

## Borders in Crisis: Border Struggles and Border Violence in a Global Perspective



### UdS American Studies Graduate Forum (hybrid: on-site and on-line)

Saarland University, Saarbrücken, May 11-12, 2023

Venue: t.b.a. and on Zoom

**Call for Papers**  
**Deadline: April 6, 2023**

In cooperation with the German-American Institute Saarland, the Chair of North American Literary and Cultural Studies (NamLitCult) at Saarland University (UdS) will hold its annual UdS American Studies Graduate Forum (ASGF) that invites advanced Master students, doctoral candidates, as well as junior scholars to present their current work-in-progress in a workshop-style setting. This year's UdS American Studies Graduate Forum will be integrated into the Seminar Border Studies 2023 "**Borders in Crisis**," organized by the UniGR-Center for Border Studies at Saarland University, and the VW-project "Borders in Crisis." The ASGF will offer participants a chance to discuss their research with peers as well as with more advanced scholars. This year, we invite submissions dealing with the construction, representation, and assessment of borders in crisis.

Within the fields of Border Studies, researchers have observed an increasing complexity of borders (cf. Wille 2021; Wille, Fellner, and Nossem, forthcoming 2023): on the one hand, as unstable concepts with shifting meanings, metaphors, and paradigms of thinking, on the other, as hard facts, fortified geographical shells, which are hard to penetrate and which are often deadly (Jones 2017). We can observe contradicting, though sometimes simultaneous debordering and rebordering practices. We have noticed the growing importance of the border as a discursive tool in political debates, and we have witnessed an increasing weaponization of the border, encompassing both the militarization of the border as well as the transformation of the border into a deadly weapon of political power play.

As semi-permeable sites of struggle, allowing only the crossing of specific goods and trade assets as well as specific groups of people while excluding others (Mezzadra/Neilson 2013), particularly the outer borders of Europe and North America have drawn the attention of the public eye over the last decade, both e.g. in the Mediterranean as Europe's outer border and in the U.S.-Mexican borderlands in North America.

From "Build the Wall" and "Kids in Cages" to "Biden's Border Crisis," the border has been at the epicenter of ever polarizing political debates in the U.S. Negotiations about colonial land grab and Indigenous rights to land also circle around borders, with borders turning into tools of expropriation, displacement, and genocide. On the other side of the Atlantic, while still trying to learn the lessons from the unexpected rebordering in Europe during Covid, Europe was shocked by the Russian all-out war in Ukraine in February 2022, where Russia deliberately tries to ignore and modify existing state borders. News about this war pushed Europe's cruel border and migration politics and deaths in the Mediterranean into the background of the public eye.

Consequently, the struggle and the violence arising from (the contestability of) the border merit a more in-depth analysis.

We invite junior researchers in the field of Border Studies, American Studies, and related disciplines in our Transform4Europe network to submit their papers for the ASGF2023.

Topics can include but are not limited to:

- The biopolitics of borders in war
- Border struggles and identity reshaping
- Representations of violent borders and trauma
- Narratives of migration and border crossings in times of crisis
- Cultural construction of borders in crisis
- Forced displacement and refugeedom in war times
- Borders and semiotic warfare
- Media and borders in crisis
- Impact of global crises (such as pandemics, climate change, and political upheavals) on border regimes and practices.
- Intersections between borders, crises, and the global economy

We encourage submissions that draw on a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including but not limited to literary and cultural studies, history, sociology, anthropology, political science, geography, and linguistics. Presentations should be approximately 20 minutes in length and will be followed by a discussion and feedback round with all participants and experts.

We are proud and honored that the renowned border, migration, and globalization scholar Prof. Dr. **Saskia Sassen**, Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology and Co-Chair of The Committee on Global Thought, Columbia University and Centennial visiting Professor at the London School of Economics has accepted our invitation to give a keynote lecture.

This Uds American Studies Graduate Forum is kindly funded by the German-American-Institute Saarland. Graduate students and junior faculty with papers that have a decidedly U.S. focus are eligible for funding.

Abstracts of no more than 300 words should be submitted by **April 6, 2023** to [amerikanistik@mx.uni-saarland.de](mailto:amerikanistik@mx.uni-saarland.de). Please include a brief bio (no more than 100 words).

We hope that the ASGF2023 will provide a forum for scholars and junior researchers to engage in critical dialogue about borders in crisis, and we are looking forward to a productive exchange with experts and scholars attending the UniGR-CBS Seminar Border Studies.

Contact: [amerikanistik@mx.uni-saarland.de](mailto:amerikanistik@mx.uni-saarland.de)