



People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Abbas Laghrou University of Khenchela
Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of English

CALL FOR PAPERS

The First Online National Conference on

**America between Dreams and
Identity,
Depictions of the American Dream
in Literature, Cinema and Popular
Culture: Prospects, Hopes, and
Failures**

8 & 9 June 2022

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- * Honorary Chair: Pr. Abdelouahed Chala, Rector of the University of Khenchela
 - * Conference Chair: Dr. Chouana Khaled, Department of English
 - * Scientific Committee Chair: Dr. Walid Kefali, Department of English

1. The Main Themes of the Conference

The American Dream is an idea that has been shaping the American nation since its foundation. It is a national ethos that can be described as the freedom of everyone to achieve prosperity and success through hard work, courage and good opportunities.

It must be said; however, that in trying to pursue the dream, some people may be disappointed by American reality that may disenchant them of their idealistic hopes and stereotyped expectations. We can see that the USA is no exceptional when we examine the issue of poverty (37.2 million in 2020) and homelessness (580 000 in 2020). Also, Richard Wright and W.E.B Du Bois, two prominent African-American intellectuals, decided to radically reject their country and leave it once for all because of racism and segregation. America has obviously segregated its African-American citizens who found in exile the only way of salvation.

This conference will explore the American Dream and will assess its fulfillment and its validity in contemporary America. We will also examine the numerous works of literature, cinema and popular music that depict the achievement of the dream and the disillusionment of unfulfilling it.

The origin of the American Dream can be traced way back to the Declaration of Independence in 1776 which promised that citizens of the new nation were already endowed by their Creator with certain undisputable rights, including life and liberty, and that these same people were entitled to engage in many varied pursuits of happiness. These pursuits of happiness often ended with many finding some degree of fulfillment.

In 1931, James Truslow Adams came up with the phrase “American Dream” in his book *The Epic of America* and defined it as the “dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement.” (404) Adams’s book was published in the midst of the Great Depression in order to give Americans a sense of hope and confidence after their lives were ruined by the biggest economic crisis of the twentieth century.

Americans have looked to their leaders since the nation’s founding to reaffirm these promises of the dream, with its guarantees of fuller liberties and a better life for all. As a matter of fact, American presidents from George Washington to Joe Biden used the rhetoric of the American Dream to create a narrative of shared experience. The election of Barack Obama as President of the United States in 2008 contends the idea that the American Dream is possible for everyone; an inclusive dream for all Americans regardless of their ethnic background or their country of origin.

Like so many potent social myths, the American Dream is barren of clear meanings, whether in journalistic accounts or in academic analyses. The major American literary writers who have engaged the dream were Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, Mark Twain, Henry James, Willa Cather, Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Ernest Hemingway, and Scott Fitzgerald, to name but a few.

Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby* (1925), deals with the decline of the American Dream during the Roaring Twenties. Similarly, Willy Loman, protagonist of Arthur Miller's play *Death of the Salesman*, tells his young sons "That's the wonder; the wonder of this country... a man can end with diamonds here on the basis of being liked!" (79 act 2). He mistakes the image of popularity for the reality, ignoring, for example, the obvious fact that, for some rich men, being "well liked" is not the source of their wealth but its effect.

The American Dream is also represented in many works of cinema. Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941) tells the story of Charles Foster Kane, a poor child who becomes a wealthy newspaper publisher in New York City. He is an archetype of the self-made man who fulfills the dream. Also, Dennis Hopper's 1969 counterculture movie *Easy Rider* is less optimistic about the American Dream. In the last conversation between the two protagonists, Billy (Dennis Hopper) says: "we've done it, we're rich!" to which Wyatt (Peter Fonda) replies: "we blew it". Wyatt's comment suggests that the American Dream is not just about achieving financial success; it is also about achieving individual freedom.

Several songs praise America as a land of opportunities in which everything is possible. Irving Berlin's "God Bless America" is an anthem that was popularized by singer Kate Smith in 1938. Similarly, folk singer Woody Guthrie wrote "This Land is Your Land" in 1940 to celebrate the beauty and grandeur of America. The song was covered by several artists including Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, and Ani DiFranco.

Today, the examination of the American Dream should be linked to the global pandemic of COVID-19 that killed millions of people and brought the economies of the world to a standstill. To what extent it is possible for an American or an immigrant to fulfill the dream in today's America? Should America sustain the world with a new vision of hope and opportunity to reclaim the American Dream? Is not the comment of stand-up comedian George Carlin pertinent when he states: "The reason they call it the American Dream is because you have to be asleep to believe it"? These are some of the questions we will be addressing in this conference.

2. Aims of the Conference

The conference aims at providing an opportunity for scholars and university professors to share their knowledge and expertise about the American Dream, its fulfillment and its depictions in literature, cinema and popular culture. The questions that will be discussed in the conference include the following:

- ☀ What is meant by the American Dream?
- ☀ How do people all over the world perceive the American Dream?
- ☀ What do we make of the thousands of Algerians who apply for the green card in order to achieve the dream?
- ☀ What about minority groups in the USA and the people who live at the bottom of the economic ladder?
- ☀ Has Martin Luther King's dream of racial equality and harmony been fulfilled?
- ☀ Are Americans still optimistic about the United States and its promises?
- ☀ Is the dream still valid in the USA of the twenty-first century?

3. Tracks of the Conference

The papers of the conference will focus on the following topics, but aren't limited to:

- ☀ The American Dream as a founding myth of the USA
- ☀ Depiction of the American Dream in literature
- ☀ American Dream and the making of American identity
- ☀ American Dream for Non-American Dreamers
- ☀ Celluloid American Dream
- ☀ Dreamweavers, disillusionment and the propagandist of the American Dreams
- ☀ The American Dream, popular music, mass media and culture
- ☀ US presidents, speeches, and reclaiming the American Dream
- ☀ Corruption of the American Dream
- ☀ The distance between the American Dream and real life
- ☀ The African-American dream of social justice and equality

- ☀ Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) immigrants and the American Dream
- ☀ Displacement, otherness, hybridity and melting pot
- ☀ The American Dream and gender

4. Bibliography

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- Tyson, L. *Psychological Politics of the American Dream*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1994.
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5. Honorary Chairman:

Prof. Abdelouahad Chala— Rector of Abbas Laghrour University of Khenchela

6. General Supervision

Prof. Badereddine Khelaf— Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Languages at Abbas Laghrour University of Khenchela










7. Conference Chair

Dr. Khaled Chouana - Associate Professor of American Studies at Abbas Laghrour University of Khenchela

8. Scientific Committee Chair

Dr. Walid Kefali - Associate Professor of American Studies at Abbas Laghrour University of Khenchela






9. The Scientific Committee Members

Member	Affiliation
 Prof. Djamel Goui	Ouargla University
 Dr. Ahmed Chaouki Houadjli	Biskra University
 Dr. Salim Kerboua	Biskra University
 Dr. Mokhtar Hamadouch	Oum Elbouaghi University
 Dr. Hicham Souhali	Batna 2 University
 Dr. Farida Lebaal	Batna 2 University
 Dr. Ouni; Salim	Khenchela University
 Dr. Baghzou Sabrina	Khenchela University
 Dr. Chouana Khaled	Khenchela University
 Dr. Fayçal Saoudi	Khenchela University
 Dr. Amel Boumaaraf	Khenchela University

10. Organizing Committee Chair

Mr. Khanfri Abdelmounaim - Head of the Department of English at Abbas Laghrour University of Khenchela





11. Organizing Committee Members

Member	Affiliation
 Ms. Chichoune Rachida	Khenchela University
 Mr. Fellah Hicham	Khenchela University
 Ms. Youssi Nabila	Khenchela University
 Ms. Dakhouch Fahima	Khenchela University
 Mr. Boulagroune Issam	Khenchela University

12. Collaborators

-  Social Media and Foreign Language Learning (PRFU Research Unit), Khenchela University
-  Interdisciplinary Studies in Language and Culture ISILC, Research Unit: Politics, Literature, and Culture in the Anglosphere (POLICA), Biskra University
-  Mapping Paradigmatic Reciprocity in Western and Postcolonial Spaces: Identities, Territories, and Representations (PRFU Research Unit), Biskra University

13. Important Dates

-  Deadline for the receipt of abstracts: April 30, 2022
-  Notification of acceptance: May 2, 2022
-  Full paper submission deadline: May 17, 2022
-  Conference date: June 8 & 9, 2022

14. Guidelines for Submission

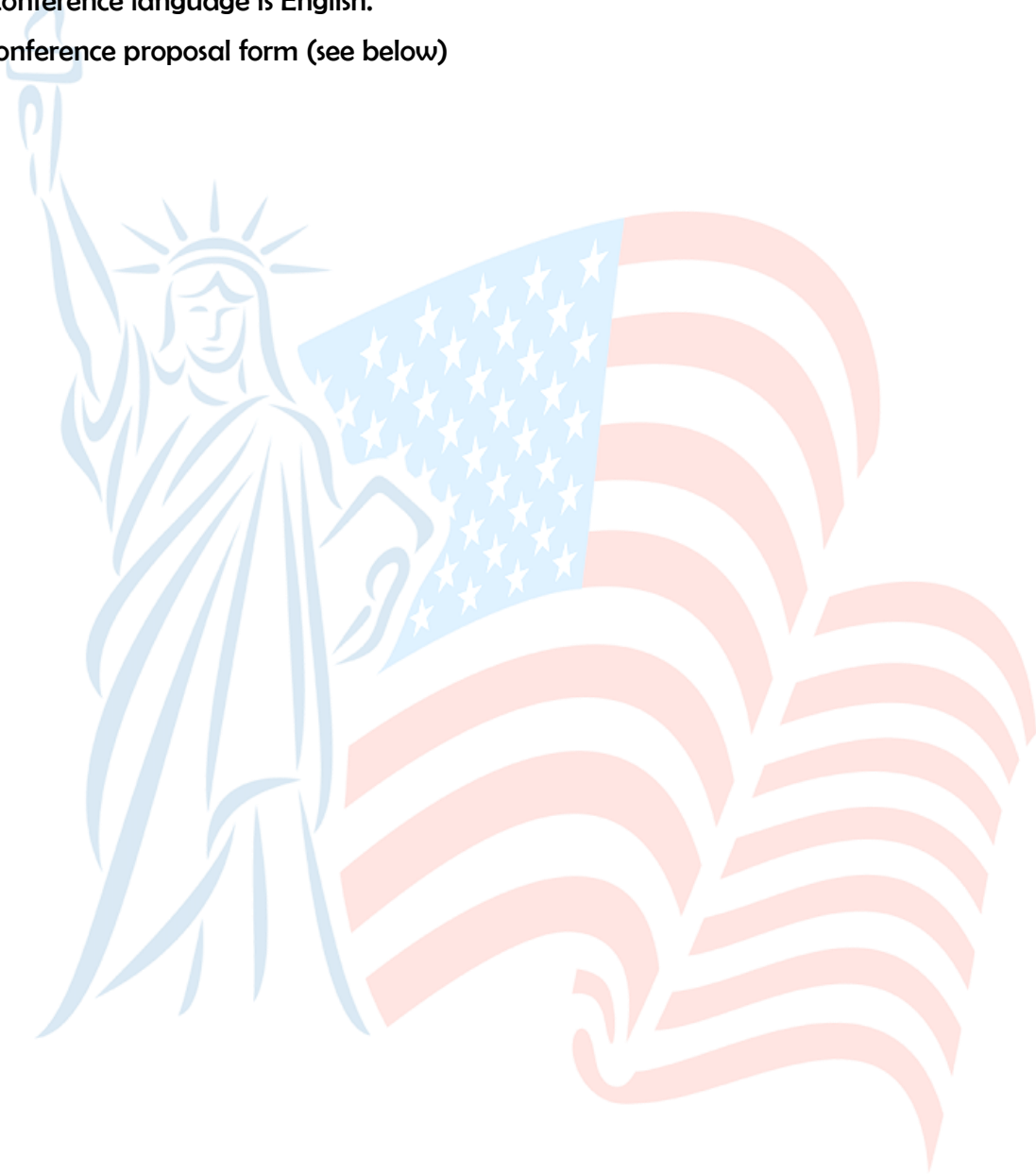
The proposals are to be sent to the conference email address:

american.dream.conf.2022@gmail.com

Submissions will be evaluated by a peer-review committee.

The conference language is English.

The conference proposal form (see below)



application form

Personal and Professional Information:

First Name

Last Name

Degree(s) / Academic Title(s)

Profession (s)

Institution(s)

Country

Email Address(es)

Phone Number(s)

Short Biography

Selected Track

Title of the Paper

Keywords (5-7 Keywords)

CODE

