

Announcing a CMRC Conference
In Collaboration with *SIMAGINE*

Imagined Borders, Epistemic Freedoms

The Challenge of Social Imaginaries in Media, Art, Religion and Decoloniality

The Center for Media, Religion, and Culture
University of Colorado Boulder

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The question of borders and the practice of bordering persist in a world destined for encounters and confrontations. This persistence today bears resemblance to long-standing legacies of coloniality, modernity, and globalization, but it also foregrounds new narratives, aesthetics, and politics of exclusion and dehumanization. Talk of walls, fortresses, boundaries, and deportation has never been a political or philosophical anomaly, but rather a reflection of a particularistic social imaginary, a linear compulsion of epistemic assumptions that sees the world through the logic of hierarchy, classification, difference, and ontological supremacy. This foreclosure is a widely shared and accepted *social imaginary*, as demonstrated in current scholarship in the critical humanities and social and political sciences: a foreclosure that has also defined institutions and disciplines of knowledge production which continue to marginalize other knowledge systems and intellectual traditions and refuse to acknowledge their viability and legitimacy in the academy. Disciplinary walls and intellectually demarcated canons within the Western and Westernized university in the Global North and South have generally produced narrow curricula and models of learning that reproduce selective systems of thought, discourses and practices.

The tenacity of this normalized worldview requires urgent new imaginaries: a *decolonial* perspective not only to call out the ontological instability of Western theory, but also to establish a sense of epistemic hospitality capable of liberating and re-centering other ways of knowing and dwelling in the world. This contestation of physical and cognitive borders has found its most ardent proponents in recent movements such as #RhodesMustFall, Standing Rock, Idle No More, Undocumented and Unafraid, #Whyismycurriculumsowhite, Arab Uprisings, Black Lives Matter, and #MeToo, among others. At the heart of this decolonial injunction is a desire by absented voices to reclaim the right to self-narrate, to signify, and to render visible local histories, other temporalities, subjectivities, cosmologies, and struggles silenced by Western and Westernized accounts of the world.

The fields of art, religion and the media have not yet come under historical scrutiny about their own epistemic and existential imaginaries and whether they reify or disrupt dominant structures and legacies of knowledge production? Drawing from a variety of intellectual traditions and

established academic disciplines, these fields risk carrying the same blind spots, the same foreclosures, the same ontological foundations, and the same centered claims to universality. What can a decolonial critique then do to avoid a zero-sum epistemology? And how can we develop new decolonial imaginaries as an invitation to undo the Eurocentrism of our paradigms, challenge the verticality of our pedagogical designs, and achieve an ethics of interpretation, an epistemic justice whereby theories from the South or from ‘the margins’ in the North are not treated merely as local or subjective? The decolonial attitude challenges us to avoid embracing singular universalities, and rethink altogether the hierarchies of global-local and of universal-particular that underlie this world’s inequality.

This will be the ninth in a series of successful international conferences held by the Center for Media, Religion, and Culture in Boulder. The previous meetings have brought together an interdisciplinary community of scholars for focused conversations on emerging issues in media and religion. Each has proven to be an important landmark in the development of theory and method in its respective area and has resulted in important collaborations, publications, and resources for further research and dialogue.

The 2020 conference is organized in conjunction with *SIMAGINE*, an international and interdisciplinary research consortium bringing together partners from the USA, the UK, Europe and South-Africa; it is hosted by the University of Humanistic Studies in Utrecht, the Netherlands, and dedicated to the study of social imaginaries between secularity and religion in a globalizing world. *SIMAGINE* has organized conferences on ‘Religion, Community, Borders’ leading to a special issue of the open access *Journal for Religion and Transformation* in December 2019. In 2018 the consortium published the volume *Social Imaginaries in a Globalizing World*.

The conference will feature keynote lectures and keynote conversations, as well as thematic panels and artistic performances. We invite papers and panels from across disciplines, intellectual traditions, and geographic locations that engage with these questions and beyond. Possible topics could include but are not limited to:

- Borders, Bordering, Border Zones between the Imaginary and the Real
- Modernity, Secularity, Religious Legacies and Universality
- Social Imaginaries and (the Critique of) Anthropocentrism
- Coloniality and Decolonial Epistemologies
- What Counts as Critical Theory and Decolonial Critique?
- What Counts as Religion in the Decolonial Imaginary?
- Big Data, Algorithmic Culture, and (De)Coloniality
- Decolonial Intersectionalities
- Decolonial Feminisms
- Decolonizing Race, Ethnicity, and Identity
- Decolonial Pedagogy, Methodology, and Praxis.
- Media, Religion, and Theoretical Provincialism
- Media, Arts, and Decolonial Theory
- Media, Religion, the Other, and the Subaltern

- Religion, Theology, and Social Imaginaries
- Social Imaginaries and (the Critique) of Neoliberalist Globalization
- Geopolitics of Knowledge Production
- Language, Publishing, and Boundaries of Learning
- Imagination and Worldview Education: Interreligious Dialogue
- Queering the Archives

Confirmed Featured Speakers:

Ann Stoler

Ann Laura Stoler is Willy Brandt Distinguished University Professor of Anthropology and Historical Studies at The New School for Social Research. Stoler is the director of the [Institute for Critical Social Inquiry](#). She has worked for some thirty years on the politics of knowledge, colonial governance, racial epistemologies, the sexual politics of empire, and ethnography of the archives. She has been a visiting professor at the École des Hautes Études, the École Normale Supérieure and Paris 8, Cornell University's School of Criticism and Theory, Birzeit University in Ramallah, the Johannesburg Workshop in Theory and Criticism, Irvine's School of Arts and Literature, and the Bard Prison Initiative. Recent interviews with her are available at [Savage Minds](#), [Le Monde](#), and [Public Culture](#), as well as [Pacifica Radio](#) and [here](#). Her books include [Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule](#) (2002, 2010), [Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense](#) (2009) and the edited volumes [Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World](#) (with Frederick Cooper, 1997), [Imperial Debris: On Ruins and Ruination](#) (2013), and [Duess: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times](#) (2016).



Catherine Walsh

Catherine Walsh is a Senior Professor and Director of the Latin American Cultural Studies Doctoral Program at the Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar in Quito. Walsh also directs the Fondo Documental Afro-Andino, a project dedicated to the recuperation of knowledge in Afro-Ecuadorian communities, and the Intercultural Workshop on Indigenous and Afro voices of the Americas. She has been an invited professor and scholar throughout the Americas. Her current research interests include the geopolitics of knowledge, decolonial thought and pedagogies, interculturality, and the political-epistemic force of present day Afro Andean and Indigenous movements, including with regard to the re-founding of State. Her recent publications include, among others, *Interculturalidad, Estado, Sociedad: Luchas (de)coloniales de nuestra epoca* (Quito: Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar/Abya Yala, 2009); "The (De)Coloniality of Knowledge, Life, and Nature: The N.A.-Andean FTA, Indigenous Movements, and Regional Alternatives," in Shefner and Fernandez-Kelley (eds). *Alternative*



Perspectives on Globalization: Status, Regions, and Movements, Pennsylvania State University Press, in press; “(Post)Coloniality in Ecuador: The Indigenous Movement’s Practices and Politics of (Re)signification and Decolonization,” in Moraña, Dussel, and Jauregui (eds.), *Coloniality at Large: The Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2008; “Shifting the Geopolitics of Critical Knowledge: Decolonial Thought and Cultural Studies “Others” in the Andes”, *Cultural Studies*, 21, 2-3, 2007; and “Afro-Andean Thought and Diasporic Ancestrality (with E. Leon), in *Shifting the Geography of Reason: Gender, Science and Religion*, Marina Banchetti and Clevis Headley (eds.), London: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007..

Glen Coulthard

Glen Coulthard is Yellowknives Dene and an associate professor in the First Nations and Indigenous Studies Program and the Departments of Political Science at the University of British Columbia. He is the author of [Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition](#) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), winner of the 2016 Caribbean Philosophical Association’s Frantz Fanon Award for Outstanding Book, the Canadian Political Science Association’s CB Macpherson Award for Best Book in Political Theory, published in English or French, in 2014/2015, and the Rik Davidson Studies in Political Economy Award for Best Book in 2016. He is also a co-founder of [Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning](#), a decolonial, Indigenous land-based post-secondary program operating on his traditional territories in Denendeh (Northwest Territories).



Abstracts of 300-350 words should be submitted to cmrc@colorado.edu by June 10, 2019. Please include your email address and university affiliation in your submission.

For questions, email Nabil Echchaibi, Associate Director: nabil.echchaibi@colorado.edu. or Stewart M. Hoover, Director: hoover@colorado.edu.

For more information, visit cmrc.colorado.edu