

“Rethinking Intellectual Activism”

The 1st Annual Language, Literacy and Culture (LLC) Graduate Student Conference

Saturday, April 12, 2014

University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC)

Deadline for Proposals: November 30, 2013

Chicana feminist writer Gloria Anzaldúa once said, “To be part of an alliance or coalition is to be active, activist. Why do we make alliances and participate in them? We are searching for powerful, meaning-making experiences. To make our lives relevant, to gain political knowledge, to give our lives as a sense of involvement, to respond to social oppression and its debilitating effects. Activists are engaged in a political quest. Activists are alienated from the dominant culture but instead of withdrawing we confront, challenge.” Where do scholars stand with regard to activism and transformative politics? Do they confront and challenge the dominant culture or serve to safeguard the status quo in the privileged comfort of the “ivory tower” of academia? Can we envision the university as a place of intellectual activism? Or should we reinvent the institution and scholars’ roles in it to make it a space of “political quest?”

We invite you to join us as we explore the potential meanings and practical implications of “intellectual activism,” which, as a political praxis of knowledge production, validation, and distribution, can take many different forms. By focusing on the notion of “intellectual activism,” the conference aims to open a critical discursive space to question and reimagine the role of the university in maintaining and/or disrupting the systems and operations of power within and through which the institution functions. In order to rethink the (actual and/or imagined) boundaries of the university and activism in a relational framework, the conference intends to bring together scholars, activists, and artists and let them engage in stimulating dialogues about the future of the university as a political place of knowledge production and social justice promotion.

We look forward to a day of inspiring dialogues that engage graduate students from all social sciences and humanities inter/disciplines and activists working to bring social justice on various political fronts. We encourage proposals that investigate “intellectual activism” from political, historical, sociological, philosophical, pedagogical, economic, feminist, postcolonial, literary, queer, etc. perspectives. Potential themes may include but are not limited to:

- Historical or theoretical analyses of activist movements and strategies both within and outside the institutionalized context of the university
- Coalition building between scholars and activists
- An examination of what is or should be the relationship between the community and the university
- Theorizing and practicing action-research methodologies
- Policing of radical ideologies in institutionalized educational settings
- Critical pedagogies and their discontents
- Institutionalization of feminist politics in the university
- Queer theory as intellectual activism
- Academic publications as oppositional discursive spaces
- Conservative policies/activisms and the academy
- The relationship between social media and social justice
- Prison-Industrial Complex and/or criminal justice
- Building and preserving public history and cultural heritage
- Immigration policies and reforms
- Urban renewal projects and “community development”
- Sexual violence against women and/or the LGBT community
- Gender inequality, particularly in light of recent attempts to legislate women’s bodies and healthcare in the United States or abroad
- Marriage equality, LGBT rights, and other normative forms of inclusion
- The relationship between the text and the critic
- Protest as performance and performance as protest

We welcome proposal submissions of full panel discussions (3 or 4 panelists), roundtable discussions (4-5 participants), or individual papers. If you submit an individual proposal, we may place you in a panel with 2 or 3 other presenters working on similar topics. You will have 15 minutes to present your paper. Each panel discussion will be followed by a Q&A session. We also welcome proposals of performative works and art installations. This is an all-day event; breakfast and lunch will be provided on conference site.

Proposals of 200-400 words should be submitted at <http://bit.ly/15Ch9jT> no later than 12:00 midnight on November 30, 2013. For questions about the conference, you can contact us at llcgradconference@gmail.com. For more information about the Language, Literacy and Culture PhD program, visit <http://llc.umbc.edu>. The invitations to the conference will be sent out via email by January 15, 2014.