



Alternative/Mainstream: A U.S. Studies Conference

**Sponsored by the Canadian Association of American Studies and St. Mary's University.
12-14 October, 2018, St. Mary's University, Calgary**

Political commentary may only be the most habitual context in which the merging of fringe and mainstream—a new prevalence of the “Alternative”—has been characterized as a defining, symptomatic feature of the cultural moment in the United States. Timothy Snyder has suggested, however, that “post-truth” anxieties triggered by widespread “scorn for everyday facts” and a proportionately prolific “construction of alternate realities” may not be as “new or postmodern” as we tend to imagine (*On Tyranny*, 2017). And while a diverse array of contemporary usages and connotations may have made tensions between alternative and mainstream more ubiquitous than ever before, the long and complex history of such tensions in American culture can hardly be denied.

With this broad theme in mind, we invite proposals for papers, panels, and other presentations (including creative media and performance); all relevant historical periods and (inter-) disciplinary approaches are welcome. What alternatives? Alternatives to what? What mainstream “realities” do champions of the alternative dispute? Do disputed facts necessarily differentiate alternative and mainstream perspectives? Potential topics of interest might include, but would not be limited to, the following:

Alternative/Mainstream...

- Policy (oppositional, partisan, centrist, extremist)
- Economies (micro- and macro-, regional, national, global)
- Progress (utopian, pragmatic, immediatist, gradualist)
- Change (catastrophic, planned, resisted, provoked)
- History and Memory (official, revisionist, nostalgic)
- Critique (Academic, Journalistic, Elite/Populist, “Wingnut”)
- Aesthetics (music, art, film, literature, performance)
- Alternatives (authentic/pseudo-, competing, radical, co-opted)
- Subcultures (underground, dominant/oppositional, residual/emergent)
- Media and Communications
- Identities and Communities
- Borders and Crossings
- Protest and Resistance
- Decolonization and Anti-Imperialism

Alliances and Collaborations
Medicine and Therapy
Places and Spaces
Consumerism and Marketing
Civility and Etiquette
Sport and Recreation
Food and Diet
Courtship and Partnership
Education and Parenting
Hope and Despair
Cooperation and Competition
Nationalisms
Social Networks
Incentive Programs
Business Models
Ecologies
Desires
Values
Publics
Rhetorics
Housing
Religion
Law Enforcement
Technology
Energy
Fashion
Internet
Publishing

To participate, please submit a 300-word proposal, a 120-word abstract (for grant application purposes), and a 1-page CV to luke.bresky@stmu.ca by April 13, 2018.

St. Mary's University and the Canadian Association of American Studies acknowledge gratefully the original inhabitants and custodians of the land on which we will meet: the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and the people of the Treaty 7 region—the Tsuu T'ina, the Siksika, the Piikani, the Kainai and the Iyarhe Nakoda. Calgary is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3.