

# **Bodies at Work, Bodies at Play**

History Graduate Student Association

14th Annual Student Conference

University of Maryland, College Park

28-29 March 2019

## **Call for Papers**

Bodies have served as the fundamental matrix through which societies have inscribed their ideas about race, class, gender, politics, culture, and nature. Yet they did not only serve as the passive vessels of power; bodies (be it human or nonhuman, animate or inanimate, material or immaterial, real or imagined) also disrupted power, contested narratives, and provided a place of refuge. Bodies destabilize categories, transgress borders, challenge authority, and force us to consider the political stakes behind such classifications. Moreover, bodies are not only singular entities or subjectivities; they are also assemblages, unwieldy confederations, and vibrant groupings of matter. Bodies are the sites and the means of encounter, presence, intimacy, and union, as well as of conflict, violence, dismemberment, and dissolution. Lastly, bodies are transhuman: animals, the environment, the mystical, the cosmos itself. How and why have people draw the line between the human and nonhuman? How did actors in different historical periods and places define bodies? The HGSA Conference invites papers exploring bodies and their connection with theory, politics, and practice.

We approach the history of the human and nonhuman through the theme of **Bodies at Work, Bodies at Play**. *Bodies at Work* invites us to reconceptualize labor, politics, biopower, alienation, and migration histories. *Bodies at Play* refers to how bodies embrace the ludic and the excessive, transcending at moments the divisions between human and nonhuman. We are interested in discussing bodies in the broadest sense possible: bodies of water, the body politic, corporations, bodies of a text, bodily metaphors, spiritual bodies, and even simply a body of matter. The question of the body is not only transhuman but also transnational. Important to the theme of *Bodies at Work, and Bodies at Play* is the idea that bodies are constantly in motion. They traverse, transgress, and transubstantiate boundaries. At the same time, authorities seek to demobilize, incarcerate, and interrogate bodies. Imminent in bodies are the non-heteronormative potentialities of embodiment that defy the state. They give us pause, and make it possible to ponder disability and capacity. By embracing a corporeal category of analysis, it is possible to use the body as an entry point into the broader history of the premodern and modern worlds, where human and nonhuman bodies were the locus of contested meaning.

We are primarily interested in the treatment of bodies from a historical perspective. Using the tools of history, part of our goal is to examine the historical contexts in which these ideas about the bodies at work and at play were and are constituted. However, the historical lens is but one of many ways to address the complex performance of bodies at both play and work. Just as we look at instances when bodies transgress their ascribed categories, we are looking for interdisciplinary contributions from scholars, activists, and intellectuals from other disciplines whose work intersects with the themes and topics

outlined here. The expansiveness and capaciousness of bodies themselves demands a diversity of approaches from the humanities, social sciences, and activism.

We are interested in topics that include but are not restricted to:

- Biopower, discipline, and (hetero)normativity
- History science, medicine, and social sciences
- Labor history and migration
- Environmental history and environmental justice
- Embodiment, corporeality, sensorial perception
- History of emotions and affects
- Corporations and collective bodies (ex. *corpus mysticum*, guilds, *umma*, *sangha*)
- Gender, and sexuality
- The intersection of religious life/theory and the body and embodiment
- The incorporeal, the supra-bodily, and bodies beyond bodies
- Nonhuman bodies in nature
- Supra-bodily presences and extra-bodily presences
- Heavenly ‘bodies’
- Materiality, and the incorporeal
- Contestation, transgression, and re-definition
- Social construction of the body
- Corporal metaphors
- Activism, performativity and the political body
- Artistic, architectural, and other renderings of the body and the bodily
- Queer theory, animal studies, disability studies
- Object oriented ontology, “new” and “old” materialism, material feminism

**Participants may propose:**

1. **Individual Papers** or **Panels** organized around a common theme with 3-5 participants. Each panelist will have 15 minutes for their intervention, followed by dialogue with the audience.
2. **Roundtables** organized in advance by a maximum of 5 discussants who will discuss the theme from different perspectives and foster audience engagement.
3. Other forms of presentations such as posters and audiovisual formats.

Please send a **250 word abstract** and any inquiries to [umdgradhistconference@gmail.com](mailto:umdgradhistconference@gmail.com) by **1 February 2019**. Include your name, program, institutional affiliations, format of your presentation, and AV needs. Proposal decision notifications will be emailed by **10 February 2019**.