

Call for Papers

White Supremacy in the United States: Politics, Economies, Histories, Affects, and Poetics



The online journal *Current Objectives in Postgraduate American Studies (COPAS)*, dedicated to publishing the work of early career researchers in American Studies in Germany and beyond, turns twenty in 2019. In 1999, when *COPAS* published its first issue, Gloria Anzaldúa was revising her article “The New Mestiza Nation,” which opens with an observation that sounds all too familiar twenty years later:

[W]e face a backlash and a dangerous regressive state inside and outside of education. The visibility of hate groups, the KKK, neo-nazis and other white supremacy groups has increased in the last few years. They proclaim that racial/ethnic others, working-class people, people of color are taking over their white territory and are using affirmative action to drive them out of jobs. [...] They denounce the wave of multiculturalism on campuses, referring to it as a new tyrannical form of being ‘politically correct.’ When some of us criticize racism or homophobia in the academy they respond by pointing the finger at us and shouting their right-wing buzzwords like political correctness to silence dissenting voices.¹

Heeding Anzaldúa’s subsequent call to counter this backlash, we dedicate our anniversary thematic issue to investigating the United States and American Studies under the auspices of the concept of ‘white supremacy.’ As a seismograph of German postgraduate American Studies research, *COPAS* invites contributions on white supremacy as a central organizing principle of American society and culture, past and present, from all academic disciplines concerned with American Studies.

We understand white supremacy as a pervasive formation that comprises institutional, political, economic, social, symbolic, physical, affective, and epistemic structures. White supremacy enables, maintains, and naturalizes oppression and dominance, which unfold from the violent making of ‘America’ as colonial modernity and persist through various permutations until today.² With recent political developments in North America and Europe where nationalist-populist and outright racist political powers have been on the rise, white supremacy has once more proven to be, as Michael Epp argues, “perhaps, the most enduring form of public feeling, cultural practice, and political aspiration in the history of the United States.”³ On the one hand, longstanding racist practices such as blackface live on in contemporary American culture because they cater to desires of antiblack domination. On the other hand, the interventions of counterpublics by Black people and people of color are delegitimized as unwarranted outbursts of anger. In light of the “affective turn”⁴ in American Studies and other fields, this *COPAS* issue thus proposes the need to analyze the ways in which notions and practices of white supremacy are intertwined with not only feeling but the politics, economies, histories, and poetics of whiteness. Thereby, we follow Claudia

¹ Anzaldúa, Gloria E. “The New Mestiza Nation.” *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader*, edited by AnaLouise Keating, Duke UP, 2009, p. 203.

² Sexton, Jared. “The Social Life of Social Death: On Afro-Pessimism and Black Optimism.” *InTensions Journal*, vol. 5, 2011, pp. 1-47.

³ Epp, Michael. “Durable Public Feelings.” *Canadian Review of American Studies*, vol. 41, no. 2, 2011, p. 179.

⁴ Clough, Patricia Tincineto. “Introduction.” *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, edited by Patricia Tincineto Clough and Jean Halley, Duke UP, 2007, p. 1.

Rankine's analytic axiom that "to name whiteness is to name dominance."⁵ Critical questions arising in this context, among many others, are: What does it mean to feel, to sense, and to experience white supremacy? Which emotions does white supremacy engender and how? How does systemic white supremacy construct individuals' affects and how do these affects relate to the distribution of economic, social, and symbolic capital? How do affects of 'white guilt,' 'white power,' and 'redemption' shape public discourse, legal policies, and the representations of US history? Who writes, interrogates, confronts, and deranges those (hi)stories of whiteness and how?

We seek article proposals that range from historical, political, and cultural perspectives to transnational and comparative approaches. Theoretical pieces as well as case studies are welcome, particularly with regard to the ways in which institutionalized white supremacy is connected to intersecting discourses of gender, sexuality, queerness, transness, class, age, ethnicity, origin, and disability. Additionally, this call is open to creative submissions (such as poems or short stories) and to proposals that engage with the ethics of doing American Studies from certain positionalities and localities. Topics may include but are not limited to the following fields of inquiry:

- white supremacy and cultural expression (e.g. film, literature, photography, performing arts, music, and social media)
- Antiracism and other racist and discriminatory discourses and practices (against e.g. Black, Indigenous, LatinX, and 'undocumented' people) as well as their transnational ramifications
- racial capitalism as well as intersections of white supremacy and class (e.g. discourses of 'white trash' and the persistence of a 'white elite')
- the entanglements of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and genocide
- social justice movements and their concepts of and actions towards a just and free society
- white supremacy and questions of gender and sexuality (e.g. femonationalism, homonationalism, queer liberalism)
- the body politics of white supremacy (e.g. scientific racism, ableism and ablenationalism, eugenics and genetic testing)
- white supremacy, globalization, and environmental destruction

Please send your submission to copas@dgfa.de. For scholarly papers the submission deadline for 500-word-proposals is December 1, 2018. Members of the editorial team will review all proposals and inform applicants about the outcome by January 30, 2019. Upon acceptance, full articles of about 5,000 to 8,000 words length will be due June 15, 2019. The articles will be peer-reviewed. Creative submissions are also due December 1, 2018. In addition, we kindly ask authors of creative submissions to send us a brief artist's statement (1000-1500 words) by June 15, 2019. Open access publication is scheduled for November 2019. Please see <https://copas.uni-regensburg.de/> for our editorial policies and submission guidelines.

We look forward to your submission!

⁵ Rankine, Claudia. "The Racial Imaginary in Contemporary Art." American Counter/PUBLICs. 65th Annual Conference of the German Association for American Studies, 27 May 2018, Seminaris CampusHotel, Berlin.