

ASANOR/NACS Conference Sept. 19-21 2014, Alta

CFP: Connections and Exchanges: America in an Intercontinental North

The American Studies Association Norway (ASANOR) and the Nordic Association for Canadian Studies (NACS) are happy to invite talks and panels for its 2014 conference at the University of Tromsø, Campus Alta from September 19 to 21, 2014.

“No man can travel alone in the Klondike after fifty below”—this line from Jack London’s short story “To Build a Fire” hints at the cultural ambivalences in the perception of the North. There is cowboy-style individualism vs. the need to cooperate in a harsh environment. London’s story belongs to a genre depicting the North as a hostile environment. How does this perception change in the 21st century, when the North is more often associated with a vulnerable ecology, and oil and gas extraction?

Looking at the globe one notices a profound difference between North and South. Whereas southern landmasses are separated by oceans and are, in the case of Antarctica, uninhabitable, the North forms a circle of harsh but habitable land around the Arctic Sea. Even though colonial and imperial powers have drawn national boundaries and claimed exclusive economic zones, the histories and stories of peoples living in the North are connected by trade and migration.

The North is not only a geographical region that transcends national boundaries from North America to Northern Scandinavia and Russia. It is also an imagined space with multiple meanings, often full of cultural projections. Historically, these have often served as background for heroic narratives for nation building. The North is represented in a variety of ways in art (painting, music, literature, etc.), and its imaginary forms the backbone of a developing tourism industry. We invite papers that deal with the diversity of cultural implications of the North. Possible topics may include, but are not limited, to any of the following:

- Histories of the North. We especially welcome North American, Russian, and Scandinavian comparative perspectives
- The North as object of colonial and imperial interests; Nation building and the North
- The perception of Alaska and/or other northern territories
- The Image and Perception of the US/North America in other Northern countries
- Russian colonies in North America
- Effects of climate change
- The effects of oil and gas exploration on cultures and ecosystems
- Indigenous peoples, their identities and economies
- Diverse identities of Northern peoples
- Migrations to and from the North
- “Last frontier,” exploration, and expedition narratives
- Geography as a challenge in human/nature interactions in the North
- The North as a tourist destination
- The North as an imagined space
- Aesthetic perceptions and representations of the North
- Representations of the North in various forms (literature, film, television, song and music, other media)
- The North and representations of gendered power

We encourage proposals for panels and individual papers. Please send panel proposals or paper abstracts of 500 words or less to Laura Castor (laura.castor@uit.no) and Werner Bigell (werner.bigell@uit.no) before March 1st, 2014. We hope to see you all in the North in September!