

Political Concepts Graduate Conference

December 4th and 5th, 2020
at Brown University



POLITICAL CONCEPTS

Submission Deadline: April 17th

We invite you to submit a proposal for the annual Political Concepts conference to be hosted by the Cogut Institute for the Humanities at Brown University on Friday and Saturday, **December 4th and 5th, 2020**. We are excited to announce that this year's conference is the first of the series to be organized exclusively by and for graduate students and postdocs. This conference is made possible with support from the Cogut Institute for the Humanities, and the Political Concepts Consortium—a collaboration among colleagues from Brown University, Columbia University, the City University of New York, New York University, and The New School. Our objective is to bring graduate students and postdoctoral fellows together to advance concepts that might serve to language the world anew.

Conference theme:

We begin from the conviction that working with concepts is resolutely political. When we invent or revise concepts and put them into circulation, we build, shape, and fight for a particular sense of a shared world. Brian Massumi has conceptualized “concept” as a brick that “can be used to build the courthouse of reason” or “can be thrown through the window.” As objects of thought that are nevertheless material, concepts constrain and obstruct as much as they clear paths for new movements through the thicketed vagaries of our world. We might imagine our scholarly work as an iterative process of honing the concepts our reality makes available, living out the consequences of that conception toward the production of new realities, and re-conceiving language in light of new, lived insights. The shift this year's conference makes to include graduate students and junior scholars may itself avail an opportunity for us to reconsider the very concept of the student, and the way it organizes intellectual practice within the contemporary academy.

Participants are thus invited to re-think and re-articulate concepts they are working with or to construct new ones that are necessary for their work. At the same time we encourage revising key political concepts, as well as showing the political work done by terms and common nouns that are not usually considered “political.” We urge our participants and authors not to be content with a concept's history or actual usage but to consider how a given concept works for them, beyond or even against what it actually does in prevalent discourse, to the point of creating a new concept or perhaps even taking one out of circulation.

Submission information:

To apply, **please submit by April 17th**, via [this Google Form](#), a one-paragraph proposal (no more than 250 words) on a single one- or two-word concept. Concepts that previous contributors

have considered include “Violence”, “Decolonization”, “The Political”, “*Katechon*”, “Parasite”, and “Sexual Difference” (all previously discussed concepts are listed [here](#) and [here](#)). You are not prohibited from writing on a concept that has been discussed at previous iterations of the conference, although we hope that opening up the conference to graduate students will allow for a proliferation of hitherto un- and under-considered concepts. We plan to work with the editorial board of the peer-reviewed Political Concepts journal (politicalconcepts.org) to publish selected contributions to the conference.

We look forward to receiving your proposals. Please write to political-concepts@brown.edu with any queries you may have.

Political Concepts Organizing Committee:

Felicia Denaud (Africana Studies), Jeff Feldman (Political Science), Julia Huggins (Modern Culture and Media), Kristen Maye (Africana Studies), Marah Nagelhout (English), Rachel Nusbaum (Political Science), and Nick Pisanelli (English)