

Call for Papers
The First Annual Interdisciplinary Humanities Conference
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo
April 25 and April 26, 2020

Performing Labor: (Re)Evaluations within the Humanities

Thus far, economics and the social sciences have been the privileged disciplinary frameworks for thinking about labor. This conference invites scholars working in the various humanities to imagine what our diverse disciplines have to contribute to contemporary critical thinking about labor. Economics and the social sciences have been detailing the social and material effects of a rapidly changing set of economic systems in the Western world, which in the course of less than 200 years has transitioned from plantation-colony to industrial-nationalism to post-industrial and globalized at a breakneck pace. With this rapid transition has come a shifting conception of what labor is, and how we talk about and conceive of labor, with many historical groups, identities and economic classes excluded from the larger narrative. With the advent of 24-hour convenience stores, drive-thru fast food, subscription groceries, and Amazon Prime, the rise of a culture that values instant gratification above all often fails to allow us to stop and think critically about the impact of these practices on other aspects of life. Consequently, the way we think about labor has become increasingly fraught. Our conference encourages prospective applicants to look critically at labor practices--both historical and modern--and the ways they shape our constructions of society, the body, and the self. What do the humanities have to contribute to this economic and social discussion? How can the intersectionality of the various fields of the humanities serve to enhance our understandings of and relationships to work and labor? How does this complicate the way we understand labor in today's global climate? How does the study of literature open new terrain for conceptualizing labor?

This conference is searching for diverse voices in all branches of the humanities who may have something to say about labor. We welcome work from scholars working on their undergraduate or graduate degrees, as well as the work of early-career independent scholars. Applicants are encouraged to consider the tensions between labor as it is constructed, represented, and understood through discourse and the actual performance of labor. Possible conference topics are not limited to, but may include:

- What are the grand narratives of labor, and how have they changed over time?
- How have transformations of labor in the neoliberal era impacted the novel form?
- How does rethinking social reproduction as labor transform the historian's approach to the archive?
- From an economic standpoint, how do different traditions of labor shape society?
- The social construction of labor
- How are economic production and consumption related to cultural production and consumption?

- How do material realities intersect with race, gender, and sexuality?
- What do the tensions between philosophical constructions of human worth and purpose and the realities of human life have to say about labor?
- How does the transformation of art between the Renaissance period and the Modern period reflect our cultural attitudes toward art and labor?
- What is the visibility of unpaid and forced labor in broader historical and current cultural narratives? (slavery, prison labor, domestic labor)
 - Labor as a form of systemic oppression (slavery)
- How has the criminalization of certain forms of work affected cultural narratives?
 - Sex work as labor, the criminalization of s-work, FOSTA/SESTA
- What voices are/have been excluded from both current and historical conversations about work?
 - Disability politics in labor
 - Queering labour, the trans body and labor
 - Femininity and labor, especially in relation to child-bearing and motherhood/parenthood
- What effects has automation had on cultural narratives about work?
- Intersectionality of labor as it relates to race, gender, sexuality, class, etc.
- Agrarian labor practices, urban labor practices, manual labour, unions, organized labor

We encourage participants to think about ways in which applying interdisciplinary approaches to the study of labor problematizes and opens up new fields for critical inquiry.

Applicants should submit a 250-300 word abstract for a 15-20 minute paper or presentation to cp.ihconference@gmail.com by **February 28**. Academic and creative work will be considered. Please include a brief bio with the abstract. **Decisions will be made the first week of March.**