



# What Makes the American Voices Special?

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U.S. Fulbrighters **Catia Confortini**, **David Carranza**, **Karl Haapala**, **Benjamin Lear**, and **Lois Presser** discussed how different cultures have changed the American cuisine. Dr. **María A. Gutiérrez Bascón** (left), postdoctoral research at the John Morton Center chaired the session.

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At this year's American Voices Seminar, we learned that the expression "bless your heart" isn't necessarily as positive as it sounds. In the U.S. South, it entails multiple nuances and layers, which can be difficult to discern. We also heard about the adventures of "Florida Man," the protagonist of many incidents that have baffled local law enforcement as well as the general public around the world. And from a presentation exploring different styles of making pizza across the U.S., we learned that the debate over which is best can be as fierce as it is unresolvable.

Compared to traditional scholarly affairs, the annual American Voices Seminar is refreshingly different. What sets it apart is the warm atmosphere and the clarity of expression. There's laughter – and lots of it – and the presentations and conversations flow free of academic jargon. The seminar is a great chance for North American Studies (NAMS) students at the University of Turku to hear about various places, practices, and phenomena related to U.S. society and its regional cultures. The informal and often humorous presentations offer insights that the students may not get from traditional lectures and course readings.

This year the John Morton Center for North American Studies (JMC) had the honor and pleasure of joining the organizers of the event, the Fulbright Finland Foundation, and the University of Turku's Department of English. The occasion offers exciting new prospects, and we are already looking

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forward to future seminars. The diversity and multitude of perspectives and voices make this event truly special.

**The annual American Voices seminar** in Turku provides an opportunity to learn about various aspects of U.S. society and culture through the experiences of American Fulbright grantees currently in Finland.