



Contradicting Contradictions: Interrogating Humanities-based Scholar Activism in the Neoliberal University

6th Annual Interdisciplinary Humanities Graduate Student Conference

University of California, Merced

April 4-6, 2019

Keynote Speaker: Dina Gilio-Whitaker, American Indian Studies, Cal State San Marcos + Policy Director / Senior Research Associate, Center for World Indigenous Studies

ihgradcon.wix.com/ucmerced

The IH Grad Con Committee welcomes proposals from all students conducting scholarship within the humanities, with special focus on graduate student research. While proposals that respond directly to the conference theme are encouraged, all topics regardless of region, temporality, or discipline will be considered in order to ensure cross-disciplinary dialogue. Abstracts addressing this year's theme may take the form of individual presentations, research posters, and panel proposals.

Please submit a 300 word-limit abstract by the December 15, 2018 deadline. To submit an abstract, please email a PDF attachment with a brief author bio to ihgradconference@ucmerced.edu. This year's conference will take place in Merced, California from April 4-6, 2019.

Humanities scholars find utility in anthropology, archaeology, art, history, literature, philosophy, and other disciplines in order to understand human society and culture. In recent years, the humanities has made an effort toward addressing social justice issues through the use of a critical lens. Sometimes, despite this effort, humanities scholars reproduce the same issues they claim to understand. This outcome can be especially common in the realm of activist scholarship. Activist scholarship aims to understand the dynamics of select social issues, and produce knowledge that may help in alleviating social ailments. But what happens when academic knowledge overshadows community knowledge, in effect undermining lived experiences?

In an institution that incentivizes the production of knowledge as a means to soliciting new financial resources, humanist scholars often work within an environment wrought with contradiction. After all,

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much of the humanities seek to address social issues, but what is a scholar activist to do if their chosen type of work isn't encouraged (and may even be discouraged) by their institution? This year's conference theme, "Contradicting Contradictions: Interrogating Humanities-based Scholar Activism in the Neoliberal University," seeks to address the contradictions of a university that incentivizes job security and tenureship in exchange for a certain type of knowledge production that benefits the neoliberal university. This type of privileging requires academics to work within a system that generally values profit, and leaves little room to work alongside local communities who may be less likely to bring financial resources to the university. In this type of environment, how do academics find balance between job security and reforming the neoliberal university to benefit everyone, not just those who bring financial benefits to the institution?

Charles R. Hale's edited volume, *Engaging Contradictions: Theory, Politics, and Methods of Activist Scholarship*, reminds us to ask ourselves, "research for whom?" when working within the neoliberal hierarchy of knowledge. Working as a grounding principle, the "research for whom?" lens creates room for acknowledging the privileges of conducting research in the University. By failing to interrogate the motivations behind humanist scholarship, we fall into the cycle of reproducing work for the sake of career advancement, or what Ruth Wilson Gilmore calls "luxury production," and risk reproducing the very social obstacles we claim to address. This year's conference seeks to redefine "knowledge," and what that means for local communities, as well as to interrogate the role of humanist scholars in activist scholarship: How can humanist scholars work beyond the confines of institutional incentives to reimagine a type of scholarship that finds value in community knowledge outside of the academic hierarchy?

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Possible presentation topics and research fields include, but are by no means limited to the following:

- Critical race and ethnic studies
- Community-based knowledges and environmental justice
- Ivory Tower, academic elitism, and white supremacy
- Organized abandonment, prison reform, and homelessness
- Labor and working class mobilizations and movements
- Immigration, nationalism, and citizenship/recognition
- Popular education, collectivism, and identity
- Neocolonialism and gentrification
- Youth activism
- (Pre)historic memory and social imagination
- Critical archeology

- Decolonial anthropology
- Gender and sexuality
- Digital and public humanities
- Critical intellectual history
- Empire, colonialism, and third world politics
- Religion, philosophy, and theology
- Pedagogical models
- Media and visual cultural studies

Guide for Authors

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Important Dates

Deadline for submission: December 15, 2018

Notification of acceptance: January 05, 2019

For all inquiries, please contact: ihgradconference@ucmerced.edu