

[Positionalities in Area Studies](#)

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Call for Papers

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Call for Papers: Edited Collection on “Positionalities in Area Studies”

Submission due date: July 15, 2020, by email

Coeditors: Ashley Currier, Gergana Ivanova, and Sunnie Rucker-Chang

How do researchers’ identities and positionalities produce and restructure “area studies”? Following Tina M. Campt (1993, 115), we treat “positionality” as the “plural cultural, political, and ideological subject positions occupied by individuals in society.” Conventional wisdom about “area studies” treats this field formation as an outgrowth of Cold War geopolitics. Motivated by an interest to control the spread of communism throughout the world, Western politicians and strategists carved up the world into geopolitical “areas,” helping to give rise to different area studies as intellectual fields: African, Asian, European, Latin American, and Middle Eastern studies. While the intellectual and political history of area studies continues to elicit much scholarly interest, to date, there has been little scholarly reflection—across area studies configurations—about how researchers’ identities and positionalities—racial, ethnic, cultural, class, gender, sexual, national, and institutional affiliation—govern and influence the production of various areas studies fields, regionalism (Chiang and Wong 2016), and “transnational studies” (Grewal and Kaplan 2001; Jay 2010). Although separate fields explore such questions internally (Amory 1997; Allman 2019; Sakai 2012), it is time to consider across fields how researchers’ identities and positionalities shape and reorganize the ethics and politics of knowledge production in area studies (Barkhuizen 2017; Mielke and Hornidge 2017). We invite proposals for this edited collection that bring together perspectives from across different area studies to address these issues.

Although we will consider sole-authored contributions, we especially encourage submissions from scholars working in different areas studies, who reflect on their identities and positionalities together. Authors should engage substantively with debates about scholarly identities and positions in their specific area studies fields. We invite contributions that take up the following issues:

- the possibility of decolonizing knowledge production within different area studies;
- the role of a scholars’ “insider” / “outsider” status within area studies;
- the importance of language and cultural proficiency as the bedrock of area studies field production;
- the cultivation of various studies “expertise” as a tenant of scholarly identities;

- how “transnational” comparisons relate to the shaping of scholarly identities and vice versa;
- profiles of key figures within area studies, with attention to their personal identities and positions;
- the opportunity for area studies field transformation through reflection about personal identities and positions;
- the role of area studies professional associations in reshaping scholarly engagement with area studies;
- tensions created, sustained, resolved by researchers’ identities and positionalities;
- the role of antiracist, feminist, queer, intersectional, and decolonial perspectives in governing researchers’ identities and engagement with area studies;
- how the COVID-19 pandemic affects researchers’ positionalities and engagements with different area studies, given the inability of scholars to travel to other parts of the world;
- how area studies and disciplinary pedagogies and practices do (or do not) prepare scholars to reflect on their identities’ engagement with and influence area studies and ways to prepare junior scholars to consider the influence of dominant/minority identities on how they approach area studies research; and
- tensions between disciplinary and area studies identifications or engagements.

Submission procedure:

We solicit chapter titles, 2-page CVs from contributing authors, and abstracts of no more than 500 words. Abstracts should clearly articulate the proposal submission’s engagement with the volume’s themes and describe the chapter’s structure. Authors should put chapter titles, abstracts, and CVs in a single PDF and email them to positionalities.uc@gmail.com by July 15, 2020, and put “Positionalities in Area Studies” in the email subject line.

References

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Coeditors' Bios

Ashley Currier is Professor and Head of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Cincinnati. Her research focuses on gender and sexual diversity politics in southern and West Africa. Her books include *Out in Africa: LGBT Organizing in Namibia and South Africa* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012) and *Politicizing Sex in Contemporary Africa: Homophobia in Malawi* (Cambridge University Press, 2019). Her research has appeared in *Australian Feminist Studies*, *Critical African Studies*, *Feminist Formations*, *Gender & Society*, *GLQ*, *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, *Mobilization*, *Politique Africaine*, *Qualitative Sociology*, *Sexualities*, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *Social Movement Studies*, *Space and Polity*, *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society*, and *Women's Studies Quarterly*.

Gergana Ivanova is Associate Professor of Japanese Literature and Culture at the University of Cincinnati. Her research interests include the reception history of Japanese classical literature, early modern erotic and didactic literature, and present-day manga representations of the past. She is the author of *Unbinding the Pillow Book: The Many Lives of a Classic* (Columbia University Press, 2018). Her current book project examines the eroticization of eleventh-century women writers in early modern Japan. She is also co-translating *One Hundred Exemplary Women, One Poem Each* (Retsujo hyakunin isshu, 1847).

Sunnie Rucker-Chang is Assistant Professor of Slavic and East European Studies and Director of European Studies at University of Cincinnati. Her primary interests lie in cultural and racial formation(s) in the Balkans. She is a co-author of *Roma Rights and Civil Rights: A Transatlantic Comparison* (Cambridge University Press, 2020) and contributor to and co-editor of *Chinese Migrants in Russia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe* (Routledge, 2013). Her work has appeared in the *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, *Critical Romani Studies*, *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, and *Interventions: The International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*.

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