20th Annual Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference:

Colonialism in the Academy

Hosted by the Department of Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies
The University of British Columbia
xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Territory
February 29th-March 1st, 2019

In privileging the material, scientific, observable world over the spiritual, experiential, and unquantifiable aspects of archaeological sites, ancient peoples, and artifacts, archaeological practice demonstrates that it is solidly grounded in Western ways of categorizing, knowing, and interpreting the world.

Sonya Atalay, “Indigenous Archaeology as Decolonizing Practice”

In recent years, Humanities and Social Science departments in North America and elsewhere have paid increasing attention colonialism’s impact on how and what we study, and as a result, the academy’s own complicity in perpetuating colonialist ideals. However, in many cases, we have yet to go beyond this stage of recognition and, as Atalay suggests, fundamentally destabilize what we consider as knowledge.

The University of British Columbia’s Department of Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies is pleased to accept papers for its 20th Annual Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference. We look forward to engaging in interdisciplinary dialogue on this year’s topic: Colonialism in the Academy.

Colonialism’s impact on the modern university is felt widely in all fields of study, affecting what is studied, how it is studied, and who studies it. The aim of this conference is to encourage interdepartmental dialogue and open exchange on this impact, as well as on the steps being taken to resist and decentre colonial narratives. We welcome papers from all fields of study (humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, education, archival and library sciences, etc.), and especially encourage submissions from those belonging to traditionally marginalized communities in order to foster inclusive dialogue that transcends disciplinary boundaries. For this reason, we invite potential participants to situate their identities in the proposal.

In order to engage effectively with this topic, prospective presenters are welcome to submit proposals for both traditional conference papers, as well as non-traditional modes of presenting. By challenging traditional forms of communication at conferences, we hope to engage critically in questions of how forms of conference presentation enforce certain narratives about what is acceptable in academia.

Possible questions to consider include: What is colonialism’s role in shaping the modern university? How has colonialism impacted specific fields of study? How do colonialist perspectives shape the ways we construct knowledge? How have colonialist ideas dictated what are considered to be legitimate fields and methods of study?
The conference will take place Saturday, February 29th and Sunday, March 1st 2020, at the University of British Columbia, hosted by the Department of Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies, on the traditional unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people.

If you are interested in participating, please send an abstract of 300 words (maximum) by 5pm PST on December 16th, 2019. Presentations should be about 15-20 minutes in length. Abstracts can be sent to cners.grad.conference@gmail.com with your name and “Abstract Submission” in the subject line. Include your name, institution, degree, title of presentation, and email address in the body of the letter. If you are submitting an abstract for a non-traditional presentation, please include the format and intent of the project, as well as any additional necessary equipment or aids (eg. extra space, special room configuration, technology).