond higher education and scholarship.

Nestled within the European Association for American Studies (EAAS), the American Studies Network (ASN) has, since the 1990s, promoted cooperation and collaboration between numerous American studies centers, all of which encourage robust interdisciplinary study of American culture, as well as multifaceted programming with public-facing service always in mind. What type of work is the network most heavily invested in at the moment, and what possible next steps and new directions would you like to see it pursue?

Fazzi: The ASN works as a connection hub among research institutes in Europe, whereas at the individual level, European Americanists usually strengthen connections more informally through the activities, publications, and events promoted by the EAAS. A more formal institutional level of cooperation can and should be enhanced. The ASN takes on this mission to further contacts and exchanges among research centers that are nationally and regionally busy with the pursuit of their American studies agendas. The ASN has the potential to act as a genuine bridge between academia and the general public, carrying out a wider societal mission on a continental scale that national institutes could hardly accomplish on their own.

Heiskanen: I think the American Studies Network has been somewhat underused as a resource. We now have an excellent opportunity to bring it to the "next level" by increasing collaboration in both teaching and research between colleagues and students at various institutions. By organizing joint webinars, guest lectures, and conference sessions, all of our students and scholars within the national programs would stand to gain from its activities. If we start with these small steps, we can then advance into initiatives that are more ambitious and, perhaps, think of

collaborations leading into full-blown research or funding applications. Ultimately, it will be up to us to use the Network to its full potential. The sky's the limit, really.

Lütke: Emma Long [current president] and Benita Heiskanen [former president] have really begun to promote and pursue a trajectory for the ASN that is indebted to a kind of critical investment with studying North America that once created the field in Europe. I really appreciate how they take note of the intellectual shifts and changing politics of American studies in the twenty-first century and how we, as a network, contribute via our inherent transdisciplinarity and our European-ness to what we feel American studies should be and do today.

Long: As the current president of the ASN, I agree with colleagues that it both has an important purpose and that it has not necessarily achieved its full potential. Increasing pressures on academic time and a degree of unwillingness by institutions to recognize extra-institutional work are among the current challenges. But the important institutional and personal connections are there, allowing for pan-European discussions of the state-of-the-field(s), sharing of expertise, and support for the American studies community. Most academics have personal connections with scholars in other countries by virtue of shared scholarly interests, but the ASN provides a more formal, institutional framework that can build on and expand beyond those links. The ability to share insights into the teaching and research of American history from the eastern side of the Atlantic, to provide better knowledge of the variety of scholarship and the range of activities, and to build stronger connections between the institutions which participate in the ASN are vital contributions made by the Network to supporting the continued study of American history outside of the borders of the United States and the Americas.

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