



History department hosts first conference solely organized by graduate students

Interdisciplinary 'History of the Body' draws presenters from across the country

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By Debbie Parker

For the first time, the Department of History in Arts & Sciences is hosting a major, three-day conference organized entirely by graduate students. "History of the Body," set for Thursday-Saturday, Oct. 20-22, is drawing interdisciplinary graduate student presenters from across the country.

"This conference is completely graduate-student driven — from the initial idea to the fundraising to the planning and execution," says Jean Allman, PhD, chair of the history department and the J.H. Hexter Professor in the Humanities.

"The students have done an amazing job. Events like this help put a department's graduate program 'on the map.' It also allows our students to engage with their peers from across the country (or globe, for that matter) — peers who will become part of their professional cohort in the decades ahead.

"It is, in other words, an extraordinary opportunity all-round," Allman says.

The conference begins at 4 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 20, with a keynote address titled, "Blood Will Out: Kinship, the Body and Popular Medicine, 1750-1860," by Mary Fissell, PhD, professor in the Institute for the History of Medicine at The Johns Hopkins University. The address will be held in Room 100 of Busch Hall.

Panels will continue from 10:30 a.m.-4:45 p.m. Friday, Oct. 21, and 10 a.m.-1:15 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 22, in Room 18 of Busch Hall.

The history of the human body has been a topic of debate and discussion for more than a decade, generating questions that are highly interdisciplinary in nature. The conference aims to bring together graduate-level scholarship that looks at the human body in historical perspective.

"From art historians working on the history of anatomical exhibitions to historians of sexuality in 20th-century China, this conference aims to showcase compelling articulations of the body as a category of historical analysis across disciplines and from a variety of methodological approaches," says Rajbir Purewal Hazelwood, co-chair of the organizing committee and a doctoral candidate in history.

WUSTL graduate students are presenting, along with those from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; University of Michigan; University of Delaware; Temple University; Columbia University; Georgetown University; Saint Louis University; Boston College; New York University; the University of Missouri, Columbia; and the University of Southern California.

Papers also are being read from a graduate student at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden and one from Istanbul Bilgi University in Turkey.

The students represent fine arts, archaeology, religious studies, English literature and cultural studies, among other disciplines.

The WUSTL Graduate History Association began developing an idea for the interdisciplinary conference in 2009 and invited graduate students from other Arts & Sciences departments to serve on the organizing committee.

"It is an incredibly laborious process that unfolds over at least two years," Allman says. "You have to have a critical mass of graduate students, with interest in a similar theme, who are willing to devote a lot of time to the effort."

Numerous WUSTL departments and centers are co-sponsoring the conference. "This demonstrates wide support at our university for a graduate conference that encourages interdisciplinary conversations and takes graduate-level research seriously," Hazelwood says. "Faculty are supportive of graduate research on this campus and committed to promoting conversations across disciplinary divides."

Sponsors are the departments of Art History & Archaeology and Germanic Languages & Literatures in Arts & Sciences; the Department of History and the History Colloquium; The Center for the Humanities in Arts & Sciences; and the programs in International & Area Studies, Religious Studies and the Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies, all in Arts & Sciences.

For more information, email co-chairs Rajbir P. Hazelwood at purewal@wustl.edu (<mailto:purewal@wustl.edu>) or Jenny Westrick at jwestrick@wustl.edu (<mailto:jwestrick@wustl.edu>) or visit history.artsci.wustl.edu/GHA/Conference/Program

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(<http://history.artsci.wustl.edu/GHA/Conference/Program>) .

Planning is under way for the 2012 conference. Email the 2012 committee co-chairs Lisa Lillie at lmillie@wustl.edu (<mailto:lmillie@wustl.edu>) or Jane Green at jane.f.green@wustl.edu (<mailto:jane.f.green@wustl.edu>) for more information.