

Unsettling Transpacific Ecologies

2021 Association for Asian American Studies 38th Conference

April 7-10, 2021 (Seattle, WA)

This year's conference theme encourages place-based inquiry at a time when we find ourselves intensely place-bound and yet still finding our way toward virtual community. We would normally be convening in Seattle, Washington, on the ancestral lands of the Duwamish, Suquamish, Snoqualmie, Puyallup, Muckleshoot, Tulalip, and other Coast Salish peoples. The Pacific Northwest is storied land and has become a gathering place for not only many Asian Americans but also a diverse group of Pacific Islanders, including Native Hawaiians, Samoans, Chamorros, and growing numbers of Marshallese, Tongans, and Fijians. We propose carrying those stories with us into our more geographically disparate conversations to interrogate how place continues to inform online space.

We seek to “unsettle” the provenance of Asian American and Pacific Islander groupings, honoring the distinct routes and sometimes overlapping contexts of Asian American and Pacific Islander migrations to these shores. Unsettling the term “transpacific” in Asian American studies demands rethinking a majoritarian geopolitical outlook that replicates a fly-over model, problematically reductive of “the Pacific” to strategic military bases or isolated island living laboratories. Similarly, we want to bring decolonial analysis to the term “ecologies,” not only to acknowledge the historical interactions between the Age of Ecology and the Atomic Age, but also to thread together environmental, racial, and disability justice by considering the ways ecological vulnerability, “slow violence,” and “slow death” disproportionately affect the politically and financially disenfranchised.

By “unsettling transpacific ecologies,” we look to forms of solidarity that arise out of the histories of displacement, exploitation, and dispossession that form the substrate of racial capitalism and settler colonialism. What shifts when Asian American studies centers the Pacific? Instead of a politics that moves towards recognition and rights under the settler state, we might look to alternate social configurations and political solidarities that arrive through Indigenous genealogies of thought and practice. We look to other possible affiliations and alliances to trace the shape and limits of Asian American studies and Asian American subjectivity by continuing to question the U.S. state-centrism of “Asian America.” What might a politics grounded in deeper relation to the land, to the ocean, or to the more-than-human entail? How can we imagine ecological systems that account for connections and conflicts across national lines, gendered difference, sexual economies, and contradictory ontologies? To what extent might we understand our current climate crisis as fallout from extractive capitalism's reliance on Native dispossession, which disrupts human-nonhuman relations through water expropriation, the patenting of genetically modified seed, and the military targeting of ecosystems, for example. We write this CFP even as the COVID-19 pandemic reveals the inequities of this “unsustainable empire,” which is failing the poor, the homeless, the elderly, the undocumented, the

incarcerated, people with disabilities, gender non-conforming and queer folks, Indigenous, migrants, refugees, and racially subjugated communities, and the most precarious workers first.

So it is under these conditions that we call for papers, workshops, roundtables, and collaborative thinking that help us build and imagine more just and sustainable ways of being in relation with one another as well as with the planet. The term *ecology* might invoke environmental concerns, but it might also signal work engaged with other interconnected systems across scales. We call for submissions that approach transpacific ecologies, either specifically or more broadly construed, from a range of disciplines, including but not limited to: Geography, History, Anthropology, Gender Studies, and Environmental Studies. The conference theme is meant to inspire contributors to connect fields or concepts across familiar divides.

We welcome proposals for panels, roundtables, individual papers, posters, films, and workshops that address but need not be limited to the following topics below:

- Disability and environmental health
- Queer diasporas and the settler state
- Pacific militarism and nuclear imperialism
- Pacific Islander sovereignty
- Critical ocean studies and “sea epistemologies”
- Racialized histories of environmental harm
- Digital placemaking and the settler state
- Trans studies and the transpacific
- Asian Americanist approaches to the more-than-human
- Affective regimes of settler nation-states
- Histories of Asian colonial occupation of Pacific Islands
- Property, possession, and other settler logics of ownership
- Surveillance and securitization and the study of ecosystems
- Carceral ecologies, dispossession through incarceration
- Decolonial approaches to “research” and methodology
- Performing transpacific solidarity and dissent
- Transpacific food sources, supply chains, and infrastructure
- Queer-feminist healing practices and decolonial joy
- Solidarity and environmental justice movements
- Archival ecologies
- Liberalism and environmental law
- Poetics, eco-poetics
- Biopolitics, environmental racism, and racial capitalism
- Islands, continents, and epistemological geographies
- Transpacific temporality, memory, and storytelling

*We encourage members to submit new proposals or revise proposals from AAAS 2020 to address the conference themes for AAAS 2021. However, in recognition of the work already

completed for the 2020 conference, we will also accept resubmitted panel and paper proposals. These resubmissions will receive equal consideration and will not be penalized for not adhering to the conference theme. Please note, MLA and APA guidelines allow for papers that were accepted to cancelled conferences to be listed on academic CVs.

In 2021, AAAS will take place entirely online. We will provide details about the submission process for this all-remote/on-line conference sometime in early October—please check back after October 15.

In 2021 AAAS will be offering the option to link up to three panels, roundtables, films, and workshops. Linked sessions present multiple approaches to a single theme or topic, thus allowing presenters and audience members to have extended discussions in a particular area.

Remember: You **MUST** be a current and active AAAS member in order to submit a proposal. Memberships now begin July 1 and run through June 30. Everyone who was a member as of the 2020 conference had their membership automatically extended through June 30, 2021 since all members as of January 1, 2020 have active memberships through June 30, 2021. **New memberships have a 3-5 day turnaround; please do not renew or request a new membership right before the proposal submission deadline as you will not receive your membership information in time.**

Submissions Due: December 1, 2020 (Tuesday) by 11:59pm PT