

CALL FOR PAPERS

STUDENT CONFERENCE 'WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS'? 250 YEARS LATER

JUNE 19 AND 20, 2026
JOHANNES GUTENBERG
UNIVERSITY, MAINZ

This year, the United States commemorates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. We are particularly interested in contributions that explore the tensions between democratic ideals and political realities, past and present.

Guiding questions include:

- Which elements of the democratic vision articulated in 1776 continue to shape the United States today?
- Where do we see contradictions between promise and practice?
- How can historical narratives be brought into dialogue with contemporary developments?
- Which role may artistic expression play in the negotiation of democratic ideals?

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- the Declaration of Independence as a historical document and an object of memory culture as well as its cultural relevance and symbolic power
- slavery, racial exclusion, and the DoI's legacy
- women's rights then and now: inclusion, exclusion, and reinterpretation
- critiques of the DoI across time
- the DoI in different academic disciplines
- representations in film, literature, and video games
- contemporary perspectives on the DoI

This student conference invites students on an advanced undergraduate as well as graduate level to reflect on the historical ideals of 1776 and their resonance in the present and critically engage with the Declaration of Independence as a founding document and the state of U.S. democracy today.

Hosted by graduate students of the Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies, the conference is deliberately interdisciplinary, welcoming contributions from across the humanities and social sciences, and from any field engaged with questions of democracy, culture, and power.

SUBMISSIONS

We warmly welcome submissions from advanced bachelor's and master's students across disciplines. Please submit an abstract of **250–300 words** by **February 28** to **Paulina Schlosser** via pschloss@students.uni-mainz.de.

Follow along @thesetruthsstudentcon!