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News

The American Voices seminar discussed the culture and the American dream of the United States

From 11 to 12 October, the North American Studies (NAMS) program, co-ordinated by the John Morton Center for English Studies and the John Morton Center for North American Studies, was organized by the University of Turku. traditional American Voices seminar at the University of Turku. During the seminar, Fulbright Fellowship speakers heard about American society and culture.



NAMS coordinator Janne Korkka, a university lecturer, opened the seminar.

The speakers at the seminar were from the United States and are in Finland for research and teaching exchange through the Fulbright program.

Representatives of the Fulbright Finland Foundation also attended the seminar. The US Embassy also partnered with the event.

The event was opened by University Lecturer **Janne Korkka**, coordinator of **NAMS**. He introduced future speeches by highlighting the upcoming US presidential election and the changes in power relations in the country's politics.

- Listen to what is said in American political debate and what is not said. Listen also to all the different voices in the conversation and be critical, Korkka advised listeners.

Rector Kola received a thank you gift from Fulbright Finland

One of the opening remarks of the seminar was to **Terhi Mölsä**, CEO of Fulbright Finland. He outlined the background of the foundation and talked about the importance of exchange programs, especially today. He also introduced over 20 American and three Finnish Fulbright scholarship recipients in the audience.



At the seminar, Rector Jukka Kola recalled his Fulbright researcher exchange.

Jukka Kola, Rector of the University of Turku, talked about how interesting the opportunities offered by the American Voices seminar and cooperation with Fulbright Finland are to the university students. He also said he was an Fulbright alumni himself.

- The seminar will also provide an opportunity for staff to gain new ways of thinking. It is also a great example of cooperation within the university and with our partners, Kola summarized.

Mölsä also presented Fulbright Finland's anniversary glass work, a glass **mouset** designed by **Jonathan Capps**, alumni of the association, which was donated by the foundation to Rector Kola in recognition of his long-standing collaboration between the University of Turku and Fulbright Finland.

Speeches on the southern accent and the American dream

The first speech by American Fulbright scholars on the seminar program dealt with the southern dialect of the southern United States. Speakers including **Bruce Blair**, **Scott Buchanan** and **Anne Klinefelter** were all from the southern United States, the states of Alabama and Georgia. They introduced the accent of the southern dialect and various parables.

In Friday's second speech, **Bin Yang** and **Eric Hahnert** talked about the American dream and its sustainability. Their speech bound social development and the need for sustainable fuels.

- The American dream is fundamentally a capitalist idea. It is based on the idea that, through hard work, future generations will always be richer than today. However, that is no longer the case, and the Millennials do not believe it. The American dream is not sustainable because it is based on exploitation of other Americans, Hahnort said.



Fulbright researchers Bin Yang and Eric Hahnert talked about the American dream and sustainable fuels.

Yang introduced the history of US fuel consumption and its environmental impact. Fuel plays an important role in the history of the American Dream, and its easy availability is nowadays considered a fundamental right.

- The US transportation sector is dependent on crude oil. Transport also generates the most greenhouse gas emissions. Nevertheless, fuel prices have been kept low. Change is needed here, Yang said.

Finally, Hahnert and Yang introduced how the concept of the American Dream should be changed. Its core values, along with diligence and freedom, should include sustainability. That would be a chance for future generations to have a positive, American dream of believing in the future.

The American Voices Seminar was held for the 27th time this year. The event also presented Regional differences in the United States, food and festive culture, and cultural diversity in the country.

Text and photos: Lotta Junnila

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