

Call For Papers: Staging Care & Well-Being

University of Pittsburgh Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference May 11-12, 2023

Keynote Speaker: Jennifer Boum Make (Georgetown University)

“For us, the human body defines, by natural right, the space of origin and of distribution of disease: a space whose lines, volumes, surfaces, and routes are laid down, in accordance with a now familiar geometry, by the anatomical atlas.”

Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*.

Our bodies continuously search for ways to express their needs and desire: we are our bodies and they are us. For Foucault, the human body does not only contain personal characteristics, but is also a medium to historicize diseases, corporeal topographies, and human interactions. Our bodies are both precious properties to guard, yet they can also be host organism that allows for the survival and reproduction of viruses. The paradox of the body is that it is its own intruder. We must care for the body while it also sustains its own detriments. Regarding this bodily paradox, Jennifer Boum Make expands the realm of corporeal discussion to the French Caribbean, arguing that human-made ecological disaster forefronts the intersection of socio-racial inequality and environmental degradation, while questioning the practice of nonknowledge on the issue of chlordecone poisoning. She asks a question to us, “what can chlordecone contamination say about our modes of inhabiting the world and the importance of imagining alternatives?”

In the wake of the global pandemic, we have rethought the notions of accessibility, precarity, and of course, self-care. In a situation where a “face-to-face” encounter is no longer the default condition. How can we communicate more efficiently and meaningfully with one another? What can the campus as a physical space provide to the students? Can virtual learning be a true alternative of traditional classes? How can we care for ourselves in this binary world where one can choose between in-person and remote modes of communication and being? How are we going to “stage” ourselves in these different modes of representation? In response to these questions, interdisciplinary approaches such as French/Italian Literature, Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, Film and Media Studies and Performance Studies, can stimulate intriguing discussions.

Two years ago, the department of French and Italian at the University of Pittsburgh held a virtual student conference, “Academia in Action: Breaching the Ivory Tower.” With this conference, we aimed to contribute to the “willful work” of positing change to the institutions of academe, narrowing the gap between theorized social tragedies and reality. For 2023, the University of Pittsburgh announced that the institution-wide focus for the upcoming academic year would be the “Year of Emotional Well-Being.” After convening virtually to think about

narrowing the gap between academia and action, we now propose that we start, first, with our minds and bodies. How do we treat ourselves within academia, and how do our disciplines and specializations face this abrupt disruption that happened around the world?

Topics include but are not limited to:

Well-Being and Mental Health

"Care" in Literature and Media

Accessibility and Precarity

Corporealities and mises-en-scène

Performance Studies

Medical Humanities

Disability Studies

Postcolonial Studies

Social Networks and Virtual Realities

Environmental studies/ecocriticism

Cinema and Pandemic

We welcome abstracts in French, English or Italian for 20-minute in-person presentations (250 words maximum) to pitt.frit.conference@gmail.com by February 12th, 2023. This conference will be fully held in-person.