

XXXI AMERICAN VOICES Seminar
Friday-Saturday 11-12 October 2024, Turku

Dear Fulbright colleagues:

In October of each year, the North American Studies Programme (NAMS) at the University of Turku and the Fulbright Finland Foundation collaborate to organize the *AMERICAN VOICES* Seminar. On Friday and Saturday **11-12 October 2024**, we will be doing so for the thirty-first 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 or roundtable presentations or in groups of three speakers 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 partners 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 the Fulbright Finland Foundation.

The audience will mainly consist of University of Turku students taking our North American Studies Programme as a minor. 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 Fulbright Finland Foundation cover your

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

We warmly encourage you to bring your accompanying partners and family with you. You have received more information on travel arrangements and reimbursement from your contacts at the Fulbright Finland Foundation.

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 has been shared with you by the Fulbright Finland Foundation. Please note some of the important deadlines. We will need to know your *accommodation needs* (including information about accompanying persons) and your topic by **Friday 6 September**. We will need your powerpoint presentations by **Tuesday 8 October**.

Please feel free to contact me or the Fulbright Finland Foundation 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,

Janne Korkka

Janne Korkka PHD

Senior Lecturer in English

Coordinator, North American Studies Programme at the University of Turku

e-mail: jkorkka@utu.fi

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