

The Humanities Center at Harvard University is pleased to announce its annual Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference. This year's topic is "Objects of Knowledge, Objects of Exchange: Contours of (Inter)disciplinarity." Below is our call for papers. We would like to ask that you forward the CFP to the graduate students in your department. Thank you very much!

Call for Papers

Objects of Knowledge, Objects of Exchange: Contours of (Inter)disciplinarity

(<http://objectsofknowledge.org/>)

Mellon Graduate Student Conference Humanities Center – Harvard University

April 3-4, 2009

Timetable

Deadline for abstract submission: February 15, 2009.

Notification of acceptance: February 23, 2009.

Submission of final papers: March 22, 2009.

Pre-circulation of papers: March 23, 2009.

Conference: April 3-4, 2009.

Note: Selected domestic and international panelists will be eligible for transportation reimbursement.

As fields of knowledge production, circulation, and consumption, academic disciplines and their intersections are privileged arenas in which to examine the emergence of objects of knowledge, their contestation and circulation. However, disciplines are themselves artifacts, engaged in processes of mutation and consolidation, among many others. How does a discipline or a field of study define its object, and how is it reciprocally defined by it? Are objects of knowledge extant entities, or defined entirely by their construction within overlapping fields and processes of knowledge? How does theory contest or reinforce objectifying processes? Can objects of knowledge be said to circulate - as text, image, written or recorded music, oral traditions and practices of habitation/embodiment, or, equally, physical and social formations, subatomic particles, etc. - and by what attributes and effects may they be known? How is the identification (or instantiation) of such objects to take place? What are the dynamics and consequences of identification and/or specification in this context, and are they desirable? What are the pitfalls of transactional models of the movement and circulation of ideas, and how might alternative models be formulated? Beyond narratives of progress, how do systematic or contingent understandings of the elaboration of thought attempt to break with teleological formulations? Are processual methodologies and/or immanent criticism successful in withdrawing themselves from a progressivist frame, and is or would such a withdrawal be desirable?

This conference will seek to interrogate the contours of interdisciplinarity through discussion focused around objects of knowledge in their constitution, negotiation, and exchange. We invite paper proposals from across the disciplines (including, but not limited to, the natural and social sciences, humanities, and the arts) and encourage reflections on the following questions and foci.

Four foci:

Negotiating temporalities and spatialities:

How do ideas move through space and time, and how are they shaped by movement? Recent and contemporary developments in communication practices and technology promise to bring about mutations in and opportunities for collaboration and research, at the same time insinuating themselves into the fabric of the ideas that arise from and through them. Does interdisciplinary investigation enable novel understandings of space and time as they

relate to the production of objects of knowledge/exchange? How does such investigation reflect the social, technological, and environmental conditions of its production? In what ways can the mutual constitution of subject and object of inquiry be situated along spatial and temporal dimensions?

In this topic area we encourage proposals to trace specific ideas or phenomena along temporal and/or spatial axes, illustrating ways in which circulations of populations, individuals, methodologies, and ideas reflect or shed light on the following: narrativity, historicity, movement, architecture, and urbanism, among others.

Ethical engagement and praxis:

What are the ethical dimensions of interdisciplinarity? It is a commonplace to refer to the apparent dichotomy between "theory" and "praxis," yet epistemological orientations are deeply implicated in social and political affairs across its various meanings and arenas. Must theory necessarily be committed to a certain ethical engagement? In the broadest sense, what are the politics of the production and use of knowledge? To approach these questions we invite contributions addressing the stakes of knowledge production in specific cases including, for example, the role of the university in the production and regulation of knowledge and the ethics of collaboration between the university and the private sector. To what extent does the increasing public engagement with environmentalism reflect a transfer of the idea of human rights to the Earth conceived as a (humanized?) being?

In this topic we invite reflection on subjects including but not limited to violence (people/society/environment); transportation infrastructure and globalization; reflexivity in the writing of theory; politics, ethics, and regimes of power; the human genome; animal and human rights; governmentality; and health and social suffering.

Images of thought / beyond the image:

While the image (by opposition to the written or printed word) may become the element of informational exchange most central to unfolding 21st century society, what sites in the understanding or production of images (including moving images) illuminate the stakes of such a transformation for theoretical investigation? If the cinema provided a "moving image of thought" in the 20th century (John Marks), does the formulation continue to pertain as image production and consumption explode beyond the confines of the theater? How do other kinds of images - particle collision diagrams, disk images, audio recordings, crowdsourced political advertisements, QR codes, photo-searching, etc. - complicate the moving image as an image of thought, and perhaps our understanding of thought itself? How may the expansion of critical practice beyond sight to include other domains of sense data further complicate the centrality of the image to our understandings of intellectual history and the future of theory?

We invite papers on topics including photographic and film criticism, new media and technology, imaging techniques in research across disciplines, image as functional or illustrative metaphor, musical notation, image making practice and its role in research in the social and natural sciences (from nano-technology to the human genome to the universe), formal and informal image-making in social praxis, visual and multi-sensory representations of knowledge domains, kinesthetics, and the circulation of art objects and the art world.

Performing transdisciplinarity? (Experimental panel)

As part of our interrogation about the circulation of ideas and the contours of interdisciplinarity, we hope to include on the second day of the conference an experimental panel in which four participants will engage with a common topic from their diverse (inter)disciplinary and methodological standpoints. To this end, we will circulate a topic to voluntary experimental panel participants 5 weeks prior to the conference and those participants will be asked to write a very short (15-minute) presentation on the topic. During the panel, the presenters will deliver their remarks, with each presentation followed by 15 minutes of moderated roundtable

discussion. The goal will be to encourage the development of a set of reflections on the same topic from four distinct methodological and/or disciplinary standpoints. In order to identify potential participants, if you are interested in taking part in this experimental panel, please indicate your interest in your cover letter.

ABSTRACTS FORMAT

Please submit an abstract (200-300 words) and a cover letter, in which you briefly explain your reasons for attending the conference and state how the paper is relevant to your research. In the letter, state whether you are eligible for transportation reimbursement. Co-authored papers are welcome.

Email to: info@objectsofknowledge.org

Deadline: February 15, 2009.

Accepted panelists will be notified by February 23, 2009.

Any questions should be directed to: info@objectsofknowledge.org