



Roosevelt
Institute for
American
Studies

Seminar Series on Modern North American History

September 2023 – May 2024

Program

Invitation to Seminar

by Sarah Nelson
26 February 2024

The political developments, societal transformations, cultural shifts, foreign policy initiatives, national security concerns, and international relations that originated from the US have left an indelible mark on the North American continent and the global landscape.

This hybrid seminar series, organized by the RIAS and the Sciences Po Center for History (CHSP) in Paris, forms a platform to explore these diverse and interconnected themes.

This series, one of very few of its kind in Europe, intersects with various significant historiographical trends, continuing the move towards a more integrated view of US and North American history. It pays special attention to the inclusion of global, imperial, transnational, and interconnected histories to reframe our understanding of the United States' place in the world and the emerging focus on international environmental history and issues.

The platform, which meets once a month in a hybrid format (online and in person), encourages active participation from doctoral students and aims to serve as an open and inclusive forum for discussing some of the most innovative recent scholarship. It aspires to bring together historians of different backgrounds and in different stages of their career, foster a historiographical and interdisciplinary conversation, and critically consider the contemporary societal and political ramifications of the historical events under discussion.



Coordinators:

- **Dario Fazzi (Leiden University / RIAS)**
- **Gaetano Di Tommaso (RIAS)**
- **Mario Del Pero (Sciences Po-Paris, Centre d'histoire)**
- **Olivier Burtin (Université de Picardie Jules Verne)**

Invitation

NETWORKING EMPIRE: COMMUNICATIONS, DECOLONIZATION, AND AMERICAN POWER IN THE 20TH CENTURY

LECTURER Sarah Nelson

DATE Monday, 26 February 2024 at 17:00 to 18:30 CET

LOCATION This is a hybrid event. You can participate in the seminar in person in Leiden or join online.

Click on this [link](#) to register



Sarah Nelson is an Assistant Professor of History and International Studies at Leiden University. She completed her Ph.D. in history, and a Joint-Ph.D. in Comparative Media, from Vanderbilt University in 2021. Before joining the faculty at Leiden, she held postdoctoral fellowships on the ERC-funded research project “Invisible Histories of the United Nations and the Global South” and at Southern Methodist University’s Center for Presidential History. From 2020-2021, Sarah was the Ambrose Monell Fellow for Technology and Democracy at the Jefferson Scholars Foundation at the University of Virginia. Her work has been supported by the Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for Humanities, the Botsiber Institute, the Society for the History of Technology, and others.

In her presentation, titled *Networking Empire: Communications, Decolonization, and American Power in the 20th Century*, Nelson will explore the complex history of “information freedom,” its ties to imperial ambitions and anti-colonial struggles, and its impact on global governance and power dynamics.

“Information freedom” is a powerful and tricky discourse in the 21st century. It often trades in the sense that information “wants to be free”: that the unrestrained flow of information across borders inherently facilitates freedom of speech, liberal marketplaces of goods and ideas, and democratic self-expression. But this idea has a long and fraught history. Since as early as the interwar period, campaigns for “information freedom” have been freighted with imperial ambition and anti-colonial protest, inspiring fierce debate between state actors, engineers, press professionals, and social scientists about what information freedom means and what kinds of international regulatory orders should be made in its name. This talk will trace this history as it unfolded as technologies evolved from the telegraph to the early internet—and as the world order simultaneously transformed from one of empires to one of nation states—showing how these contestations became referenda on the legacies of empire in international governance, the power of the United States abroad, and the possibilities for economic and cultural sovereignty amid decolonization.

To attend the lecture, [please register here](#).

Program

Monday, 25 September 2023, 17.00 – 18.30 CEST

- Kristin Hoganson (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign), *Structures of Power: US Infrastructure Building in the Circum-Caribbean During the Bad Neighbor Era*

Monday, 23 October 2023, 18.00 – 19.30 CEST

- Matthew Connelly (Columbia University), *America's Secrecy Industrial Complex: History and the Future*

Monday, 11 December 2023, 17.30 – 19.00 CET

- Rebecca Herman (UC Berkeley), *Cooperating with the Colossus: US Military Basing in World War II Latin America*

Monday, 29 January 2024, 17.00 – 18.30 CET

- Sean Vanatta (University of Glasgow), *A Treacherous Ocean of Money: Finance and Failure across the Interwar Atlantic, 1920-1935*

Monday, 26 February 2024, 17.00 – 18.30 CET

- Sarah Nelson (Leiden University), *Networking Empire: Communications, Decolonization, and American Power in the 20th Century*

Monday, 25 March 2024, 17.00 – 18.30 CET

- Augusta Dell'Omo (Southern Methodist University), *Far Right Capitalism in the US and South Africa at the End of the Cold War*

Monday, 29 April 2024, 17.00 – 18.30 CEST

- Elsa Devienne (Northumbria University), *Rubbish Tactics? Oil Spills, Beach Clean-Ups, and the Making of Modern Environmentalism (1969-2023)*

Monday, 13 May 2024, 17.00 – 18.30 CET

- Andrew Preston (University of Cambridge), *From Planning to Strategy: New Deal Liberalism and the Invention of National Security*



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