

11th MESEA Conference

Ethnicity and Kinship: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Family, Community, and Difference

May 30 – June 2, 2018 University of Graz, Austria

Keynote Speakers

David L. Eng, University of Pennsylvania, Department of English

Daniela Berghahn, UCL Royal Holloway, Media Arts Department

Robert Pichler, University of Graz, Center for Southeastern European Studies

May Friedman, Ryerson University, School of Social Work and Graduate Program in communication and culture

“Individuals typically learn their assigned place in hierarchies of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nation, and social class in their families of origin,” argues Patricia Hill Collins in her study of the intersectionality of ‘race,’ nationhood, and gender in racial/ethnic US American families. Hill Collins’s work shifts the focus from long dominant to less restrictive family models and their representation in literature, film, and other cultural and artistic expressions as well as in legal, economic, and social situations. There are two concurring trends in the study of family and kinship—the challenge to the “traditional” family model from critical race studies, ethnicity studies, queer theory, and feminism and the study of transnational kinship. Globalization—and its resulting mobilization of kinship structures—is a major factor for societal changes that push the limits of family concepts founded in parameters of Whiteness, heterosexuality, patriarchy, ability, and affective individualism. In the same vein, ethnicity as a cultural and social construct has an impact on a sense of belonging which shapes family and kinship patterns and practices of relating to collective memory and cultural heritage. If kinship, according to Linda Stone, is “an ideology of human relationships” which highlights the “cultural ideas about [...] the nature and meaning of their biological and moral connections with others” (6), it is also a framework through which to investigate the intersection of other factors such as ‘race,’ religion, gender, sexual orientation, class, language, and geography.

Taken together, queer, feminist, critical race theorist, and transnational revisions have liberated discussions of family and kinship from pressing assumptions about family values. The breadth of scholarship on ethnicity and kinship furthermore centers on present and historical counter-narratives to discursively and ideologically constructed family ideals. In particular, in times of increasing instrumentalization of “the family,” approaching notions of family, community, and difference from interdisciplinary angles facilitates engaging scholarship which focuses both on the way we are not and “the way we never were” (Stephanie Coontz).

The 2018 MESEA conference seeks to explore this diversity of approaches to ethnicity and kinship by inviting paper proposals from all disciplines and perspectives. Potential paper and panel submissions can but are not limited to work around the following topics:

- o transnational family and kinship models: thinking and living relations globally
- o cultural heritage: (re)negotiations of cultural knowledge, narratives, and intergenerational memory

- o intersectional approaches to family: class, gender, 'race,' ethnicity, religion, age, and nationality
- o representations of family, nation, and community in ethnic and postcolonial cultures
- o kinship as sentimental political discourse
- o family and kinship in literature, film, theatre, series, music, and other artistic and cultural forms of expression
- o interracial dating and marriage: discourses of power and privilege in the past and present
- o queerness in and beyond the family: LGBTQI families, queer communities in non-family settings, and other phenomena of kinship and gender parameters
- o critical motherhood/ fatherhood/ sibling studies
- o communicating kinship: the role of new technology and social media for creating, maintaining, shaping, and/or breaking off kinship relations
- o social justice and the family: interdisciplinary approaches to the role of the family and kinship in the face of systemic racism and nationalism
- o White privilege: reproducing Whiteness and reinforcing power through family and kinship
- o transnational families in the New Economy: working parents in the diaspora; kinship and the care economy
- o family and political upheaval: forced migration, families in transit, negotiating citizenship through kinship
- o family as a site of (physical, psychological, emotional and epistemological) violence and abuse

Proposals should be submitted to our website at www.mesea.org between August 15 and November 15, 2017. Submitters will receive notification of acceptance by January 1, 2018.

Preference will be given to complete panel proposals with an inter/transdisciplinary and/or transnational focus. Panels may not include more than 2 participants from the same institution. Presenters must be members of MESEA or MELUS in 2018.

As in previous years, MESEA will award at least one Young Scholars Excellence Award.

Program Director:

Jopi Nyman, PhD DSocSc
 Professor of English
 School of Humanities
 University of Eastern Finland
 P. O. Box 111
 FI- 80101 Joensuu
 FINLAND
 Tel. +358-2944-52143
 Email: jopi.nyman@uef.fi

For more information please visit: <http://www.mesea.org>