



Middlebury  
College

Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs  
RCGA

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## Eighth Annual International and Interdisciplinary Conference

### Call for Papers

### Anxieties of Empire: New Contexts, Shifting Perspectives

March 5-7, 2020

The “anxiety of Empire” has been a recurrent idea in studies of colonial discourse, as critics observed how fears about the (in)stability of imperial power were masked by confident assertions of its rightful authority, and by an obsessive drive to reproduce it. Even though the sun may have set on the colonial powers of previous centuries, the power dynamics constructed by Empire and the tangled rhetoric that perpetuated it persist. Hegemonic powers continue to signify and fear people of other races and religions as a debased other who threatens their own cultural integrity, and to systematically attempt to marginalize that other. During the height of European colonialism this marginalization took place largely in the colonies and through concrete policy. Now, however, it is enacted across geographic divisions of center and periphery and in more indirect ways, with dispersed actors and global flows of capital, information, and bodies.

Today, we may think of Empire beyond specific national imperial projects and more as a global system of power dominated largely, but not exclusively, by Western states and economies and global elites exercising political, economic, or physical domination over spaces and bodies. This brand of power is accompanied and sustained by discourses inaugurated by past imperial projects and reformulated for Empire’s more recent incarnations. “Imperial anxiety” may thus serve as a trope and critical framework for examining policy decisions, economic imperatives, subject-formation, and cultural production under globalization.

This conference seeks to bring together scholars from an array of disciplines and fields of inquiry to interrogate understudied *modi operandi* of Empire and to foreground new critical tools for understanding them. How and where can we locate Empire’s anxiety today? What newly formulated mechanisms of Empire’s reproduction can we identify and theorize in imperial systems of the past as well as in new articulations of Western imperialism, current non-Western imperial projects, late global capital flows, and the ascendance of white nationalism around the world?

Presenters may want to address **Anxieties of Empire** in the context of the following themes, though others are possible:

- Contemporary contradictions of signifying, marginalizing, and integrating otherness.

- Borders, detention centers, and the reformulations of Empire in light of current migration crises world-wide.
- New approaches to U.S Empire that tie together any of the following: U.S. continental expansion, overseas interventions, slavery, indigenous genocide and disenfranchisement, and mass incarceration.
- Contemporary relationships between evangelical institutions and local or global hegemonies; religious doctrine that has normalized racial, gender, and sexual orderings of power.
- Empire, white supremacy, and post-racial discourses.
- History, discourses, and legacies of Russian and Soviet imperialism from the eighteenth century to the present.
- Contemporary coloniality in Latin America and the Caribbean across institutions and in cultural production, considering relationships between local and global articulations of Empire.
- The re-ascendance of China as Empire, with impacts at home and abroad: anti-Muslim re-education centers and the incarceration of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, the Tibetan question, economic policies in the Global South.
- Empire and the body: fitness, bodybuilding, and practices of consumption.
- Imperial mappings around language (i.e. Francophonie, Commonwealth, etc.), cultural production, and sports.

Those interested in presenting at the conference should send an abstract (no more than 250 words) and a CV by **October 7, 2019** to [mayer@middlebury.edu](mailto:mayer@middlebury.edu)

The selection process is competitive.

All presentations must be in English.

Funds are available to support travel and lodging of all presenters.

The conference will take place on the campus of Middlebury College, in Middlebury, VT, USA.

**Organizers:**

**Tamar Mayer**, Professor of Geography, Director of the Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs, [mayer@middlebury.edu](mailto:mayer@middlebury.edu)

**Daniel F. Silva**, Associate Professor of Luso-Hispanic Studies, Interim Director of the Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity, [dfsilva@middlebury.edu](mailto:dfsilva@middlebury.edu)

