

CFP: Drew University, Dean Hopper, 24 March 2023 -- "Modes of Belonging: Kinships, Exile, and Translation"

Announcement published by Michael Anderson on Thursday, January 5, 2023

Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

March 24, 2023

Location:

New Jersey, United States

Subject Fields:

Race / Ethnic Studies, Religious Studies and Theology, Women's & Gender History / Studies, Philosophy, Political Science

Modes of Belonging: Kinship, Exile, and Translation

In a time of constant fatigue and anxiety caused by economic, political, and climatic catastrophic events, we are faced by dilemmas that are at their core about belonging. Take, for instance, the current focus on Ukrainian refugees and how they have been received differently than Syrian refugees. While in the latter case, we are told of a "refugee crisis," the former is perceived as a duty Europe owes to Ukrainians because they are Europeans. In other words, Ukrainians "belong" in Europe. The present moment, therefore, calls for a historization and reimagination of major concepts in our debates about belonging.

To complicate this concept, we turn to interdisciplinary work that employs ideas of translation, kinship, exile, and diaspora to expose the elasticity of "belonging." For instance, we ask what understandings of belonging have contributed to the hostile discourse we witness regarding immigration? How might politicians have shaped this discourse? Some scholars, such as Keguro Macharia, have named how political leaders rely on biological kinship and other "genealogical models to generate social and cultural legibility," to gird up national collective identity and sympathies. Yet, in doing so, they often perniciously privilege "reproductive heteronormativity" at the expense of other forms of belonging or relationality.

We may also think of exile and diaspora as an alternative site that complicates our theorizing of belonging. In *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, Edward Said writes, "Exile is... the unbearable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted." One interpretation of this statement might suggest that Said is reinforcing an idea that one only belongs to their place of birth or their "native place." What might be a way to think about exile beyond this notion of "insurmountable uprootedness"? Following Mary Jacobus, we consider whether

belonging must be intimately bound up with a notion of a past home. Her use of “translation” as a mode of analysis highlights how, far from simply being an instance of moving “from one language to another,” translation is also moving “from one place to another-translocation.” Translation enables the experience of “becoming foreign” that gestures toward a cosmopolitan vision of a world without borders. Thus, rather than exploring a melancholic return to the past home, what might be produced when we take, as Nadia Ellis suggests, an utopian diasporic horizon as our imaginary for belonging?

The 10th annual Dean Hopper Conference of Spring 2023 (March 24) will examine these and related questions, seeking interdisciplinary engagements with the notion of “belonging” in cultural, historical, political, and theoretical contexts. We invite papers engaging with the intellectual and cultural history of belonging, and related topics like home, kinships, translation, exile, migration, both from historians and other scholars and from activists working in the field. Submissions from graduate students, postdocs, and early-career faculty are encouraged. This year’s conference will be hybrid in its modality; as such, we also welcome submissions from individuals to present via Zoom as well as in-person.

Please send abstracts to Hopper@drew.edu by 11 January 2023: The conference organizers welcome abstracts of no more than 250 words, and panel proposals of not more than 750 words. We especially welcome reflections on the following themes:

- Immigration studies
- Borders and borderlands
- Translation and translocality
- Models of kinship (genealogical, biological, ancestral, fictive, etc.)
- Exilic and postexilic writings (communal, autobiographical, etc.)
- Struggles of belonging posed by climate change and climate crises
- Refugees and the challenge of multiculturalism
- Intellectual and cultural histories of “belonging”
- Religious belonging
- Exodus: The book, its themes, and its afterlives
- Diaspora and the nation-state
- Postcolonial melancholy and utopianism

Contact Email:
hopper@drew.edu