

HORÁRIO: 10:30 – 12:15 (Brasília)

ACLA Vice Presidential Panel - Geopolitics of Comparison around the World

Shu-mei Shih

Organizer

Wail S. Hassan

Co-Organizer

Reading Across and Beyond the (Geopolitical) Disciplinary Boundaries: A Few (Non)Comparative Reflections

Presenter

Irene Sywenky - isywenky@ualberta.ca
University of Alberta

Abstract Info

This paper considers the historically shifting and geopolitically problematic concept of comparativism in its recent iterations across a range of theoretical developments and practical applications, and the growing complexity and responsibility of the project of Comparative Literature in the context of a settler colonial state. The presentation will also discuss the implications of the changing conditions – from intellectual to institutional – for the status of the discipline, and the way comparative inquiry can help shape and invigorate new ecoscapes of knowledge(s), methodological paradigms, and pedagogical practices, particularly in response to the growing neoliberalization of the university.

Speaker Bio

Irene Sywenky is an Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and Graduate Chair at the Department of Modern Languages and Cultural Studies, University of Alberta. She has published on postcolonial and post-imperial cultural spaces in Central and Eastern Europe; border identities and border cultures; memory; cultural translation. Her most recent publication is the co-edited volume (with S. Ingram) *Comparative Literature in Canada: "Contemporary Scholarship, Pedagogy and Publishing in Review"*. She is Editor of the *"Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée"*.

The Dirty Word: A View on Comparison from Aotearoa / New Zealand

Presenter

Jacob Edmond - jacob.edmond@otago.ac.nz
University of Otago

Abstract Info

Comparative literature in Aotearoa / New Zealand is almost a dirty word. Any mention of it is likely to provoke a sceptical or suspicious response. And despite the fact that one of the founders of the discipline, Hutcheson Macaulay Posnett, held a chair at the Auckland college of what was then the University of New Zealand in the late nineteenth century, comparative literature has a marginal and tenuous existence as a discipline in Aotearoa / New Zealand. Seen from this country, comparative literature—especially in its new or renewed “world” or “planetary” guises emanating from North America and Europe over the past few decades—often looks suspiciously like another version of Anglo-European colonialism and imperialism, another extract industry in which the West exploits the resources of the rest. Such a critique lies behind Lisa Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies*, which is written out of the author’s frustration at the exploitation of Māori and other indigenous peoples by largely white researchers and which has resonated broadly amongst and beyond indigenous scholarly communities around the world. While comparison in Aotearoa / New Zealand is almost a dirty word, it is impossible here not to be a comparatist if by that we mean someone who must grapple on a daily basis, as Smith does, with the politics and geopolitics of unequal encounters between languages, cultures, and intersectional identities, and with the insidious histories and ongoing power of racialized and gendered ideologies and prejudice. It is equally a comparative perspective that has led to the uptake of Smith’s critique in a wide range of contexts and that enables forms of transnational solidarity against historical and contemporary imperial, colonial, and racist ideologies and other forms of prejudice that cross borders. Comparison, then, from my perspective as a descendent of white colonial settlers, must be seen as both problem and cure. It is a dirty word that we cannot do without—whoever “we” are. It comes to us with ingrained layers of imperial and colonial history and is equally saturated by contemporary geopolitics and by digital platforms and networks through which everyday forms of comparison increasingly occur today.

Speaker Bio

Jacob Edmond is a Professor in the Department of English and Linguistics at the University of Otago.

CompLit in Taiwan: Essentially Incomplete

Presenter

Sun-chieh Liang - sunchieh.liang@gmail.com
National Taiwan Normal University

Abstract Info

Since the birth of comparative literature, death has been shadowing its growth and development. Scholars of this field seem to be constantly required to sustain the anxiety of an academic discipline whose identity is perpetually precarious. The indeterminacy of identity, however, is essentially rooted in Taiwan culture and literature, because of a history of colonization by the Dutch, Spanish, Chinese, and Japanese, and recently the geopolitical tensions between the US and China, with Taiwan being part of the first island chain. The in-betweenness of Taiwan's geopolitical position also features the comparative literature studies in Taiwan. This presentation will map out the historical development of the comparative literature studies in Taiwan, demonstrate the current local debates (is it dying?), and contend that CompLit studies in Taiwan, corresponding to Taiwanese-ness which is inherently embedded by creolism, syncretism and hybridization, will continue to live on in a way that will never be completed.

Speaker Bio

Sun-chieh Liang is the President of the Comparative Literature Association of Republic of China (Taiwan) and Professor of English as well as Professor of Graduate Institute of European Cultures and Tourism at National Taiwan Normal University.

Translatability of Arabic: A Transdisciplinary Comparative Approach, in the Egyptian Context

Presenter

Marie Thérèse Abdelmessih - marietherese.abdelmessih@gmail.com
Cairo University

Abstract Info

This paper advances a claim for rethinking the burgeoning of comparative readings in Egypt by networking them to the discovery of an ancient past obliterated from national memory. This was paired to an exposure to monumental visual products, which provided a supplementary language. This along with other factors played a role in problematizing traditional approaches to Arabic literature and culture, while providing alternative perspectives. One of the goals of this paper is to propose a transdisciplinary comparative framework that examines the translatability of Arabic literature and culture in the process of interacting with verbal and visual foreign/domestic resources, against the backdrop of an inconstant geopolitical local/global system.

Speaker Bio

Marie Thérèse Abdelmessih is an established scholar in Comparative Literary Studies; she published widely in interart and Intermedial Studies. She studied at the universities of Cairo, Essex and the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, and was visiting scholar at Keynes College, University of Kent. She was Director of the MA Program, College of Graduate Studies, and Acting Vice-Dean for Academic Affairs & Research (Kuwait U). She is an elected member of the Executive Committee, International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA), elected member of the International Advisory Board and Associate Editors of the CLCWeb Comparative Literature and Culture Elected member of Board of Trustees, International Arab Fiction Prize, funded by the TCA Abu Dhabi, UAE in association with the Man-Booker Prize Foundation, London. Member, Advisory Board, National Centre for Translation, Cairo. Listed, "Profiles of Prominent Egyptian Women," Women & Memory Forum (WMF) Cairo, Egypt.