GSNAS Graduate Conference 2014

Trust Issues: Community, Contingency, and Security in North America

May 9-10, John F. Kennedy Institute, Freie Universität Berlin

From the misprision of financial institutions to the NSA scandal, recent years have seen several revelations calling the architecture of American society into question. The United States has been rocked by crises of faith that have cast new doubt on the American Dream. Historical breaches of trust are also at the fore. The fortieth anniversary of Watergate is a further reminder that issues of trust constitute a central concern in North American studies.

This conference engages with the significance of trust for social cohesion and the consequences of its withdrawal from social, political, and financial institutions. We also welcome papers exploring how these processes are represented in literature, film, and other media. Where can we place our trust, culturally and socially, given a multitude of informational sources and authorities? How can America's damaged politico-cultural institutions be stabilized, transformed, or replaced?

Papers are invited on a range of topics from various disciplines. Possible subjects include, but are not limited to:

• How has America created, maintained, and interrogated its 'grand narratives' throughout history? What role does popular culture assume in debates regarding surveillance and control, conspiracy theories, and leadership?

• How can the conflicting priorities of an individual's right to freedom and the communal desire for security be accommodated? In what way do business interests interact with political responsibilities? Can corporations rebuild trust at a local and transnational level?

• In what ways do the histories of race, sectarianism, and sexuality in North America intersect with those of community and security? How does the figure of the Other stabilize or destabilize a sense of trust?

• In what way does minority/divided government influence political accountability and legitimacy? Do the political systems of the U.S. and Canada inspire trust in adequate representation?

• What does the erosion of trust between narrators and readers signify for modern and postmodernist texts and aesthetics? How are alternative realities, paranoia, and the fear of technology depicted in fiction?

Please submit an abstract of no more than 250 words and a short CV to gsnas.conference2014@gsnas.fu-berlin.de. The proposal deadline is **February 9, 2014.** For updates please refer to http://www.gsnas.fu-berlin.de/en/conference/2014/index.html