

Call for Papers

Doing Southern Studies Today

International Conference
Humboldt University in Berlin
14-15 January 2021

In the field of Southern Studies, the first twenty years of the 21st century were defined by attempts to formulate and visualize the future of Southern Studies, as evidenced by publications such as Suzanne W. Jones and Sharon Monteith's *South to a New Place: Region, Literature, Culture* (2002), Jon Smith's *Finding Purple America: The South and the Future of American Cultural Studies* (2013), or Zackary Vernon's *Ecocriticism and the Future of Southern Studies* (2019) – to name only a few. The “future,” most publications propose, lies beyond traditional narratives of Southern exceptionalism and sectionalism that promote a specific “sense of place” that cannot be found outside the South. A more dynamic and global understanding of the South needs to be implemented if Southern Studies wants to contribute to a critical engagement with current and past cultural and social developments, in and outside the U.S. Despite the expansion of the scope of Southern Studies though, the ‘old’ questions remain: What and where is “the South”? What is “southern”? While “sense-of-place”-regionalism, a rather essentialist and nativist approach to being “southern,” is outdated, the concern with the “place of ‘place’” in Southern Studies remains.

This conference aims to bring together scholars who want to share their work on “the South” and “doing Southern Studies” in an uncommon place: Berlin – a place outside “the South.” We don't expect definite answers to the ‘old’ questions (although we welcome them). We rather want to explore the trajectories of Southern Studies in and outside the U.S. We owe our title to Scott Romine and Jennifer Rae Greeson who claim that “[d]oing Southern Studies is unmasking and refusing the binary thinking – ‘North’/‘South,’ nation/South, First World/Third World, self/other,” it is “thinking geographically, thinking historically, thinking relationally, thinking about power, thinking about justice, thinking back” (2016: 4). We take their definitions as this conference's objective and seek an exchange of these thoughts. We are particularly interested in papers that tackle the South as a “multiplicity of communities” (Gray 2002: xxiii), factoring in race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity; the role (or rather the problematic exclusivity) of whiteness in Southern Studies; imaginations of “the South” in popular media; the Global South and the possible transnational routes of Southern Studies.

The first confirmed keynote speaker is Martyn Richard Bone (University of Copenhagen), author of *The Postsouthern Sense of Place in Contemporary Fiction* (2005).

Please send abstracts of **no more than 300 words** and a short biographical info to conference organizers Evangelia Kindinger (Humboldt University in Berlin) and Greta Kaisen (Humboldt University in Berlin) at doingsouthernstudies@gmail.com. The **deadline** for paper proposals is **1 August 2020**.