



Roosevelt
Institute for
American
Studies

Seminar Series on Modern North American History

September 2024 – May 2025

Invitation

Gretchen Heefner

14 April 2025

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

FROM THE RED DESERT TO THE RED PLANET: ENGINEERING THE AMERICAN EMPIRE

LECTURER Gretchen Heefner

DATE Monday, 14 April 2025 at 17:00 to 18:30 CEST

LOCATION Online

Click on this [link](#) to register



Gretchen Heefner is professor of history at Northeastern University, where she teaches and researches the history of the US in the world, with a focus on militarization, the environment, and the surprisingly intimate relations between national security regimes and the everyday. Her new book, *Sand, Snow, and Stardust: How Military Engineers Conquered Extreme Environments*, (out next month with the University of Chicago Press) explores how the US military has acquired and used information about extreme environments since 1940. Her work has appeared in *Diplomatic History*, *Environmental History*, and *Endeavor*. Her first book, *The Missile Next Door: The Minuteman and the Arming of the American Heartland* (Harvard 2012), was a Choice Outstanding Academic title.

Deserts, the Arctic, outer space—these extreme environments are often seen as inhospitable places at the edges of our maps. But from the 1940s through the 1960s, spurred by the diverse and unfamiliar regions the US military had navigated during World War II, the United States defense establishment took a keen interest in these places, dispatching troops to the Aleutian Islands, North Africa, the South Pacific, and beyond. To preserve the country's status as a superpower after the war, to pave runways and build bridges, engineers had to understand and then conquer dunes, permafrost, and even the surface of the moon. Gretchen will share stories and findings from her new book, *Sand, Snow, and Stardust* and share information about connecting the dots between environmental history and the US military.

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

Program

Monday, 23 September 2024, 17:00 – 18:30 CEST

- [Melani McAlister](#) (George Washington University), *Promises, Then the Storm: Notes on Memory, Protest, and the Israel-Gaza War*

Monday, 7 October 2024, 17:00 – 18:30 CEST

- [Jayita Sarkar](#) (University of Glasgow), *Global Southwests: Capital and Uranium in Africa and America*

Monday, 18 November 2024, 17:00 – 18:30 CET

- [James T. Sparrow](#) (University of Chicago), *The Archives of Self-Repression: Anticommunism, Internationalism, and the Case of Ralph Bunche*

Monday, 9 December 2024, 17:00 – 18:30 CET

- [Emma Day](#) (University College London), *Beyond Procreation: A New History of Reproductive Justice in the United States*

Monday, 27 January 2025, 17:00 – 18:30 CET

- [Evan McCormick](#) (Columbia University), *Remembering a Presidency: The Obama Presidency Oral History Project*

Monday, 17 February 2024, 17:00 – 18:30 CET

- [Joel Suarez](#) (Harvard University), *Towards a Global Labor History of the Volcker Shock: Mexico, Informality, and Undocumented Labor*

Monday, 24 March 2025, 17:00 – 18:30 CET

- [Evan Bonney](#) (Sciences Po-Paris), *Forestry and the Intermountain Experiment that Transformed Executive Power in the Age of Empire, 1897-1914*

Monday, 14 April 2025, 17:00 – 18:30 CEST

- [Gretchen Heefner](#) (Northeastern University), *'From the Red Desert to the Red Planet': Engineering the American Empire*

Monday, 19 May 2025, 17:00 – 18:30 CEST

- [Jeanine Quené](#) (Roosevelt Institute for American Studies), *The (Un)changing Nature of U.S. Women's Conservatism Across the Twentieth Century*



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