Obama Lecture

OBAMA INSTITUTE

November 26, 2026
10.00 - ca. 12.15
Fakultätssaal (01-185)
Philosophicum

Prof. Dr. Jens Temmen
"New Planet Dad, Please?": Post-Planetarity in North American Astroculture

Joseph A. Hurley
Curating the USA Library

Obama Dissertation Prize & Hans Galinsky Memorial Prize
Award Ceremonies



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“New Planet Dad, Please?”: Post-Planetarity in North American Astroculture



Imaginaries of an astrotheological ‘new New World’ exodus into outer space, promising a quick technological fix for our planetary polycrisis, have become a staple among US tech-oligarchs. They hail the stars as a space of solution and even of salvation for humanity, offering the transcendence of the human body and our planetary embeddedness. The ways in which this discourse reverberates through current (popular) culture and science underlines its potency in times of planetary insecurities.
Through a comparative analysis of Christopher Nolans’s *Interstellar* (2014) and Richard Powers‘ *Bewilderment* (2021)—the latter quoted in the title—my talk will discuss how contemporary North American astroculture has evolved into a central arena for negotiating tech-faschist ideology. It thus contributes to a right-wing “withdrawal from the idea of a jointly inhabited world” (Latour), which necessitates, I will argue, into a critical debate of ‘post-planetarity‘ discourse.

Jens Temmen is chair of American Studies at KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. His first monograph was titled *The Territorialities of US Imperialism(s)* (Universitätsverlag Winter, 2020). He was visiting scholar at the University of Hawai’i at Manoa (2016) and York University Toronto (2022). In 2024 he was visiting professor at the Centre for Anglophone Studies (CAS) at Université de Toulouse-Jean Jaurès. His current research focuses on North American astroculture, post-planetarity discourse and tech-fascism. He is co-editor of a special issue on *North American Astroculture* (*AmSt*) and of a book series titled *Critical Futures* (transcript). He is also a member of faculty at the DFG RTG *Practicing Place*, where he is involved in an interdisciplinary research project on “Fascist Spaces”.

Obama Dissertation Prize

The Obama Dissertation Prize is awarded annually for outstanding Ph.D. work in Transnational American Studies.

Boyd Ruamcharoen, Ph.D.
“Deteriorating Relations: Weatherable Materials, Tropical Decay, and American Power, 1942–1970s”
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Obama Lecture

Program 2026

Welcome
Alfred Hornung,
Speaker of the Obama Institute

Obama Lecture (in memoriam Karl Dietz)
Introduction: Alfred Hornung,

Curating the USA Library
Introduction: Axel Schäfer

Obama Dissertation Prize
Introduction: Mita Banerjee

Hans Galinsky Prize
Introduction: Frank Newton

Hans Galinsky Memorial Prize

The Hans Galinsky Memorial Prize is awarded annually to the best student theses and research papers in Early American Studies at the Obama Institute’s Mainz campus.

Zarah Marlene Meisel
“The Power of Media: Perception of American Identity from Crèvecoeur to Hamilton” – Term Paper

Leonie Pagel
“The Realist Heroine? Penelope Lapham and the Entanglement of Realism and Romance” – Term Paper