

Curriculum Vitae

Dr. Helen A. Gibson

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Education

Dr. phil. in History, Freie Universität Berlin, 2024

M.A. in American History, Culture and Society, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 2014

B.A. in American Studies, University of Virginia, 2005

Research Interests

American cultural history, Black feminist and Womanist theory, mobility studies, other-than-human ecologies, Indigenous studies

Academic Career

- 04/2025 – 09/2025 Lecturer, Department of History, John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, Freie Universität Berlin
- 10/2024 – 03/2025 Visiting assistant professor, Department of History, John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, Freie Universität Berlin
- 05/2021 – 09/2024 Research fellow (wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin), Collaborative Research Centre (SFB) TRR 294 “Structural Change of Property” / Professorship of North American History, University of Erfurt (Advisor: Prof. Dr. Jürgen Martschukat)
- 10/2015 – 12/2021 Doctoral candidate in the Department of History, John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies / Graduate School of North American Studies, Freie Universität Berlin

Dissertation (summa cum laude): “Joyriding across the Color Line: Automotivity and Citizenship in the United States, 1895 to 1939”

(Advisors: Prof. Dr. Sebastian Jobs, Prof. Dr. Anke Ortlepp)

- 10/2012 – 09/2014 M.A. studies at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Amerika-Institut
- 08/2001 – 05/2005 B.A. studies at the University of Virginia
Semester abroad at L'Université Lumière Lyon 2 (WiSe 2004/05)

Grants and Awards

- 07/2022 Rolf Kentner Dissertation Prize, Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA)
- 09/2021 – 12/2021 STIBET grant, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD)
- 09/2021 Research stay at Temple University (DAAD-Kooperation “Internationale Studien und Ausbildungspartnerschaft mit Temple University ISAP”)
- 09/2020 – 12/2020 STIBET grant (DAAD)
- 10/2015 – 12/2019 Doctoral fellowship, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)
- 03/2017 Heidelberg Spring Academy grant (HCA)
- 06/2016 Futures of American Studies Institute grant, John F. Kennedy Institute (JFKI)

Academic Teaching

- Summer 2025 “Asian American History,” Freie Universität Berlin (B.A. seminar)
“Trans History,” Freie Universität Berlin (B.A. seminar)
- Winter 2024/25 “Other-than-Human Ecologies on Turtle Island,” Freie Universität Berlin (B.A. seminar)
“Gendering American History,” Freie Universität Berlin (B.A. seminar)
“Histories of (Racial) Capitalism,” Freie Universität Berlin (M.A. seminar)

Summer 2024	“Rootwork and Reciprocity: Healing with Plants in Black and Indigenous Communities,” Universität Erfurt (M.A. seminar)
Winter 2023/24	“The History of Racial Capitalism” / “Die Geschichte des rassifizierten Kapitalismus,” Universität Erfurt (B.A. seminar)
Summer 2023	“History and Physics: Cosmic and Quantic Moments,” Universität Erfurt (M.A. seminar)
Winter 2022/23	“Histories of Enslavement in the United States,” Universität Erfurt (M.A. seminar)
Summer 2022	“Gender History, Black Feminist and Womanist Theory,” Universität Erfurt (M.A. seminar)
Winter 2021/22	with Dr. Barbara Lüthi: “The Politics of Mobility: Mobile Subjects and Stasis in the United States,” Universität Erfurt (M.A. seminar)
Summer 2021	with Prof. Dr. Eva Boesenberg: “Topics in American History,” Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (B.A. seminar)
Winter 2020/21	“Care Work: Black Midwifery and a History of Science, 1619 to 1877,” Freie Universität Berlin (B.A. seminar)
Winter 2017/18	“The History of Felon Disenfranchisement and Race in the United States Pre-1877,” Freie Universität Berlin (B.A. seminar)

Conferences, Workshops and Colloquia Co-Organized (selection)

01/2024	with July Ackermann: Workshop with Alexander G. Weheliye organized via the Collaborative Research Centre (SFB) TRR 294 “Structural Change of Property” at Universität Erfurt.
11/2023	with July Ackermann: “Epistemic Reparations: Attending to the Grievances and Harms of the Colonial/Racial/Capital.” Workshop organized via the SFB TRR 294 at Universität Erfurt.
06/2023	with Sebastian Jobs and Nadja Klopprogge: “Knowing/Refusing ‘Value’: Reclaiming Kinship at the Expense of Capital.” Workshop co-organized via the German Association of American Studies (GAAS/DGfA) at Rostock University.
04/2023 and 11/2022	with Sofia Bianchi Mancini, Dirk Schuck, and Markus Vinzent: “Relating to Land.” Workshops co-conducted via the SFB TRR 294 at Universität Erfurt.

- 11/2021 with Barbara Lüthi: “Race and Propertization.” Conference co-organized via the SFB TRR 294 and the *Historisches Seminar* of Universität Erfurt at the Kleine Synagoge in Erfurt.
- 11/2021 with Verena Wolf and Petra Gumplová: “Property ‘Objects’ and their Discontents.” Workshop co-conducted via the SFB TRR 294 at Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena.
- 10/2020 with Cedric Essi and Anna-Lena Oldehus: “The GAAS in 2030: Imagining Future Practices of Critical Diversity in American Studies.” Workshop co-conducted at the *John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies*, Freie Universität Berlin.
- 05/2016 – 05/2019 with Nadja Klopprogge, Thomas Lindner, Marvin Menniken, and John Woitkowitz: “From Canada to Mexico: Doctoral Lab in North American History.” Colloquium co-coordinated approx. once per month during the semester at the *John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies*, Freie Universität Berlin.
- 03/2018 with Aditi Surie von Czechowski, Till Großmann, Christian Güse, Tinatin Gurgenidze, Nadja Klopprogge, Anna Kokalanova, Hannes Langguth, Aram Lee, Gala Nettelblatt, Gözde Sarlak-Krämer, Hannah Schilling, Sébastien Tremblay, Jiann-Chyng Tu, and Urszula Ewa Woźniak: 16th Annual NYLON Conference co-organized at Humbolt-Universität zu Berlin.
- 11/2017 with Anne Potjans, Simon Rienäcker, and Jiann-Chyng Tu: Postgraduate Forum (PGF) of the German Association of American Studies (GAAS/DGfA) co-organized at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.
- 04/2017 with Nadja Klopprogge and Hannes Langguth: “NYLON Mixtapes: A Workshop on Critical Social Research.” Workshop co-conducted at the 15th Annual NYLON Conference, *NYU Institute for Public Knowledge*, New York University.
- 06/2016 with Kira Álvarez, Sarah Epping, Jie Feng, Lars-Frederik Bockmann, Lee Flamand, Christian Güse, René Kreichauf, Betsy Leimbigler, and Sören Schoppmeier, “Flows and Undercurrents: Dimensions of (Im)mobility in North America.” GSNAS Graduate Conference co-organized at the *John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies*, Freie Universität Berlin.

Service to the Profession

Editorial Positions

- 09/2021 – present Editor for history, social sciences and international relations for the *European Journal of American Studies (EJAS)*
- 09/2021 – 09/2024 Co-editor of the Collaborative Research Centre (SFB) TRR 294 “Structural Change of Property” blog “Transformation of Property”

Elected Positions

- 12/2022 – 09/2024 Representative of academic staff on the committee for budgetary matters (Ausschuss für Haushaltsangelegenheiten), Universität Erfurt
- 12/2022 – 12/2023 Equal Opportunity Representative of the Collaborative Research Centre (SFB) TRR 294 “Structural Change of Property”
- 12/2018 – 12/2020 Co-speaker of the Diversity Roundtable (DR) of the German Association for American Studies (GAAS/DGfA)
- 10/2017 – 10/2020 Co-coordinator of the NYLON Berlin research group at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin’s Georg-Simmel Center for Metropolitan Studies (GSZ)

Theses Supervised as First Advisor

- 2025 Jinhui Gao, “The Origin of the Chinese Exclusion Act and Its Role in Shaping Immigration Policies of the United States” (M.A. thesis, Freie Universität Berlin, forthcoming)
- 2025 Nadim Chahrour, “Die Lakota und der Ghost Dance: Spiritueller Widerstand gegen die Westexpansion der USA im späten 19. Jahrhundert” (B.A. thesis, Freie Universität Berlin, forthcoming)
- 2025 Alessandro Luzi, “Present Memories: The Global War on Terror and its Memorials” (B.A. thesis, Freie Universität Berlin, forthcoming)
- 2025 Tobias Maisch, “Echoes of the Past: Stories of Lebanon’s Youth in Contemporary Times” (M.A. thesis, Universität Erfurt, forthcoming)

- 2024 Alix Gerbing, “‘Freiheit die ich meine?’ Kontinuitäten des Liberalismus seit der Aufklärung über die Kolonialmächte bis in die unmittelbare Gegenwart” (B.A. thesis, Universität Erfurt)
- 2023 Dennis Menacher, “On the Juxtaposition of Women Migrant Domestic Workers and Recruiting Agencies in Lebanon” (M.A. thesis, Universität Erfurt)
- 2023 Salome Daphne Soraya von Stolzmann, “From the Margins to the Forefront: Black Women’s Activism in Reproductive Justice and the Oversight of the Civil Rights Movement” (B.A. thesis, Freie Universität Berlin)

Theses Supervised as Second Advisor

- 2024 Marianne Ghanem, “Citizenship, Gender and Patrilineality in Lebanon” (M.A. thesis, Universität Erfurt)
- 2023 Gloria Neidlein, “Leben in Beziehung: Sarah Madden, Sally Hemings und ihre Kinder als Geschichte von Unfreiheit und Mutterschaft im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert” (M.A. thesis, Universität Erfurt)
- 2022 Katharina von Pawel-Rammingen, “‘Refusing to be refused’: Labelle’s Black Feminist Sonic Practices in Sound and Performance” (B.A. thesis, Freie Universität Berlin)
- 2021 Judith Goetsch, “Stigma and Disease – Conceptualizing Ableist and Racist Rhetoric as a Basis of Structural Inequality in New York” (B.A. thesis, Freie Universität Berlin)
- 2020 Johanna Ohler, “How Implicit Bias Laid the Groundwork for the Multitude of Death Penalty Convictions in Arizona between 2004 and 2009” (B.A. thesis, Freie Universität Berlin)
- 2019 Celine Ofenito, “International Criminal Court v. Guantanamo Bay: War Crimes amid the War on Terror and How the U.S. are Forfeiting Themselves from Prosecutions by the ICC” (B.A. thesis, Freie Universität Berlin)

Memberships

German Association of American Studies (GAAS/DGfA)
 Collegium for African American Research (CAAR)

Consultations

2016 Advised the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the Deputy Counsel of Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe on the history of felony disenfranchisement and the restoration of civil rights in Virginia.

Academic Presentations

Invited Lectures and Public Panels (selection)

“Film & Talk #2030.” Panelist at “RBG - Ein Leben für die Gerechtigkeit,” delphi LUX Theater, Berlin, March 7, 2025.

“Reproductive Justice and (Racial) Capitalism: Grand Midwives as Political Economic Theorists.” Lecture prepared for the *Ringvorlesung Winter Semester 2024/25*, John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, Nov. 27, 2024.

“Versklavte Hebammen und ihr kosmologisches Wissen.” Lecture prepared for the *Erfurter Kolleg*, Universität Erfurt, May 3, 2024.

“Kosmologisches Verlernen: Granny Midwifery Jenseits des Eigentums.” Paper prepared for the *Kolloquium Geschlechtergeschichte*, Universität Basel, March 15, 2024.

“Teaching Reproductive Justice from Granny Midwives to the SisterSong Collective.” Lecture prepared for the *Wittenberg Teacher Academy 2023*, Muhlenberg Center for American Studies, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Nov. 16-18, 2023.

“Memphis Minnie’s Chauffeur Blues: Gender, Automotivity and Sustainability in the Second and Third Reconstructions.” Lecture prepared for the *Ringvorlesung gender*bildet*, Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Oct. 24, 2023.

“Joyriding Otherwise: William Pickens’ Automotivity as Spiritual Practice.” Lecture prepared for the 2022 Rolf Kentner Dissertation Prize ceremony, *Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA)*, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, April 27, 2023.

“Joyriding as Spiritual Practice.” Lecture prepared for the *Oberseminar Neuere/Neueste Geschichte*, Universität Gießen, Oct. 26, 2022.

Panelist at “Ein Afrika: Durch kulturelle Unterschiede navigieren, um Einheit zu fördern,” *Afrikanisch-Deutscher Verein für Kultur und Bildung e. V.*, Zentrum für Integration und Migration Erfurt (ZIM), Sept. 29, 2022.

- “Der Geist der Poiēsis in der Kunst von Kameelah Janan Rasheed.” Lecture prepared for Rasheed’s exhibit “i am not done yet,” *Kunstverein Hannover, the American Studies department of Leibniz Universität Hannover and the Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland (ISD)*, Hannover, March 30, 2022.
- “Non-Agapeic Love in Black Imagining.” Panelist at “Panel on American Violence,” *John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies*, Freie Universität Berlin, April 28, 2021.
- “‘Your Fourth of July’: Frederick Douglass’ Critique of Lockean Natural Personhood.” Panelist at *The 1776 Report and Its Afterlives: Critical Responses from German American Studies Teach-in*, Universität zu Köln/Universität Wien, Feb. 4, 2021.
- “Epistemic and Embodied Care in the GAAS.” Panelist at the “First GAAS Townhall” on Diversity, Racism, and Anti-Racism in Research and Teaching in American Studies in Germany, *Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies*, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Nov. 27, 2020.
- “Diversity Roundtable Initiatives.” Panelist at “(out)Rage in America (and elsewhere)—Structural Racism, Resistance, and Responsibilities: The situation in the US and Germany” Town Hall Meeting, *Department of English and American Studies*, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, June 24, 2020.
- “Chauffeur Blues and Joy in Cars: Navigating the Emotional Terrain of Early American Automotivity.” Lecture prepared for the *Historisches Institut: Nordamerikanische Geschichte* department colloquium, Universität Köln, May 14, 2019.
- “Jim Crow Automobile Insurance: Racialized Logics of Joy and Risk on American Highways.” Lecture prepared for the *Geschichte des europäisch-transatlantischen Kulturraums* department colloquium, Universität Augsburg, January 16, 2019.
- “Leisure and Risk in Cars: Resisting Racist Surveillance by Early Automobile Insurers.” Lecture prepared for the *Ringvorlesung 2018/19*, John. F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, December 5, 2018.
- “Limits of the Open Road: Driving While Black in Jim Crow America and Today.” Lecture prepared for the annual Chemnitz and Rostock *American Studies Teacher Seminars*, Sächsische Bildungsagentur Chemnitz and Universität Rostock, March 14 and 16, 2018.
- “The Divide - Photography by Raymond Thompson, Jr.: A Portrayal of Collateral Damage of Incarceration on Families in the United States.” Exhibit opening talk with Raymond Thompson, Jr. Amerikahaus München, January 26, 2018.

Moderator at book launch discussion of *Emotional Cities: Debates on Urban Change in Berlin and Cairo, 1860-1910* by Joseph Ben Prestel with panelists Julie Ren and On Barak, Pro qm, Berlin, Nov. 3, 2017.

“‘We the People?’ Nation/State/Community.” Panelist at the *10th Anniversary of the Graduate School of North American Studies* conference, Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences, Oct. 20, 2017.

Speech given at Rathaus Schöneberg on behalf of the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies/Freie Universität Berlin at large in honor of the 100th anniversary of the birth of John F. Kennedy, May 29, 2017.

Papers Given (selection)

“William Pickens’ Antiracist Pedagogy of Mobility.” Paper prepared for the *Fourteenth Biannual Conference of Collegium for African American Research (CAAR)*, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, March 20-22, 2025.

“Dogwoods as Sacred Boundaries in the Practice of Grand Midwifery.” Paper prepared for the *Culture & International History VII – Uncertain Boundaries in International History Conference*, John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies, Freie Universität Berlin, Dec. 12-14, 2024.

with Jürgen Martschukat. “Reproduction, Kin, and Family: Gender and Property in Slavery and Segregation in the United States.” Paper prepared for the *Changing Property and Gender Relations Workshop*, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Nov. 29, 2024.

“‘Critical Fabulation’ als historisch-philosophische Methode: Grand Midwives und das Verlernen der Propertisierung.” Paper prepared for the *XI. Tagung für Praktische Philosophie*, Universität Passau, Sept. 19-20, 2024.

“Is There an Elder in the Room? Divination in Contemporary Black Midwifery.” Paper prepared for the *27th Biennial Associazione Italiana di Studi Nord-Americani (AISNA) Conference*, University of Perugia, Narni, Italy, Sept. 21-23, 2023.

“Spiritual Breath in Granny Midwifery.” Paper prepared for the *Biennial Conference of the Nordic Association of American Studies (NAAS)*, Uppsala Universitet, Uppsala, Sweden, May 25-27, 2023.

“Beyond Teleology and Eschatology: The Stasis of ‘Taking Flight’ in Cars.” Paper prepared for the *Annual Conference of the Historians in the DGfA/GAAS*, Akademie für Politische Bildung, Tutzing, May 5-7, 2023.

- “The Reception of the Theory of Path Dependency in Historical Science.” Paper prepared for the SFB TRR 294 workshop *Path Dependence*, Jentower, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena, Jan. 19-20, 2023.
- “The Cosmogram as Alternative to Property for the *Eigentumslosen*.” Paper prepared for the SFB TRR 294 workshop *Relating to Land*, Max-Weber-Kolleg, Universität Erfurt, Nov. 4, 2022.
- “‘Her Chief Delight’: Pleasure and the Aesthetic Temporalities of Driving.” Paper prepared for the 23rd *International Conference on the History of Concepts*, Friedrich-Meinecke-Institut, Freie Universität Berlin, April 7-9, 2022.
- “Midwifery as Black Radical Tradition.” Paper prepared for the *Second Annual Roundtable for Black Feminist and Womanist Theory*, Emory University and the University of Louisville, Nov. 4-6, 2021.
- “Teaching towards Calvin Warren’s ‘Nonmetaphysical Historiography.’” Paper prepared for the 67th *Annual Meeting of the German Association for American Studies* (GAAS/DGfA), Universität Heidelberg, June 17-19, 2021.
- “Access to Leisure in Cars: Early Black Motorists’ Worldmaking in Miami.” Paper prepared for the conference *Tourist Imaginaries and Mobilities in the United States*, University of Versailles, Feb. 6-7, 2020.
- “Joy, Terror, and Humiliation in Cars: Emotional Black Worldmaking at the Twilight of the Long Nineteenth Century.” Paper prepared for the symposium *African American Worldmaking in the Long Nineteenth Century*, Universität Potsdam, Oct. 12, 2019.
- “Volatile Humanity: Joy and ‘Joyriding’ in Cars.” Paper prepared for the 17th *Annual NYLON Conference* (“Knowledge Production in Volatile Times and Spaces”), London School of Economics and Goldsmiths, April 5-7, 2019.
- “Remembering Jim Crow Auto Insurance.” Paper prepared for the *Young Scholars Forum* of the 41st Annual Conference of the Historians in the DGfA/GAAS, Franken-Akademie Schloß Schney, Lichtenfels, Feb. 9, 2019.
- “‘Oh, if I had that Ford V-8!’: Automotivity, Anti-Lynching Campaigns, and Imagined Black Liberation, 1934-39.” Paper prepared for the *Joint 32nd European Association for American Studies and 63rd British Association for American Studies Conference*, King’s College London, April 4-7, 2018.
- “The Invisible Whiteness of Being: Thoughts on the Annual Conference of the German Association of American Studies.” Paper prepared for the workshop *Diversity and/in the GAAS*, Amerikahaus München, Oct. 21, 2017.

“Chauffeur Blues: Cars as Spaces of Social Transgression, 1895-1939.” Paper prepared for the *Heidelberg Spring Academy*, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, March 20-24, 2017.

“Joyriding across the Color Line: Chauffeuring and Citizenship in the United States, 1895-1918.” Paper prepared for the *Young Scholars Forum* of the 39th Annual Conference of the Historians in the DGfA/GAAS, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Feb. 11, 2017.

“Joyriding in the Early Twentieth-Century United States: Race, Mobility, and the Right to Consume.” Paper prepared for the *Futures of American Studies Institute*, Dartmouth College, June 20-26, 2016.

“Hog Stealing in Virginia’s Colonial Statutes: Racially Discriminatory Seeds of Felon Disenfranchisement Sown in the Colonial Capital.” Paper prepared for the *Lemon Project Spring Symposium*, College of William & Mary, April 10-11, 2015.