



Radboud University
Duisburg - Essen
Spring Academy

**Grounding Transnational American Studies in European
and American Contexts**

**Master programs in American Studies at
Radboud University Nijmegen, NL,
the University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany,
and the University of Wyoming, USA**

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GROUNDING TRANSNATIONAL AMERICAN STUDIES

Mission Statement

When approaching transnational American studies in European and U.S. American contexts we need to ground¹ our work in a threefold manner: First regarding the premises, second, regarding the theoretical frameworks, and third regarding geographic dispositions and opportunities for research, case studies, and valorization.

First, we consider it crucial to acknowledge the underlying premises, which inform the theories and methodologies of transnational American studies in both European and U.S. American contexts. Only if we bring to the forefront the unconscious, often implicit narratives and values which guide our choices regarding objects, theories, and methodologies, can we initiate a process of strengthening the outside perspective on American culture, politics, and the economy. In what ways do we organize narratives about developments in American culture and academia? The five romances with “America” which American studies theoretician Winfried Fluck traces are helpful. He distinguishes between the romance with the American founding myths (such as the success story, the frontier myth or the melting pot), the romance with popular culture (or the so-called “outlaw-and-defiance romance”), the romance with Southern culture, the romance with American modernism and postmodernism, and the romance with the popular myth of a

¹ Grounding is a research method and strategy first developed in the social sciences in the 1960s (Barney Glaser & Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, 1965). It is soundly lodged in hermeneutics, developing qualitative approaches which combine the study of texts with field work, participant observation, interviews and self-reflection. We propose to adapt this dynamic epistemological and methodological school for our own purposes of conceptual thinking about the insights to be gained by American studies inquiry in an age of re-enforced borders and new border thinking. One particularly interesting reinterpretation of grounding is Tamara Caraus and Elena Paris' edited collection *Re-Grounding Cosmopolitanism: Towards a Post-Foundational Cosmopolitanism*. London: Routledge, 2016. Print.

democratic culture.² One might add three more romances such as the romance with the west, the romance with American technology, and the romance with Anti-Americanism (a romance ex negativo).³

Second, we need to ground our critical thinking in innovative theoretical frameworks, which allow us to understand scholarly work within the United States while becoming aware of opportunities that can be found in modifications or novel approaches developed in European academia.

The challenge is to turn the alleged disadvantage of being so far removed from “the homeland” into an asset. The distance from the physical space of the United States and its border regions allows – this is our hope and conviction – for a nuanced perspective on the US as a global agenda setting country whose effects are often different from the processes which inform the frameworks of “encoding”, to use an expression by Stuart Hall.⁴ The European perspective can contribute to challenging what Amy Kaplan called “the tenacious grasp of American exceptionalism.”⁵ Understanding, mapping, and analyzing the cultural sources of American power and its effects means that European scholars and students can embark on transnational American studies with confidence and without a felt need of self-provincialization. The Dartmouth series *Re-Mapping the Transnational* edited by Don Pease is but one example which places special importance on transnational and European perspectives on

² Fluck, Winfried. “American Studies and the Romance with America: Approaching America through Its Ideals.” *Romance with America? Essays on Culture, Literature, and American Studies*. Ed. Laura Bieger and Johannes Voelz. Heidelberg: Winter, 2009. 87-104, here 89-90. Print.

³ For another ex-negativo romance, the nightmare of environmental destruction see Levander, Caroline. “Transnational American Studies in a Warming World.” Keynote Address, *Bavarian American Academy Conference 2016: Cultural Mobility and Knowledge Formation in the Americas*. June 30, 2016. Web.

⁴ Hall, Stuart. “Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse.” Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1973. Print.

⁵ Kaplan, Amy. “The Tenacious Grasp of American Exceptionalism. A Response to Djelal Kadir, ‘Defending America Against Its Devotees.’” *Comparative American Studies* 2.2 (2004): 153-59. Print

the US.⁶ This encouraging development needs continued debate to allow students to formulate a persuasive answer why they chose – of all places – to study American Studies in Nijmegen/The Netherlands, Duisburg-Essen/Germany or Warsaw/Poland, to name but a few places of lively American Studies programs in Europe.

Third, we understand grounding as a geographical practice, as a comparative approach, which renders American studies particularly relevant in the vicinity of the very universities where we are studying, working, teaching.

Paul Lauter argued in his September 2014 keynote speech at the Salzburg Seminar: “You cannot do American Studies today and confine yourself to events that have occurred, or writers who have composed, within the boundaries of the now-50 states that constitute the US of A.” Speaking from the perspective of American literature, he argued that complicated work is ahead, such as “finding the manifold ways by which an international text milieu [i.e. a space in which creative writers and teachers function today] affects what is written and how it is read.”⁷ For American studies, text milieus might be extended into ‘cultural milieus’ in which text is understood as discourse in the Foucauldian sense. Whatever kind of sources, media texts, spaces, and developments we analyze, whether as American scholars and students or European scholars and students working in the field of American studies, we produce answers and results that are always “acts of cultural self-description.”⁸ Ideally, this involves self-reflexive as well as

⁶ Pease, Donald, ed. *Re-Mapping the Transnational: A Dartmouth Series in American Studies*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 2010. Print.

⁷ Lauter, Paul. “You Cannot Do American Studies Today and Confine to the Boundaries of the Now-50 States.” Keynote Address. *Salzburg Global Seminar 2014*. September 28, 2014. Web.

⁸ We borrow this expression from Kelleter, Frank. “Response to William Uricchio.” *American Studies Today: New Research Agendas*. Ed. Winfried Fluck, Erik Redling, Sabine Sielke, and Hubert Zapf. Heidelberg: Winter, 2014. 383-97, here 305; Kelleter’s reference is to Niklas Luhmann, *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (1997). Kelleter uses Luhmann’s idea of the prominent role played by implicit and explicit self-descriptions to emphasize that American studies scholarship cannot help but to “participate in the

comparative textual and practical work in regional archives and local settings; it means to reach out to public institutions related to American politics, economy, or culture, to include comparativist field work and dialogic formats as well as to study sites of memory that are far more than a record of a distant national event.

Again, the culturally diverse European network of universities offers a particularly promising basis to ground transnational American studies by offering multi-national perspectives. We will focus on triangular perspectives on war, liberation, commemoration, political protest, urbanization and deindustrialization, transgressive cultural and musical imaginaries from World War II to today. How can students and scholars from the Netherlands, Germany, and the U.S. trace American legacies in a transnational and comparative fashion? Case studies involve sites of memory related to World War II, the music and media of oppression and liberation, urban and posturban transformations in the U.S., the Ruhr region and the Netherlands. A combination of classroom lectures and debates, field work, consultations with peers and excursions offers a promising experiment of grounding by comparing triangular approaches and results, for example via online learning platforms. In addition, students equipped with digital communication devices and powerful shareware tools are invited to combine theoretical analysis with the very means they use to retrieve information, namely documentary films, photo essays, or the programming of new smartphone apps to present their research and their own archives, be it oral history, visual archives created with smartphones or discovering archives in the digital and analogue realm.

Our goal in this Dutch-German-American Spring Academy is a threefold grounding of Transnational American Studies as a form of *engaged comparative teaching, research, and valorization* with an emphasis on multi-national perspectives in interactive classrooms.

activities of [its] objects of observation” thus giving insights into the multiple “dependencies between a culture’s knowledge and performance of itself” (305).

RUDESA Program (Nijmegen)

Monday, 13 March 2017

Theory and Practice

- 09:00** Departure Campus Essen
Universitätsstrasse 12, 45141 Essen
- 11:00** Arrival at Nijmegen and Check-In at Hotel Credible
- 12:30** Arrival at Liberation Museum in Groesbeek, meeting
in Museum Cafeteria
<http://www.bevrijdingsmuseum.nl>
- 13:30** “What does Grounding American Studies mean?”
Introduction to Methodology by Frank Mehring
(Nijmegen), Barbara Buchenau (Duisburg-Essen) and
Ulrich Adelt (Wyoming)
- 14:15** Introduction to the vision of the National Liberation
Museum by director Wiel Lenders
- 14:30** “The Rosies as Transnational Icons”
Frank Mehring (Nijmegen) and Lisa van Kessel (Nijmegen)
- 15:00** Guided tour of “Rosie the Riveter” special exhibition by
curator Rense Havinga
- 16:00** The Liberation of Europe in Transnational Contexts – “The
Politics and Cultures of Liberation”
Mathilde Roza (Nijmegen) and Hans Bak (Nijmegen)
- 18:00** Welcome Dinner at Het Gerecht in the Grotius Building
(on campus)

Required Reading

Rupp, Leil J. "From Rosie the Riveter to the Global Assembly Line: American Women on the World Stage." *America on the World Stage: A Global Approach to U.S. History*. Eds. Gary W. Reichard and Ted Dickson. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 2008. 162-169. Print. http://apcentral.collegeboard.com/apc/members/courses/teachers_corner/38083.html

Sierp, Aline. "Integrating Europe, Integrating Memories: The EU's Politics of Memory since 1945." *Interrogating Memory between and Beyond Borders*. Ed. Lucy Bond and Jessica Rapson. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014. 103-118. Print.

Recommended Reading

Greenblatt, Stephen. "Cultural Mobility: An Introduction." *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 1-23. Print.

Fluck, Winfried. "Theories of American Culture (and the Transnational Turn in American Studies)." *Romance with America? Essays on Culture, Literature, and American Studies*. Ed. Laura Bieger and Johannes Voelz. Heidelberg: Winter, 2009. 69-86. Print

Tuesday, 14 March 2017

Academic Interaction and Conversation

- 09:30** Meeting at Radboud University Campus, Erasmus Building
20th floor
- 09:45** MA Peer Group Consultations – Help to Advance the
Argument of your Fellow Thinker
@Erasmus Building 9.14
- 11:45** Instructions for field trips in Nijmegen to the American
Sites of Memory
- 12:00** Lunch at Het Gerecht in the Grotius Building (on campus)
(self-pay)
- 14:00** Regionaal Archief Nijmegen
Field trips to American Sites of Memory in Nijmegen (in
groups)
- 16:30** Meeting at the Gelderlander Newspaper Headquarter Stu
dents report/presentation findings of their city expedition
- Presentation by guest speaker (tba) on Oversteek bridge/
war memorial and FAN (Foundation Friendship Albany-
Nijmegen)
- Interviews with reporter from *De Gelderlander* newspaper
<http://www.gelderlander.nl/>
- 18:30** Walk to the Oversteek Bridge – the largest World War II
memorial in Europe
Commemorative Practices: Sunset walk at Oversteek
Bridge
- 19:30** Open evening at the Honig Fabriek close to the Oversteek
Bridge

Required Reading

- Doss, Erika. "Gratitude: Memorializing World War II and the 'Greatest Generation.'" *Memorial Mania. Public Feeling in America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010. 187-253. Print.
- Rosendaal, Joost. "After the Bombs." *The Destruction of Nijmegen, 1944. American Bombs and German Fire*. Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2014. 57-80. Print.

Recommended Reading

- Certeau, Michel de. "Walking in the City." *The Practices of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. 91-110. Print.
- Laat, Niels de, van Lunteren, Frank, Steenbergen, Dorine, and Willems, Michiel. *The Crossing: A Dutch Tribute to 48 American War Heroes*. De Gelderlander, 2014. 6-7, 44-51. Print.

Wednesday, 15 March, 2017

**On Crossing Borders:
Collaborative Thinking, Writing, and Action in
Nijmegen and Essen**

- 09:30 "Black Lives Matter and You"
Laura Visser-Maessen (Nijmegen), Markha Valenta
(Nijmegen), Jorrit van den Berk (Nijmegen), and Mitchell
Esajas (Civil Rights Activist and Community Builder)
(Amsterdam)
@Radboud University Campus, Donders Zaal
- 10:45 Round Table Discussion
@Radboud University Campus, Donders Zaal

In the context of "grounding" American Studies, the main purpose of this session is to explore the ways in which (anti-)racism crosses national and cultural boundaries. We should not make the mistake of thinking that white supremacy and the fight against it are unique to the United States. At the same time, we should be conscious of the ways in which national contexts have shaped these issues. At the heart of this discussion is going to be the work and experience of Mitchell Esajas, an Afro-Dutch activist and community builder who has been active in civil rights both in the U.S. and the Netherlands. Students will then be invited to reflect on this topic from their position as (European) Americanists. How should European scholars contribute to the study of (anti-)racism in the context of American Studies? What is the relationship between scholarship and activism? Is the American case relevant to the European experience (or vice versa)?

- 12:15 Lunch at Het Gerecht in the Grotius Building (on campus)
(self-pay)

- 13:15 Transition to Essen by Bus: Thinking aloud about *your own* theory of transnational American Studies, potentially with your Tandem partner
- 15:30 Arrival in Essen & Check-In at Hotel Unperfekthaus
- 18:00 “The Uncanny Return of (Trans)national Anxieties”
Donald E. Pease (Dartmouth College)
@Glaspavillon (Universitätsstraße 12, 45141 Essen)
- 20:00 Exploring the City of Essen and its Night Life / Open Evening

Required Reading

www.BlackLivesMatter.com

Pease, Donald. “Introduction: Re-mapping the Transnational Turn.” *Re-Mapping the Transnational Turn in American Studies*. Eds. Winfried Fluck, Donald Pease, and John Carlos Rowe. Dartmouth: Dartmouth University Press, 2011. 1-48. Print

Salem, Sara and Thompson, Vanessa. “Old racisms, New masks: On the Continuing Discontinuities of Racism and the Erasure of Race in European Contexts.” *Nineteen Sixty Nine: An Ethnic Studies Journal* 3.1 (2016): 1-23. Web.

RUDESA Program (Essen)

Thursday, 16 March 2017

Analytical Practice, Theorization and Academic Conversation

- 09:00** “Walking the City: An Urban Analysis” – Collecting Data
Starting Point for Groups: Unperfekthaus
- 11:00** “Walking the City: An Urban Analysis” – Discussion and
Presentation
moderated by Barbara Buchenau, Courtney Moffett-Bateau
and Zohra Hassan (Duisburg-Essen)
@Campus Essen: Die Brücke
- 13:30** Lunch at Duisburg-Essen Mensa, Essen Campus (self-pay)
- 14:30** “Scripting Creativity in Essen and Detroit”
Barbara Buchenau (Duisburg-Essen) & Alex Blue V
(University of California Santa Barbara)
@V15 R01 H90
- 15:45** Coffee Break
- 16:00** “Transnational American Studies and Border Crossings”
Lilia Soto (Wyoming) and Ulli Adelt (Wyoming)
@V15 R01 H90
- 17:15** Individual preparation for MA PEER GROUPS: Adapt
presentation of your research question to new audience,
including the suggestions received in the first meeting
- 18:30** RUDESA Dinner
@Großstadtdeli (Univiertel/Unipark, 45127 Essen)

Required Reading

- Adelt, Ulrich. "Machines with a Heart: German Identity in the Music of Can and Kraftwerk." *Popular Music and Society*. 35.3 (July 2012): 359-374. Print.
- Canclini, Nestor Garcia. "Entrance." *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005. 1-11. Print.
- Gieryn, Thomas F. "City as Truth-Spot: Laboratories and Field-Sites in Urban Studies." *Social Studies of Science* 36.1 (2006): 5-38. Print.
- Hassenpflug, Dieter, Giersig, Nico, and Stratmann, Bernhard. "Introduction: Challenges for Urban Hermeneutics in the 21st Century." Eds. Dieter Hassenpflug, Nico Giersig, and Bernhard Stratmann. *Reading the City: Developing Urban Hermeneutics*. Weimar: Verlag der Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, 2011. 23-36. Print.
- Hassenpflug, Dieter. "Once Again: Can Urban Space be Read?" Dieter Hassenpflug, Nico Giersig, and Bernhard Stratmann (eds). *Reading the City: Developing Urban Hermeneutics*. Weimar: Verlag der Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, 2011. 49-59. Print.
- Lindner, Rolf. "Die Kulturelle Textur der Stadt." *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* 104 (2008): 137-147. Print.
- Soto, Lilia. "The Telling Moment: Pre-Crossings of Mexican Teenage Girls and their Journeys to the Border." *Geopolitics* 21.2 (2016): 325-344. Print.
- Tomlinson, Barbara and Lipsitz, George. "American Studies as Accompaniment." *American Quarterly* 65.1 (2013): 1-30. Print.

Friday, 17 March 2017

Academic Conversation and Application

- 09:30** MA Peer Groups – Refine the Argument of your Fellow Thinker
@Cafeteria Rosso in building R12 and vicinity
- 11:15** “Writing Latin@ Los Angeles”
Josef Raab (Duisburg-Essen)
@V15 R01 H90
- 12:00** Lunch at Duisburg-Essen Mensa (self-pay)
- 13:00** “The Adventures of the Urban Frontier in the 21st Century”
Dietmar Meinel (Duisburg-Essen)
@V15 R01 H90
- 14:00** “Deindustrialization and Photographic Memory”
László Munteán (Nijmegen)
@V15 R01 H90
- 15:00** Wrap-Up & Open Conversation
“What is your theory of grounding Transnational Studies?”
Discussion of Reading Material in Plenum
@V15 R01 H90
- 16:00** Bus departs from Campus Essen

Required Reading

Limerick, Patricia. "The Adventures of the Frontier in the Twentieth Century." *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2001. 74-92. Print

Rodriguez, Luis J. "Pigeons." *The Republic of East L.A.* New York: Harper Collins, 2002. 163-176. Print.

Vergara, Camilo J. *American Ruins*. The Monacelli Press, 1999. 61-69, 202-213. Print.

Recommended Reading:

Turner, Frederick Jackson. "The Significance of the Frontier in American History." *The Frontier in American History*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920. 1-12. Print.

WALL-E. Dir. Andrew Stanton. Perf. Ben Burtt, Elissa Knight, and Jeff Garlin. 2008. Disney/Pixar, 2009. DVD.

Your Participation in the RUDESA Spring Academy

Tuesday and Thursday Afternoon

1. “My Research Question / My Master Thesis” – MA Peer Group Consultation

Small groups of up to five participants will be joined by one faculty member (as a moderator) to advise and discuss MA thesis or project / term paper outlines. Each student will present his or her thesis statement or project outline in no more than fifteen minutes to the group. The presenter should identify at least one essential question about the project with which he or she is still struggling. These questions may include:

- What are the questions raised by my material that I have trouble answering?
- How do I proceed methodologically speaking? Why?
- If you would like to present your thesis statement, please consider bringing along a print version (12 copies to be shared with your peers)

Students who are not currently preparing a thesis or seminar paper should please either

- bring a short excerpt (two to three paragraphs) from theoretical text that you found intriguing though difficult to grasp, or
- bring an excerpt from a literary text (one page max.) you found fascinating
- In either case please bring along twelve copies to be able to share it with each of the groups and be prepared to present one possible reading of the text under consideration

After the presentation, the consultation begins. This means that the other group members will talk about the strengths of the project they have just encountered, they will identify aspects in need of refinement, and they might spot aspects that appear to be unaddressed. The presenter does not take part in this part of the discussion. Instead, he or she is invited to take notes while the others are seeking to understand and improve the argument. Only after this period of listening in on the thoughts of the peer group does the

presenter reconnect to the group, responding to their thoughts and suggestions. This two-step approach offers various benefits:

- The group can discuss freely what the members have understood (and what they did not understand) about the project, its strengths, and its less persuasive aspects.
- By listening in on the conversations of the other group members, the presenter can assess which parts of his or her project are particularly strong and/or well-presented and which aspects require clarification and improvement.

In experiencing the numerous ways in which your peers understand your project, you move toward a “meta-”perspective on your own work without being asked to defend it.

Tuesday around Noon, Wednesday after Lunch, Thursday Morning, Friday Afternoon

2. “My Theory and Practice of Grounding Transnational American Studies”

In the context of RUDESA we discuss a variety of approaches to Transnational American Studies and we apply this rather broad disciplinary framework with its theoretical and practical implications to our individual research projects. However, we would like to ask you to think ahead: What if you were to develop your own Transnational American Studies theory? This exercise asks you to think critically about transnationalism, one of the most important paradigms currently shaping our multi-discipline. The task straddles three countries and is divided into six parts: you will work on the first part before coming to the Spring Academy (independent study of the material in the reader). Part two involves a field trip to American sites of memory in Nijmegen. Part three involves your own transfer from Nijmegen to Essen: as you cross national borders and ponder their history of U.S. American liberation, you are invited to define your own, very personal understanding of transnational American Studies, unfolding its historical, cultural, political, spatial

and geographical premises. Part four begins as an exercise of walking a part of the city of Essen while thinking of urban experiences as significantly shaped by North American urban theory and practice. This part ends with your presentation on the glimpse of Essen you have been able to gather. Part five allows you to test your theory of “Grounding” in debates with your peers on Friday, part six comprises finalizing your theory in writing, to be submitted four weeks after the completion of the Spring Academy.

To give you one example of how critics have understood the exercise of grounding, please consider Andreas Huyssen’s use of the term in *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (2003):

“If the historical past once used to give coherence and legitimacy to family, community, nation, and state, in a discourse that Eric Hobsbawm called the ‘invention of tradition’ then those formerly stable links have weakened today to the extent that national traditions and historical pasts are increasingly deprived of their geographic and political **groundings**, which are reorganized in the processes of cultural globalization. This may mean that these groundings are written over, erased, and forgotten, as the defenders of local heritage and national authenticity lament. Or it may mean that they are being renegotiated in the clash between globalizing forces and new productions and practices of local cultures. The form in which we think of the past is increasingly memory without borders rather than national history within borders. Modernity has brought with it a very real compression of time and space. But in the register of imaginaries, it has also expanded our horizons of time and space beyond the local, the national, and even the international. In certain ways, then, our contemporary obsessions with memory in the present may well be an indication that our ways of thinking and living temporality itself are undergoing a significant shift. This is what the whole academic debate about history vs. memory is subliminally all about, but one wouldn’t know it by listening in. And yet, the most interesting aspect of the debate is what it may portend for the emergence of a new paradigm of thinking about time and space, history and geography in the twenty-first century” (4).

Part One: Independent Studies at Home or in the Library

Working through the required reading for the Spring Academy please abstract one possible theory of (a) *Transnational American Studies* on a single flash card, and (b) describe two possibilities of further “grounding” transnational American studies in terms of the methodologies employed, the materials chosen or the theoretical foundation upon which arguments can be built (using a second flash card). Make sure to bring these flash cards to the Spring Academy.

Part Two: “Walking the City – Encountering American Sites of Memory”

Instruction on this part will be handed out in Nijmegen. It is the twin to the “Walking the City” exercise in Essen (check Part Four). In Nijmegen, you will focus on the marked and unmarked signs of American historical presences in Nijmegen, analyzing commemorative practices.

Part Three: On the Bus

Sit next to a partner from one of the other universities (if you are from Nijmegen, choose a partner from Essen or Laramie and vice versa) and use the transfer to exchange opinions about what you have learned about transnationalism in American Studies over the past days and how these insights relate to the assumptions gathered during your independent studies. Keep the following questions in mind: if I were to develop *my own* theory on a grounded kind of Transnational American Studies, what would it look like? What elements would it contain, which materials would it address, with what kind of methodology? What theoretical assumptions would it rest on? Present these ideas to your tandem partner during the bus ride, ask him/her for his/her vision and jointly develop ideas for one specific RUDESA version of grounding Transnational American Studies. Sketch your thoughts in bullet points.

Part Four: “Walking in the City – An Urban Analysis”

“Walking the City: An Urban Analysis” introduces you to a small fragment of the city of Essen, allowing for the formation of a rapidly grounded transnational perspective. We ask you to approach your urban area as a multi-layered text that invites, and indeed needs, your critical reading and analysis (compare Hassenpflug and Gieryn in the reader for the methodology you will employ). Imagine yourselves as a group of researchers who has been asked to **develop an outline for a research project** about American aspects of the urban area you will be exploring. This assignment will highlight how the process of reading always involves choices: As you walk, you will be decoding/reading elements such as architecture, streets, walkways, walls and stairs, intersections and traffic lights, but also material objects, music/sound, written information/text, images/visuals and olfactory and haptic sense perceptions. These elements make up an urban environment, but they are also the textures that enable deviating experiences of the city dwellers and their concrete, yet disparate and often competing urban readings/hermeneutics. As you will develop short presentations about your impressions, you participate in writing or “scripting” the city from a grounded transnational as well as Americanist perspective.

On Thursday morning, your task will be to explore and document one precisely specified area of Essen – so **please bring pen and paper as well as a digital camera or a smartphone**. You may concentrate on what seems to be particularly common for your area, equally noting streets, buildings, signs or urban arrangements that differ and stand out. Take photos and notes to document and later share your observations. We encourage you to incorporate ideas, concepts, and terms from your reading material to develop an understanding of your urban area.

After the walk, the task of your urban walking group will be to develop a five-minute presentation on the quarter you visited. Remember, you are a research group applying for funding and you

should be able to explain why your urban area deserves to be studied in greater detail. Think about the ways in which aspects such as architecture, infrastructure, exhibited art and advertisement, music and text, city planning, settlement patterns, community arrangements etc. shape and produce urban experiences. To come up with a compelling presentation, please think about and try to integrate the following questions:

- What makes your space particularly interesting, representative, or relevant for studying urban environments from an American / American studies perspective?
- What is the research question (or research thesis) you would want to pursue? Explain your question or research thesis and suggest possible answers
- Which fields of urban, cultural or social studies does your research approach and your area of Essen address? How so?
- Which ideas and/or arguments from the assigned reading material may be helpful to understand your research? Please explain
- Each group will have the opportunity to ask a senior advisor for support with putting together their research project

For your **five-minute presentation on Thursday**, please use your photos and notes to introduce your research project (we will also provide you with a Powerpoint template to organize your presentation). You may also include the statements of people you interviewed or quotes from our reading material that you found particularly pertinent. If you prefer a writerly approach, you may also write a script, a story, or a poem about your urban experience.

At the end of this exercise the research groups are going to be re-arranged so that every member will have the opportunity to present the group's quarter and its research proposal to participants

from the other research groups. As a consequence, everyone is going to present one research proposal to an audience of about seven people. Afterwards we will talk about the proposals in the forum. Ideally, this exercise also inflects your thinking on grounding transnational American studies.

Areas for Exploration

1. Baldeney-See and vicinity (S-107 South)
2. Zeche Zollverein and vicinity (S-107 North)
3. Take the S-105, travelling in both directions until reaching the respective final destination (Unterstrasse, Frintrop and Rellinghausen, Finefraustrasse, respectively). Get off once as you travel in both directions.
4. Südostviertel to Steeler Straße
5. Rüttenscheider Straße
6. From U-18 station “Breslauer Straße” to Mühlheimer Straße and Frohnhauser Platz
7. Downtown to Limbecker Platz to main station
8. From IKEA to Thyssen-Krupp headquarters (Berthold Beitz Boulevard)
9. Margarethenhöhe

Part Five: In Essen on Friday afternoon

Revisit your joint notes of your respective ideas and write down your theory of how to ground transnational American studies; please do so on a single page.

Part Six: Independent Studies at Home

Using your flash cards, the notes taken during the Spring Academy and the required reading for the Spring Academy, please delineate, explicate and defend your own theory of how transnational American studies can be “grounded” in the future. Make sure to write a terse, concise scholarly text of no more than two pages that uses footnotes and parenthetical references and a list of works cited to make its point.

After the RUDESA Week

**3. “What I Learned about Transnational American Studies
and Ways of Grounding”**

Written Report of 1500 words to be Submitted by **April 17, 2017**
[for **Duisburg-Essen** students]

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