UNIVERSITÄT LEIPZIG
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Call for Papers: “Individualism in Community”

aspeers: emerging voices in american studies
Call for Submissions by 11 October 2026

From its founding ideals framing rights as tied to individuals to many of the ‘myths that made America,’ such as the self-made man, ideas of individualism are deeply entrenched in the culture of the United States. Yet at the same time, the US has also always understood itself as a particular community: as a city upon a hill, a melting pot, a more perfect union. As such, the United States has been established on a seeming paradox, forming ‘out of many, one.’ More recently, this previous consensus has become increasingly brittle, with fragmentation, polarization, hyper-individualism, and loneliness on the rise—as some would argue: again. At the same time, grassroots political movements, subcultures, and other forms of community building have seen renewed urgency and interest throughout different societal fields and across the political spectrum.

For its twentieth issue, *aspeers* therefore dedicates its topical section to **“Individualism in Community”** and invites European graduate students to critically and analytically explore US literature, (popular) culture, history, politics, society, and media through the lens of this core tension within US culture and society. We welcome papers from all disciplines, methodologies, and approaches comprising American studies and related fields, and especially those that critically engage constructions and narrations of individualism and/or community. Potential papers could cover (but are not limited to):

- Representations and transformations of individualism and community in US (popular) literature, film, TV, games, art, music, etc.
- Communities and collective identities in US culture and society, including questions/notions of belonging, inclusion, assimilation, solidarity, care, conformity, alienation, and counterculture
- Historical formations of individualism and community in the US, informed by narratives and concepts such as the self-made man, the American Dream, rugged individualism, or the frontier myth
- Focus on specific communities, such as religious groups, social and environmental justice movements, kinship networks, literary circles, etc.
- Politicization and historicization of American individualism in colonial, imperialist, and transnational contexts
- ‘Alternative’ or ‘utopian’ constructions of community throughout US history and culture (e.g., communes)
- Evocations of a ‘national’ community in moments of crisis or disaster (wars, pandemics, etc.)
- Contemporary developments as reflected in the formation of digital communities and subcultures, as well as in values like authenticity, self-expression, individuality, and their representation in US culture

aspeers, the first graduate-level peer-reviewed journal of European American studies, encourages fellow MA students from all fields to reflect on the diverse meanings of “Individualism in Community.” We welcome term papers, excerpts from theses, or papers specifically written for the twentieth issue of *aspeers* by **October 11, 2026**. If you seek to publish work beyond this topic, please refer to our general Call for Papers. Please consult our submission guidelines and find some additional tips at www.aspeers.com/2027.

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