Research Clusters 2015-2016

GIS at SMU

Conveners: Klaus DesmetMark McCoy and Jessie Zarazaga

This research cluster aims to bring together faculty, graduate students and staff who are interested in spatial analysis and GIS (Geographic Information Systems, for mapping and spatial analysis).

Ancient Biomolecules

Conveners: Louis Jacobs (jacobs@smu.edu) and Pia Vogel (pvogel@smu.edu)

Advances in analytical techniques applied to biomolecules and their residues have opened deep time and the evolution of life to a wide range of research questions relating to phylogeny, biogeography, extinction, paleoenvironments and paleoecology, domestication, and other significant topics across the spectrum of Archaeology, Biology, and Earth Sciences. This research cluster will facilitate communication among interested parties at SMU through discussion sessions and will catalyze specific research projects.

Cognitive Science

Conveners: Justin Fisher and Alan Brown

This research cluster will sponsor a series of talks and other activities intended to draw together various people who do research on cognition at SMU, where cognition is information processing that occurs in brains or artificial systems, including gathering information from the environment (perception), drawing further conclusions (reasoning and inference), storing away information for future usage (learning and memory), using information to guide further activity (planning, decision making and action), and other mental activities involving that information (emotion, creativity, conscious experience and aesthetic response). More participants are always welcome.

Post Secularism

Conveners: Beth Newman and Denise DuPont

How is the relatively new concept of "postsecularism" reshaping thought in different disciplines? What are the political, cultural, legal, and social implications of attempts to dislodge secularism from its place of pride in contemporary societies and epistemologies? What would it look like to engage in the "complementary learning process" that Habermas calls for between religious traditionalists and secularists? We are eager to include members from multiple disciplines as well as from diverse cultural and faith traditions, including no faith at all, to explore a topic that has been reshaping the humanities, the social sciences, and theology.

The following 2014-2015 Research Clusters have been continued through 2015- 2016.

Digital Humanities
Conveners: Dennis Foster and Kate Engel

Over the past two decades, innovative researchers in a wide range of humanities disciplines have begun to develop research projects that take advantage of digital tools. As a consequence, the humanities as a whole have seen a shift in what counts as a knowable object of study, expanding the humanities into new and often multi-disciplinary fields. The goal of this cluster is to read and discuss some of the recent theoretical and practical work being done in the Digital Humanities with the goal of creating a network of SMU scholars who can create and sustain digital projects.

Interdisciplinary Approaches to Inebriation, Addiction and Recovery Literature
Conveners: Bruce Levy

The Inebriation/Addiction/Recovery research cluster focuses on the discursive and real-world practices surrounding historical and contemporary quests for intoxicants, stimulants, and depressants. We approach the topic from the fields of sociology, criminology, history, literature, cultural theory, psychology, philosophy, public health and policy. Participants come from a cross-section of disciplines, professions, and practices.

Global Health Services
Conveners: Eric Bing and Suku Nair

Current global health challenges require innovative solutions from students and scholars skilled and motivated to work across areas including technology and informatics, human behavior and motivation, social and cultural networks, entrepreneurship, economics and policy, media and the arts. The Global Health Services Research Cluster will facilitate cross-campus, cross-disciplinary discussion and engagement that may lead to global health services research and training proposals, funding, and opportunities to improve engagement through innovative uses of technology and existing platforms locally and abroad.

Linking Mathematical and Life Sciences
Conveners: Andrea Barreiro and Brandy Stigler

In this cluster, we will explore interdisciplinary connections between the mathematical, physical, and life sciences by conducting informal seminars and discussions led by cluster participants.

Biopsychosocial Research

Conveners: Thomas Ritz and Pia Vogel

Efforts to understand health and disease processes increasingly use a biopsychosocial model, incorporating biochemical and cellular processes, physiological function, psychological behavior, and individual experiences, all in relation to society and the physical environment. Our research cluster will discuss the opportunities and limits of this interdisciplinary approach by exploring research collaborations between relevant disciplines in Dedman College and SMU, including but not limited to the biological sciences, psychology, chemistry, and anthropology