

## **Cultural Histories: Emergent Theories, Methods, and the Digital Turn**

Organized by TransCanada Institute & Canadian Writing Research Collaboratory

**University of Guelph**

**March 2 - 4, 2012**

Keynotes: Alan Liu (University of California, Santa Barbara) – Steven High (Concordia)

In both history and literary studies, critical theory and the cultural turn have called into question the role of narratives and metanarratives of teleology and causation, and of monological or hegemonic voices in scholarly constructions of the past. Be it a reading of the problems of the past with an eye to possibilities in the future, a genealogical analysis of the remains of the past, cultural ethnography channeled through archives, or a critical rendering of a discipline's formation, historical projects help us understand ourselves and the sites we inhabit at the same time that they can cause ruptures and discontinuities that unmoor familiar regimes of truth and the instrumental and rational models that produce them. Writing cultural history has been progressively challenged by a range of intellectual developments since the latter part of the twentieth-century. Critical theory and the cultural turn have called into question the roles of narratives and metanarratives, of teleology and causation, and of monological or hegemonic voices in scholarly constructions of the past. The contemporary accelerated pace of change, the ephemerality of eventful experience, and the relentless remediation of representations of events in the age of digital information networks present new kinds of challenges in relating the present to events of the recent past. The shift towards digital scholarship further complicates historical projects by offering a much larger potential "archive" of sources and new tools for scholarly engagement. The current fascination with the archive and its application to uncommensurable referents itself points to a sea change in how we engage with, attempt to access, and inscribe the past. Digital tools offer the chance to engage with the past using evidence on a much larger scale, as well as different modes of representation than those possible with print media. Yet engaging with the potential and perils of digital media requires dialogue with "analog" debates over how to engage in cultural history. This conference aims to bring together literary scholars and historians to discuss the impact of recent theoretical and methodological developments in our fields and think of new directions.

This interdisciplinary conference is jointly sponsored by the TransCanada Institute ([www.transcanada.ca](http://www.transcanada.ca)) and the Canadian Writing Research Collaboratory /Le Collaboratoire scientifique des écrits du Canada ([www.cwrc.ca](http://www.cwrc.ca)) to foster debate on new modes and methods of history and historiography, especially those employed or theorized by cultural historians, literary historians, and critics.

Examples of topics or questions to be considered:

- Historiography, historicism, and epistemic shifts
- Cultural histories in the context of post/colonialism, diasporas, minoritized communities,

and globalization

- Writing about mega events (e.g., Olympics, G20 protests)
- The writing of histories of literature, text technologies, and modes of cultural production
- Digital interfaces for historical argument
- Historicizing critical concepts, or institutional and/or disciplinary formations
- Genres of cultural histories (e.g., literary history, chronicle, biography)
- The histories of cities, of space, or place
- Non-positivist histories, or speculative histories
- Cultural histories of crisis and/or trauma, truth or reconciliation commissions
- Activist historiography
- Archives as sources, as textual constructs, as problems
- Digital archive structures and their implications for cultural history
- Histories of the ephemeral, the popular, or the representative

We invite proposals of no more than 300 words for twenty-minute papers or panel proposals of three or more papers (nontraditional formats such as 10-minute position papers or project demonstrations are welcome).

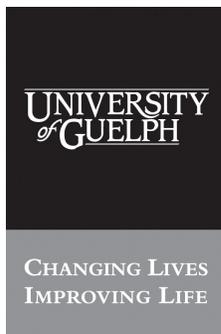
Organizing Committee: Susan Brown and Smaro Kamboureli (University of Guelph), co-chairs; Catherine Carstairs (University of Guelph); Paul Hjartarson (University of Alberta); Katherine McLeod (Postdoctoral fellow, TransCanada Institute).

**Deadline for abstracts:** September 30, 2011

**Notification of acceptance:** October 30, 2011

**Submission address:** [transcan@uoguelph.ca](mailto:transcan@uoguelph.ca), or

Cultural Histories Conference, TransCanada Institute, 9 University Avenue East, University of Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 1M8



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