Ethics, Settler Colonialism, and Indigeneity in the History of the Human Sciences

This workshop explores long-running historical questions of how scholars should assess the historical actors they study—in this case, scientists—whose behaviors often fell short of what we consider ethical by today’s standards. We draw on the recent work of historian Jan Goldstein, who has called for an “empirical history of moral thinking,” as we examine the histories of scientific research involving Indigenous communities.

Sunday, November 4, 2018
Communication 202, University of Washington, Seattle

8:30 am - Breakfast

9:30 - Welcome and Introductions: Adam Warren (UW) and Julia Rodríguez (New Hampshire)

10 am - Contentious Encounters

Karin Rosemblatt (Maryland, College Park), “Between Cuauhtémoc and Cortés: Eulalia Guzmán, Masculinity and Politics in Cold War Mexico”

Micah Oelze (Florida International), “The Dangers of a Novel Science: Ethnography as Fictional Adventure in 1930s Brazil and its Ethical Implications”

Chair: Sebastián Gil-Riaño (Pennsylvania)

Discussants: José Antonio Lucero (UW), Josh Reid (UW), and Laura Stark (Vanderbilt)

11:45 am - Lunch

12:45 pm - Refashioning the Other

Maile Arvin (Utah), “The Science of Settling Wayward Girls in Territorial Hawai‘i”

Sarah Walsh (Washington State), “The Problem of Brazilian Anthropology: Gilberto Freyre and the Legacy of Racial Hierarchy”

Chair: Stephen Casper (Clarkson)

Discussants: Sara González (UW), Dian Million (UW), and Hans Pols (Sydney)

2:30 pm - Coffee

2:45 pm - States, Science, and Sovereignty

Eve Buckley (Delaware), “Overpopulation or Overconsumption? A Brazilian Scientist’s Critique of Early Cold War Overpopulation Discourse”


Chair: Ileana Rodríguez-Silva (UW)

Discussants: María Elena García (UW), Ben Silverstein (Australian National), and Jonathan Warren (UW)

4:40 pm - Synthesis and Counterpoints

Warwick Anderson (Sydney), Jean Dennison (UW), and Gabriela Soto-Laveaga (Harvard)

5:30 - Reception

Organized by Julia Rodríguez (University of New Hampshire) and Adam Warren (University of Washington). Co-sponsored by History, Comparative History of Ideas, Latin American & Caribbean Studies, the Simpson Center for the Humanities, and by Clarkson University.

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