



Research Clusters 2017-2018

New Feminist Discourses and Social Change

Crista deLuzio, History; Susann Scholz, Theology; Bonnie Wheeler, English

Feminism has once again become a culturally approved term, but the connection between feminist scholarship and social change has thinned in the past decade. A group of eighteen SMU faculty and graduate students came together on May 5 with philanthropist/feminist scholar Helen LaKelly Hunt and long-time activist Vivian Castleberry to talk about Hunt's new book on the religious roots of American feminism in the abolitionist movement. During that conversation, we realized that SMU's feminist community could itself benefit from revitalization. As scholars and teachers, we use the tools of feminist analysis but we remain uncertain about "correct" relations between our scholarly and reformist agendas.

We'd like to think through this question, among others, in a cluster next year that would have six notable speakers and several small discussion sections. We would also engage the Women and Gender Studies Program in this project. Our goal is to produce an edited set of essays that poses questions about the place of feminist visibility in the academy. We want to develop the field of feminist thought further as we engage in both an embodiment of and conscious reflection upon feminist discourse. Can we see feminist theory in the service of social change?

Medieval Matters

Bonnie Wheeler, English; Shira Lander, Religious Studies/Director of Jewish Studies; Danielle Joyner, Art History, Meadows

The "Medieval Matters" Research Cluster plans a year-long initiative to reinvigorate the strong, diverse, and engaged community of medievalists among the faculty and students at SMU and in the metroplex area. As a working group, we will examine fresh methodological approaches to the study of the Middle Ages with the goal of generating opportunities for new collaborative teaching and research across disciplinary boundaries. Among other possibilities, we envision a fully vetted book and digital project (with national and international contributors) that advances current understandings of the uses and limits of transdisciplinary teaching/research in the Middle Ages.

Preparing for the Second Century of Historical Inquiry about the Hilltop

Ashley Tull, Simmons School of Education and Human Development; Joan Gosnell, University Archivist, Central University Libraries; Timothy Binkley, Archivist, Bridwell Library, Perkins School of Theology

As SMU launches into its Second Century, we will pause a moment to examine historical SMU events and issues, their meaning and significance. Cluster members will meet monthly to discuss readings from One Hundred Years on the Hilltop and visit the University Archives and the Archives at Bridwell Library. At the end of the academic year, cluster members will develop and disseminate a research agenda for further study of SMU's history based on gaps, newly developed interests and contemporary issues identified through their time together.

On Decolonial Options and the Writing of Latin American History

Francisco Moran, World Languages; Asiel Sepulveda, PhD. Candidate in Art History; Alice Hereen, Phd. Student in Art History; Claudia Zapata, Phd. Candidate in Art History; Beatriz Balanta, Art History; Grace Vargas, Phd. student in Religious Studies; Angel Gallardo, Phd. Candidate in Religious Studies; Gage Peer, M.F.A. Student in Art

This cluster will explore decolonial options for the Latinx/Latin American scholar in the U.S academy. We will discuss how to make local histories global, to claim agency for the Latin American subject, and to open possibilities to navigate racially and gendered coded academic power structures

Biopsychosocial Research: In Interdisciplinary Initiative

Pia Vogel, Biology; Thomas Ritz, Psychology

The Biopsychosocial Research Cluster brings together faculty from Psychology, Biology and Chemistry to use their combined expertise to discover molecular events linked to psychological, social, physical or medical challenges of humans. The biopsychosocial model of health incorporates, in its ideal conceptualization, processes on multiple levels, including biochemical and cellular processes, physiological function, psychological levels of behavior and experience of the individual, family and peer-group processes, as well as levels of the society, community and physical environment. The cluster has been active for a couple of years. The cluster research has been successful and resulted in several papers published over the last years, as well as in obtaining SMU a Dean's Research Council grant to two of the members.

Thinking Digitally: Understanding the Data in Humanities Disciplines

Jo Guldi, History; Dennis Foster, English

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.

GIS at SMU

Klaus Desmet, Economics; Mark McCoy, Anthropology; Jessie Zarazaga, Lyle School of Engineering

This Research Cluster brings together faculty, graduate students, and staff who are interested in GIS (Geographic Information Systems, for mapping and spatial analysis). In recent years the greater availability of spatial data has led to a growing interest in GIS across a variety of fields, including anthropology, art, earth sciences, economics, engineering, human rights and the humanities. The goals of the cluster include 1) connecting SMU faculty and students who may be working independently in the area of spatial analysis, and sharing the different uses and potentials of GIS across their fields; 2) identifying specific needs for SMU faculty training in GIS tools; and 3) helping the library and the Ford Building in setting up facilities and support strategies for GIS at SMU

Telling our Stories: Women of Color and the Power of Narratives

Karen Thomas, SMU Meadows School of the Arts; Candice Bledsoe, SMU Simmons School of Education

This research cluster will explore the power of narratives to help students connect to the human experience. The use of narrative inquiry and the experiences of women of color utilizing oral storytelling, print, film, and other multimedia platforms will generate discussions about principles to employ when crafting stories and counter stories for empowerment. Sharing stories of institutionalized racism and sexism, may inspire confidence in students, professors, and college practitioners to disturb and realign power asymmetries in socially just ways.

Computer-Assisted Mnemonics for Learning Enhancement

Teresa Brentegani, World Languages and Literatures; Pavel Klimovich, Computer Science and Engineering

Our goal is to make the early-stage learning process for students more efficient by exploring and utilizing optimal pathways whereby the information is perceived. This learning personalization will be achieved by employing computational linguistics algorithms that would take into account students' interests inside and outside the classroom.

Cognitive Science

Justin Fisher, Philosophy; Alan Brown, Psychology

The Cognitive Science Cluster sponsors a series of talks and other activities intended to draw together various people who do research on cognition at SMU. 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).

Interdisciplinary Museums and Heritage Initiatives at SMU

B. Sunday Eiselt, Department of Anthropology; Michael Adler, SMU-in-Taos; Andrew Graybill, History Department and Clements Center for Southwest Studies; Christopher Roos, Department of Anthropology

This research cluster aims to identify and bring together faculty, graduate students and staff from multiple disciplines who may be interested in developing research capacities and applications for undergraduate and graduate student education in interdisciplinary museums and heritage management at SMU. The primary goals of the research cluster are to identify specific needs for student education and training in this diverse and growing field, evaluate the feasibility of programming on campus, and explore how museums and heritage initiatives might be constituted in the curriculum.

Mapping Human Rights Sites in Dallas

Dr. Rick Halperin, Director, Embrey Human Rights Program; Edward Gray, DLS candidate, Simmons School; Jennifer McNabb, DLS candidate, Simmons School

According to Michael Philips in his book, *White Metropolis*, Dallas has created a series of false narratives around its history, leading to an obfuscation of human rights abuses, especially where race is concerned. Dallas has not come to terms with its true history, which has had repercussions into the present and recent past, from the Kennedy assassination to current injustices in racial and economic inequality to Dallas's part in the incarceration epidemic. All over Dallas there are sites redolent of an untold past. We propose a project to map the human rights sites in Dallas through an interdisciplinary approach with a prominent educational component. This proposal envisions partnerships with the new Dallas Holocaust Museum, as well as area high schools (especially Booker T. Washington), and community colleges.

The FDR-MLK Jr. 'Economic Bill of Rights'

Theodore Walker, Perkins School of Theology; Steve Long, Perkins School of Theology; Justin Barringer, Religious Studies

The "FDR-MLK Jr 'Economic Bill of Rights' Research Cluster" will convene for the purpose of sharing research on proposals for an "economic bill of rights" advanced by Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1941) and by Martin Luther King Jr. (1963; 1967a; 1967b), and for constructive and critical work on a contemporary economic bill of rights. Accordingly, three main disciplines will collaborate: ethics, economics, and law.

Creative Intersections in Interdisciplinary Education: Making Connections among Various Sectors of Creativity Research

M. Carmen Smith, Director of Education, Meadows Museum; Ige Guobadia, DLS Candidate, Simmons School; Gina Weber, DLS Candidate, Simmons School

Trends in education are pointing in an interdisciplinary direction. But what does "interdisciplinary" mean? SMU recently inaugurated the third Doctor of Liberal Studies program in the world, building on its interdisciplinary Master's Program. Creativity research approaches the innovative, novel, and valuable in multiple fields, encompassing education, psychology, leadership and organizational management, and many others; it is by definition an interdisciplinary research endeavor. This cluster will look at ways in which creativity research can inform and enrich interdisciplinary education at SMU, and the potential ripple effects of this type of education in the wider community

Native American and Indigenous Studies at SMU

Kacy Hollenback, Anthropology; Mike Adler, Anthropology; Neil Foley, History

This research cluster brings together faculty, staff, and graduate students with interests in indigenous studies. The focus will be on traditional and contemporary indigenous forms of culture, language, art, knowledge, economy, ecology, politics, and identity, as well as contemporary issues surrounding sovereignty, tradition, human rights, intellectual property rights, heritage, health, environmental justice, and development. Our year-long goals involve (1) creating and fostering a viable campus community at SMU, (2) identifying areas for collaborative research, and (3) defining existing and future teaching needs.