



Roosevelt  
Institute for  
American  
Studies

# Seminar Series on Modern North American History

September 2023 – May 2024

**Program**

**Invitation to Seminar**

by Elsa Devienne

29 April 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

## ONE SIMPLE THING TO SAVE THE EARTH

**LECTURER** Elsa Devienne

**DATE** Monday, 29 April 2024 at 17:00 to 18:30 CET

**LOCATION** Online — Click on this [link](#) to register



Elsa Devienne is Assistant Professor of History at Northumbria University in the UK where she teaches environmental history, US history and American Studies. Her first book, [Sand Rush: The Revival of the Beach in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles](#), is out this spring with Oxford University Press. In 2021, the French version of the book won the Willi Paul Adams Award given by the Organization of American Historians and was a finalist of the Prix de la Recherche SAES/AFEA.

In her presentation, titled “One Simple Thing to Save the Earth”: Beach Clean-Ups and the Making of the Plastic Crisis in the Neoliberal Era (1980s-2020s), Devienne will analyze the evolution of beach clean-ups from grassroots initiatives to global movements, assessing their role in addressing the plastic crisis within the context of neoliberal environmentalism.

In the 1970s, health and safety accidents involving plastics and the counterculture’s emphasis on a return to natural materials made plastics uncool, dangerous even. A decade later, plastics were back in style and more convenient than ever. Yet some women in Texas and Oregon started noticing huge amounts of plastics littering shorelines. By organizing the first “citizen” beach-clean-ups, they brought the public’s attention back to the dangers of plastics. While often framed in the rhetoric of the “small gesture” that could “save the earth,” these events offered a radical proposition: holding producers accountable. Today, the beach-cleanup has become one of the most popular forms of environmental action, with Ocean Conservancy’s International Coastal Cleanup Day mobilizing over one million volunteers in 150 countries each year. But, for what and for whom are beach cleanups? By historicizing the beach cleanup, this talk will revisit the plastic crisis, modern environmentalist tactics, and nature consciousness in the neoliberal era.

*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 25, 2024, 17.00 – 18.30 CET

- Augusta Dell'Omo (Southern Methodist University), *Human Rights for White Power*

## Monday, 29 April 2024, 17.00 – 18.30 CEST

- Elsa Devienne (Northumbria University), *One Simple Thing to Save the Earth. Beach Clean-Ups, and the Making of the Plastic Crisis in the Neoliberal Era (1980s-2020s)*

## Monday, 13 May 2023, 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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