

Frontiers and Wastelands: The Boundaries of US American Identity

International Conference

Alcalá de Henares, Madrid | November 25–26, 2024

Reprising its first edition, the conference will focus on how US American identities have been shaped, informed, configured, and challenged since the country's foundation. It will look at the centrality of boundaries broadly intended and borderlands as geopolitical, sociocultural, metaphorical zones of liminality. Boundaries that have been deployed to construct (and deconstruct) the dominant national identity and its narratives. Just as it happens along geopolitical borders, the proximity of otherness—which dwells in the borderlands themselves—implies a more or less overt threat to the sovereignty and cultural integrity of the nation eliciting a variety of perceived dangers. Stereotypes are born and binaries are created to maintain such integrity, playing on the difference and opposition between inclusion / exclusion, civilization / savagery, correctness / incorrectness, insider / outsider, us / them.

The conference invites reflections on the multimodal representations of the boundaries of US identity in popular culture and discourses, focusing on the diversity of identities, liminality, and disenfranchised experiences of US Americanness, as well as the construction of borders—both material and metaphorical—as means to define the US national imaginary.

Possible topics may be (but are not limited to):

- Reflections on the notion of “boundary” and how it has shaped the construction, integration, and erasure of US identities
- The confines of gender, ethnic, racial, sexual, political, religious identities in US culture, how they have been maintained, challenged, crossed, and reshaped
- The constructions and representations of US Americanness, as well as counter- and subcultures
- Representations of the borderlands, borders, and borderland communities in US cinema, TV series, literature, and graphic narratives
- Sociocultural and political boundaries within US cities and between urban and rural spaces
- How linguistic boundaries inform the experience of non-Anglo US communities
- The frontier, the border, and the borderlands broadly intended as means to define US national identities
- Borderland literature and artistic expressions, especially related to immigration, border-crossing, and the life in border communities
- The myth of the frontier: western narratives and Old West imaginaries
- Boundaries of North America (US–Mexico, US–Canada, Canada–Mexico relations and their representations in popular culture)
- Representations and narratives about the militarized border fence
- Frontiers and the wilderness: representations of US landscapes
- US wastelands: landscapes of waste, toxicity, dehumanization, structural violence, neglected and liminal realities
- US boundaries in apocalyptic scenarios, dystopias, and the Anthropocene

Deadline for submission: JUNE 17, 2024

We accept abstract proposals for individual presentations (≈ 250 words), as well as full panels (3 presenters, ≈ 250 -word description of the panel plus brief abstracts of all papers). Please, email your proposal to popmec.frontiers@gmail.com as a single attachment (.doc, .docx, .odt) including name, affiliation (if any), and contact email.

The conference will result as well in the publication of a special issue of the *European Journal of American Culture* (<https://www.intellectbooks.com/european-journal-of-american-culture>), for which we will select papers upon the event. Please, let us know if you are interested in being considered for publication.

You can find the call, further details and updates on the official conference webpage:
<https://www.popmec.com/frontiers-conference/>

Venue

Instituto Franklin–Universidad de Alcalá
Colegio de Trinitarios, Calle de la Trinidad, 1
28801 Alcalá de Henares, Madrid ES

Registration fees

REDUCED student / unwaged: 50€ (35€ + 15€ one year of PopMeC membership)

FULL: 85€ (60€ + 25€ one year of PopMeC membership)

The membership allows you to participate to our virtual events (including our annual virtual conference) for free, as well to receive our updates and to send your CFPs to our mailing list.