

ASANOR Conference 2026

“Constituting the U.S. in the Twenty-First Century”

University of Agder

Short Biographies

Keynote Speakers

Sarah Gronningsater is an associate professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania, where she teaches courses on the history of American law, the American Revolution, African American politics, and the sport of baseball. Her first book, *The Rising Generation: Gradual Abolition, Black Legal Culture, and the Making of National Freedom*, was published in 2024, and has received five book prizes, including the James Rawley Award for best book on U.S. race relations from the Organization of American Historians and the Cromwell Prize from the American Society for Legal History. She is also the recipient of numerous teaching awards at Penn, including the Dean’s Award for distinguished teaching by an assistant professor.

Xine Yao is Associate Professor in American Literature to 1900 and co-director of the queer studies network qUCL at University College London. Yao’s *Disaffected: The Cultural Politics of Unfeeling in Nineteenth-Century America* (Duke UP) won the Robert K Martin Book Award from the Canadian Association of American Studies, Duke University Press’s Scholars of Color First Book Award, honourable mention for the Arthur Miller First Book Prize from the British Association of American Studies, and shortlisted for the University English Book Prize. Accolades include the American Studies Association’s Yasuo Sakakibara Essay Prize. She is a BBC Radio 3/AHRC New Generation Thinker.

Panel Presenters

Anna S. Agbe-Davies is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Specializing in contemporary and historical archaeology, much of her research focuses on life in the African diaspora. Her first book, *Tobacco, Pipes, and Race: Little Tubes of Mighty Power* (2015), examines craft production on plantations and the origins

of racialized slavery in 17th-century Virginia. Her current book project considers the role of material culture in Black women's pursuit of human rights circa 1900-1950.

Fadime Apaydin, a first-generation college student, is a Ph.D. student in Religious Studies at the University of California, Riverside, and holds an M.A. in Religious Studies from the University of South Florida. Her research centers on the intersection of religion, migration, and cultural adaptation, with particular attention to Muslims in the United States. In addition to co-editing a volume on sustainability and religion, she has co-authored book chapters on the role of faith-based organizations in disaster response, media representation of religious minorities, faith-based diplomacy in climate negotiations, and religion and political legitimacy. Also, Fadime has been serving as co-chair of the Asian Religions Unit of the American Academy of Religion-Western Region.

Charles I. Armstrong is a Professor of English literature at the University of Agder. He has published three monographs and co-edited several essay collections. Much of his work deals with poetry, including Romantic poetry, Irish poetry, and (more recently) song lyrics. He is the current president of the European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies, and group leader for literature at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters.

Erin Small Capistrano is a PhD candidate at the University of Oslo, working on a project entitled "Violence and the Living Newspaper". She has a BA from Yale University and an MA from King's College, London, and has worked as a dramaturg, performer and teacher. Her research focuses on the relationship between theatre and politics, and the ways in which aesthetic forms are shaped by and intervene in their sociopolitical contexts.

Harrison F. Dietzman is an assistant professor in the Department of English at George Fox University, a Quaker college in western Oregon. His research focuses on medical humanities, postsecular theory, and the literatures of the nineteenth-century United States. His scholarship appears in or is forthcoming from *J19*, *Palgrave Studies in Global Literatures and Religions*, *The Emily Dickinson Journal*, *Religion & Literature*, and elsewhere.

Stephen Dougherty is Professor of American Literature at Agder University in Kristiansand, Norway. His essays on literature, contemporary philosophy, science, and technology have

appeared in *Cultural Critique*, *Diacritics*, *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, *Science Fiction Studies*, *University of Toronto Quarterly*, and other venues. Dougherty is a co-editor at *Science Fiction Studies*, and currently president of the American Studies Association of Norway (ASANOR).

Eir-Anne Edgar is Associate Professor of Literature in English at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), founder of the NTNU North American Studies research group, and a current vice president of the American Studies Association in Norway. Her research focuses on issues of gender, sexuality, race, and representation in twentieth- and twenty-first-century American literature and film. Her book project *Women in the Wastelands* (SUNY UP) examines contemporary feminist dystopian novels and American culture and politics.

Aurora Eide is a PhD candidate in English literature at the University of Agder, Norway. Her research centers on queer modernism, queer ecology, and the recovery of sapphic modernist poets. In her PhD project, titled “Sapphic Gardens: Queer Nature and the Futurity of Poetic Communities,” she investigates the understudied sapphic garden communities of Elsa Gidlow in the US, Natalie Barney in France, and Sylvia Townsend Warner in England. She has developed and taught courses at UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, including a course on gender and sexuality that focuses on queer literary history. In 2025, she won the Orm Øverland Prize for best graduate student paper at the NAAS conference in Turku for her research on Elsa Gidlow. She has also previously worked as an editorial assistant for *American Studies in Scandinavia*.

Susan Erdmann is an Associate Professor at the University of Agder in Kristiansand. She teaches linguistics and language in teacher-training and discipline studies.

Peter Paul Ferry: I am Professor of English Literature at the University of Stavanger (UiS), Norway. My research examines how literary and cultural narratives play a crucial role in representing, interrogating, and contesting masculinities. My scholarly output includes monographs, articles, and book chapters on representations of masculinities in the history of American Literature and contemporary literature, such as *Beards and Masculinity in American Literature* (Routledge 2020) and *Masculinity in Contemporary New York Fiction*

(Routledge 2015). I am currently writing a monograph on narrative empathy and masculinity in the fiction of George Saunders to be published by Routledge in 2027.

David Gerwin earned his PhD in American history at Columbia University and an MA in Teaching Social Studies. He is Professor of Social Studies Education and serves as chair of the department of Secondary Education at Queens College, City University of New York. He is a 2025-2026 US-Norway Fulbright Foundation Roving Scholar.

William R. Glass is a professor of American social history at the American Studies Center of the University of Warsaw. He is the author of *Strangers in Zion: Fundamentalists in the South, 1900-1950* and co-editor of a volume of essays on nationalism called *Beyond Imagined Uniqueness*. His most recent publication is “From Religious Liberty to Faith in America: JFK, Mitt Romney, and the Rise of the Religious Right” in *The Historian*.

Adam Głaz is Associate Professor at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (UMCS) in Lublin, Poland, researching in cognitive-cultural linguistics, linguistic worldview, and translation. He has edited or co-edited several collective volumes, including *Languages–Cultures–Worldviews: Focus on Translation* (Palgrave Macmillan 2019). Głaz has authored three monographs, most recently *Linguistic Worldview(s): Approaches and Applications* (Routledge 2022), as well as several dozen articles (including on language in science-fiction). He has also translated books and papers in linguistics and the humanities into Polish and English.

Milan Hain is Assistant Professor and Chair at the Department of Theater and Film Studies at Palacký University, Czech Republic. His research focuses on US cinema and Hollywood production culture. He is the author or co-author of five books, including, most recently, *Starmaker: David O. Selznick and the Production of Stars in the Hollywood Studio System* (2023). He was a Fulbright Visiting Researcher at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and a Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Łódź.

Jessica Allen Hanssen is Professor of English Subject Pedagogy at Nord University, Bodø, Norway. Hanssen teaches American literature for disciplinary English and English teacher education students. Recent publications on American literature include work on Irving (2016, reprinted 2019), Hawthorne (2016), Wharton (2021), David Foster Wallace (2022), and Vonnegut (2026).

Ken R. Hanssen is Associate Professor of English Literature at Nord University, Norway. He received his doctorate in 2008 from the University of Oslo, Norway, with a dissertation on Shakespeare's romances. He has published on a variety of topics in British and American literature, including essays on Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, Harry Crews, Cormac McCarthy, W.G. Sebald, the American canon, literature and formation, aesthetics in education, and the literary history of Key West, Florida.

Richard Hardack received his doctorate in English and J.D. (law degree) from UC Berkeley, and has taught there and at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges. He has published more than fifty articles in American Studies and law, and presented more than 100 conference papers in 20 countries. His first book, *"Not Altogether Human": Pantheism and the Dark Nature of the American Renaissance*, which focused on Melville and Emerson, was published by the University of Massachusetts Press; and *Your Call is Very Important to Us: Advertising and the Corporate Theft of Personhood* recently was published by Rowman & Littlefield and will be republished in paperback by Bloomsbury in 2026. He is also project editor for the history of NASA's Juno Mission to Jupiter.

Fiorenzo Iuliano is Professor of American Literature at the University of Cagliari. He holds a degree and a Ph.D. in Cultural Studies from the University of Naples "L'Orientale." He was a researcher at the Jan Van Eyck Academie in Maastricht (2009-10) and has held visiting scholar positions at several universities (Freie Universität Berlin; the University of Washington, Seattle; and Leuphana University of Lüneburg). His research focuses on early 20th-century American literature, with particular attention to Henry James, the literature and culture of the Pacific Northwest (a book on this topic is under review at University of Illinois Press), and cultural theory.

Jee H. An is Professor of English Language and Literature at Seoul National University (SNU) in South Korea. She received her BA and MA in English Literature at SNU and her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 2003. Some of her articles include “Meridian, an ‘Anachronistic’ Black Intellectual” and “‘Only then, if I listen carefully’: The Sounding(s) of Countermodernity in Caryl Phillips’s *Crossing the River*.” She has also translated several novels into Korean, including a translation of Caryl Phillips’s *Crossing the River*. Her research has been supported by SNU, Korean Research Foundation, the Harvard-Yenching Institute, Fulbright Foundation and the James Weldon Johnson Institute of Race and Difference at Emory University.

John A. Kirk is the George W. Donaghey Distinguished Professor of History at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He has authored, edited, or co-edited ten books including *Redefining the Color Line: Black Activism in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1940-1970* (2002); *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement: Controversies and Debates* (2007); *Race and Ethnicity in Arkansas: New Perspectives* (2014); and *The Civil Rights Movement: A Documentary Reader* (2020). Kirk has also published numerous book chapters in edited collections and articles in a wide variety of journals including the *Journal of African American History*, *Journal of American Studies*, *Reviews in American History*, and *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Society and Culture*. His work has featured in various media outlets including *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Atlantic*, *The Huffington Post*, *History Today*, *BBC History*, *PBS*, *CNN*, *The History Channel*, and *BBC Radio*.

Dean J. Kotlowski is professor of history at Salisbury University. He is the author of *Nixon’s Civil Rights: Politics, Principle, and Policy* (Harvard University Press, 2001) and *Paul V. McNutt and the Age of FDR* (Indiana University Press, 2015) and the editor of *The European Union: From Jean Monnet to the Euro* (Ohio University Press, 2000). He has published over forty articles and book chapters on U.S. political and policy history, including in journals such as *Diplomatic History*, *Pacific Historical Review*, *The Historian*, and *Business History Review*. He has been a historical adviser to the National Archives, Richard Nixon Library, and U.S. Mint. He has served four times as a Fulbright scholar, in the Philippines (2008), Austria (2016), and Australia (2020, 2022), the last of which was a distinguished chair. His next book, *Toward Self-Determination: Federal Indian Policy from Truman to Clinton*, is under contract with University of North Carolina Press.

Navneet Kumar has a Ph.D. in Postcolonial Theory and Literatures from the University of Calgary, and he is an Assistant Professor in Liberal Education at Mount Royal University,

Calgary, Canada. He teaches courses from a decolonizing and Indigenous perspective that challenge the dominant Eurocentric belief systems. His areas of interest and research are citizenship, the American Constitution and segregation, pluralism and identity, post-truth and surveillance in American life and critical race theory.

He has articles published in various journals and book chapters on issues of refugees and statelessness, the figure of the terrorist, black criminality, neoliberalism, democracy, and pedagogy.

Hamid Masfour is associate Professor and pedagogical coordinator of the Master Program “Studies in Literary and Cultural Encounters” at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sultan Moulay Slimane University, Beni Mellal, Morocco. He is a permanent member in the Laboratory of Research on Literature, Language, Culture and Communication (RLLCC) and American Studies Association of Norway (ASANOR). He supervises several PhD dissertations on Literature and Cultural Studies. His research focuses on Anglo-American literature, cultural studies, subaltern studies and the intersections of capitalism and ecological collapse in contemporary fiction. He has published and presented internationally on American literature, Indigenous studies, and critical theory, with recent work the politics of ecocriticism. He is currently developing projects on the cultural critique of the Anthropocene and extractivism in U.S. literature. He also has a considerable record of participations in international conferences in Morocco and abroad in Ukraine (2018), Norway (2022 and 2024), in Sweden (2023), Germany(2024) and Finland (2025).

Zbigniew Mazur teaches British and American History and Cultural Studies in the Department of British and American Studies, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin, Poland. His academic interests center on eighteenth-century Anglo-American history, cultural studies of sport, and interdisciplinary studies of culture contact, as well as TV and film studies. He is the author of *Settlers and Indians: Transformations of English Culture in Seventeenth-Century Virginia* (1995), *Power of Play: Leisure, Recreation, and Cultural Hegemony in Colonial Virginia* (2010) and a co-author of *Oswajanie Innego: Obraz Polski i Polaków w prasie brytyjskiej w latach 2002-2007* (2010), *Taming the Other: Representations of Poles and Poland in the British Press in 2002-2007*.

Ida M. Olsen (she/her) is a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Agder’s Centre for Education Research. Situated at the intersection of literary studies and pedagogy, her research explores the pedagogical potential of fictional texts in education for sustainable development. She holds a PhD from Ghent University, where her dissertation explored narratives of species extinction and biodiversity loss in contemporary English-language

literature. Her work has appeared in journals such as *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, *Green Letters*, *Ecozon@*, and *Studies in the Novel*.

Gabriele Pizarz-Ramirez is Professor of American Studies and Minority Studies at Leipzig University, Germany. Her publications include the co-edited volumes *The Americas in the Nineteenth Century: Inter-American Perspectives on US Literature* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2008); *Hemispheric Encounters: The Early United States in a Transnational Perspective* (Interamericana Series, Berlin: Peter Lang, 2016); *Spatialization Processes in the Americas: Configurations and Narratives* (Interamericana Series, Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018), as well as a Special Forum of *Journal of Transnational American Studies* on “Archipelagic Spaces and Im/Mobilities” (1:2023). She is the coauthor of *Periphere Räume in der Amerikanistik* (DeGruyter 2019) and *Imaginationen* (DeGruyter 2019), and the author of *MexAmerica: Genealogien und Analysen postnationaler Diskurse in der kulturellen Produktion von Chicanos/as* (Winter 2005). Her current research is concerned with spatialization and security.

Ingunn Røysland teaches English and German at Skigymnaset (Setesdal vidaregåande skule, avd. Hovden). In addition to teaching, she is a ‘U2 scholar’ and has published a monograph on U2 and trauma with Professor Charles I. Armstrong. Currently, she is writing a fan book on U2 for a Dutch publisher upon the band’s 50th anniversary.

Claudia Sadowski-Smith is professor of English at Arizona State University and the author of *The New Immigrant Whiteness: Race, Neoliberalism, and Post-Soviet Migration to the United States* and *Border Fictions: Globalization, Empire, and Writing at the Boundaries of the United States*. In addition, Sadowski-Smith is the editor of *Globalization on the Line: Culture, Capital, and Citizenship at U.S. Borders* (Palgrave, 2002) and the editor or co-editor of special issues on the cultures of global post/socialism, postsocialist US literatures, and comparative border studies.

Timothy Saunders: I am Associate Professor of English-language literature and culture at Volda University College, Norway. My current research focuses primarily on the aesthetic underpinnings of national constitutions, both written (the American) and “unwritten” (the British).

Abigail Shupe is an Associate Professor of Music Theory at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado. Her first book was published by Routledge in 2023 and is entitled *War and Death in the Music of George Crumb: A Crisis of Collective Memory*. That project focused on Crumb's pieces related to the Civil War and the American War in Vietnam. Currently, she studies music and collective memory related to the Global War on Terror and 9/11. She has presented on these topics at conferences of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies, the Society for Military History, and the American Studies Association.

Oksana Starshova is an Associate Professor at the Department of English Philology and Translation of Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University in Mykolaiv, Ukraine. She defended her PhD dissertation in American Literature at the Shevchenko Institute of Literature, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in which she discussed the problem of the author in American postmodernism and in the works of John Barth. She is currently a British Academy Researchers At-Risk Fellow at Pembroke College and Faculty of English, University of Cambridge, exploring spaces of New York in migration narratives. Her research interests include: postmodernism, geocriticism, urban space and literature, spatial studies, geocriticism, migration theory.

Hilde Løvdal Stephens is an Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Oslo. She is the author of *Family Matters: James Dobson and Focus on the Family's Crusade for the Christian Home*. Her work has been published in the *Journal of American Studies* (UK), *Reviews in American History*, and *American Studies in Scandinavia*, as well as in volumes published by Gyldendal, Oxford University Press, and the University of Pennsylvania Press.

Randall J. Stephens is a Professor of American and British Studies at the University of Oslo. He has written about religion in the US South, music and pop culture, white backlash to the civil rights movement, and, most recently the Dust Bowl. Stephens is the author of *The Fire Spreads: Holiness and Pentecostalism in the American South* (Harvard University Press, 2008); *The Anointed: Evangelical Truth in a Secular Age*, co-authored with physicist Karl Giberson (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011); and *The Devil's Music: How Christians Inspired, Condemned, and Embraced Rock 'n' Roll* (Harvard University Press, 2018). He is the editor of *Recent Themes in American Religious History* (University of South Carolina Press, 2009). Stephens has also written for the *Atlantic*, the *Independent*, *History Today*, the *Chronicle of Higher Ed*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*. In 2011-2012 he was a Fulbright scholar in Norway.

Fabrizio Tonello is Senior Scholar of the University of Padova, Italy. His main research interest is the evolution of the American political system. He has published articles and essays on diverse topics, including nineteenth- and twentieth-century U.S. history, political science and media studies. His work has appeared in *Review of International American Studies*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *MicroMega*, *Indiscipline*, *Ácoma – Rivista internazionale di studi Nordamericani*, *Sociologica*.

María Luz Arroyo Vázquez is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Modern Languages at the UNED, The Spanish National Distance Learning University. She obtained her PhD in English Language and Literature at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM). She holds two degrees in English Language and Literature, and in Geography and History. She has published on twentieth-century U.S. history, with research interests in the New Deal, American Women, and diplomatic and cultural relations between the United States and Spain. English publications include “European Views of the New Deal: The Case of Spain,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 3.2. (2005); “The Long Silencing of Spanish Memoirs of U.S. Ambassador Claude G. Bowers: A Case of Forbearance or Political Repression?” in C. van Minnen and S. L. Hilton (eds) *Political Repression in U.S. History* (2009), and *Expanding your English and Creative Skills through Art and the Humanities* (2018). Her current research areas include U.S.-Spanish relations, U.S. foreign policy, African American Women History, migratory movements, and Humanitarian Aid.

Sabrina Vellucci is an associate professor of American Literature at Roma Tre University. Her research interests mainly focus on women’s writing, ecopoetry, Italian diaspora studies, U.S. theater, and adaptation studies. Her recent publications include the volume *Italian American Poetics of Place: An Environmental Perspective* (Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2024) and an essay on Phillis Wheatley’s ‘re-visions’ of the classics (*SigMa* 8, 2024).

Christa Wirth is a professor of history (1750-Present) at the Department for Religion, Philosophy, and History at the University of Agder in Kristiansand in Norway. She has published on the topics of the history of transatlantic migration, social science, (post)colonial history, the Cold War, and the U.S. empire. Her first book is on Italian migration to the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries. In her second book, she is studying U.S. anthropologists in the US-colonial Philippines. She has also co-edited the book *Transnational History of Switzerland* published in

2022. Currently she is working on an anthology on Norway's colonial and postcolonial history that should come out in early 2026.