

XXVII *AMERICAN VOICES* Seminar
Friday-Saturday 11–12 October 2019, Turku

Dear Fulbright colleagues:

In October of each year, the North American Studies Programme (NAMS) at the University of Turku and Fulbright Finland collaborate to organize the *AMERICAN VOICES* Seminar. On Friday and Saturday **11–12 October 2019**, we will be doing so for the twenty-seventh time. As one of the Fulbright grant recipients for Finland for the coming academic year, on behalf of NAMS, I invite you to Turku for those two days.

The idea of the Seminar is very simple. Participants are asked to give short team presentations in groups of two or three speakers (15-20 minutes) on some aspect of American society: its arts, languages, political life, legal system, music, natural geography, populations, regions, social problems, sports, etc. Due to the high number of speakers and the tight schedule of the seminar days, we ask speakers to find at least one partner for their presentation. The topics should be of interest to a wide audience: if you speak about your own research, bear in mind that the listeners will not be specialists, but mostly BA and MA students. This is NOT intended as a forum for reading a scholarly paper. Many of the best presentations have been on topics unrelated to the speakers' academic work; on the other hand, we have also had marvelous talks arising out of professional research or experience. In recent seminars, this has been illustrated for example by a thorough and entertaining look at the Philly cheesesteak, and a deeply engaging exploration of the cultural history of Barbie.

The aim of the Seminar, from the audience's point of view, is to provide a forum for a variety of 'American voices'; to create a composite insight into the kaleidoscopic nature of American society. Many of the listeners have not previously visited the United States. They are very familiar with images of the country from news, music, television and movies, but that kind of knowledge of another country tends to blur into a limited range of insights. We hope that you will be able to help us give them a more differentiated understanding of American society.

In addition, for the Fulbrighters, this is an opportunity halfway through the autumn semester to meet up with fellow faculty and graduate students, and with the staff of Fulbright Finland.

The audience will mainly consist of University of Turku students taking our North American Studies Programme. Most of them will be Finnish, but some will be exchange students from other countries. In addition, graduate students (which here means PhD students) and faculty affiliated with NAMS or from other universities' similar programmes often attend. We expect a local attendance of up to one hundred.

The Seminar will be held on **Friday and Saturday 11–12 October**, starting Friday lunchtime and finishing on Saturday afternoon. On the Friday evening, we have dinner together in a restaurant by the riverside. The seminar organizers – Fulbright Finland and the University of Turku NAMS Programme – cover your travel expenses to Turku.

Complimentary accommodations are provided for the Friday night in a budget hotel at the center of Turku, within walking distance of the campus.

We warmly encourage you to bring your accompanying partners and family with you. Regrettably, the organizers can only cover the accommodation of the Fulbright grantees for one night. You are welcome to stay an extra night or two at your own expense; if you let us know in good time, we can make inquiries for you. It is difficult to predict hotel room prices for the seminar weekend, but budget accommodation prices start at perhaps 80 €.

Note that in addition to the city's own attractions (Turku has some marvelous museums, and is famous for some of its pubs), there are regular ferry services (think "medium-size cruise ship which also transports vehicles") every morning and evening for the 12-hour crossing to Stockholm. Fulbrighters have used the Turku seminar as the jumping-off point for an excursion across the Baltic.

More detailed information about the Seminar will be available at the Fulbright orientation sessions held by Fulbright Finland. You might already note some of the important deadlines, however. We will need to know your ***accommodation needs*** (NB! including information about *accompanying persons*) by Thursday **5 September**; your ***topic*** by Monday **9 September**; and if you are intending to use a PowerPoint or similar presentation, we ask you to send that to us as an e-mail attachment or upload it to a Google Drive folder no later than Monday **7 October**.

Please feel free to contact me if you want to discuss your choice of topic: you will find my e-mail address below. We ask you to pencil the seminar dates into your calendars now and look forward to seeing you in Turku in October!

With best wishes,

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NAMS website <https://www.utu.fi/en/university/faculty-of-social-sciences/john-morton-center/studying-at-the-jmc>