

Futures and Frontiers of US American Culture(s) International Conference

30 September – 2 October 2026

John-F.-Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien, Freie Universität Berlin

While encompassing the study of US American cultures broadly intended, the conference aims at examining the evolution of their contemporary manifestations and possible futures. As the sociocultural and geopolitical landscapes in the United States are in rapid transformation, they give rise to new forms of expression, resistance and identity formation, characterizing how different groups are coping with change and precariousness. Likewise, the influence of US soft power has also been in transformation, as the global perception of US cultural ascendancy and impact has increasingly reshaped.

Uncertainty has marked the past few decades in many culturally relevant aspects, spanning from the instability of political categories to the increasing repression of targeted groups and the accelerated development of technologies that transform our relationships with artistic and cultural enjoyment. The inevitable role of artificial intelligence tools and in particular generative AI in relation to cultural production and creative processes, can be traced in the propagation of political discourses and aesthetics that manifest the existing polarization. Social media content and its immediacy have been leveraged by the most diverse groups and communities to externalize their feelings and stances, as well as to challenge opposite factions, resist against institutional and media invisibilization, and reach out to people who would otherwise be isolated. The conference seeks to foster debate and critical analysis in relation to the popular culture imaginaries of possible futures and hope, as well as cultural expressions that represent a distorted and polarized present.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- the trajectory of US popular culture in the 21st century
- representations of diversity and (un)safe spaces
- prescient cultural texts that envisioned current geopolitical unfoldings
- how the Trump era has been represented in film, graphic narratives, and literature
- how are futures and futurity being imagined in cultural texts
- the aesthetics and intrinsic excess of AI-generated images and videos in the Trump era
- social media content related to political conflict and state repression
- far-right social media content and its use of language to foster tribalism and traditionalism
- the (re)shaping of shared identities
- new forms of resistance and protest
- the foreign perception and representation of the United States in cultural texts
- changes and challenges in relation to forms of cultural expression, identity and enjoyment
- the transformation of cultural enjoyment in relation to technological changes

Deadline for abstract proposals: May 31, 2026

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

More practical details to come soon. You can find the call and updates on the official conference webpage: <https://www.popmec.com/frontiers-2026/>

Venue

John-F.-Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien
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