

Critical Divides: Coming Together in Crisis

The 21st Century Englishes Conference is hosted by the Rhetoric Society of the Black Swamp, Bowling Green State University's (BGSU) Student Chapter of the Rhetoric Society of America, and BGSU's Rhetoric & Writing Ph.D. Program. It is sponsored by BGSU's English Department.

Date: Friday, November 6 - Saturday, November 7, 2020

Time: 9:30am EST for Welcome and Opening Remarks

Virtual Location: Live Zoom and <https://casit.bgsu.edu/21stcentenglishconf>

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Proposal Deadline: Friday, September 25, 2020 @ 11:59 PM



The past six months have been an incredibly difficult time for individuals and communities all across the world. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic and protests of the ongoing police brutality toward BIPOC individuals and groups, have exposed critical divides in the values and beliefs of many Americans. At the heart of these divides is the health and safety of the most vulnerable in our communities. As we work to understand and learn from the divisions between us, what has become increasingly clear is the importance of communities and educational institutions in our lives and in the well-being of our society. It is also important to recognize the ways that these two aspects of our lives, community and education, are tightly interwoven. Educational institutions are often the foundation for building communities, and schools are only one out of many spaces where learning happens.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a tremendous strain on our usual routines in many ways, but especially in our expectations for education. Where and how to safely educate students has become an essential question for our society to answer. But the field of rhetoric and writing has long acknowledged and grappled with the limits of the academic classroom. In 1989 Mike Rose wrote that we “need a pedagogy that encourages us to step back and consider the threat of the standard classroom and that shows us, having stepped back, how to step forward to invite a student across the boundaries of that powerful room” (238). And Jeffrey Grabill also advocates for allowing students to “learn in the areas where learning must take place, and... to mine what they already know, the expertise, or metis, from other lived and intellectual experiences” (121). They and other rhetoric and composition scholars showcase the skepticism of the field toward a limited view of education that is tied too closely to institutions and schools. A skepticism

that allows us to see the possibilities and strengths of learning that occurs outside of the confines of school.

Education outside of the classroom encompasses many of our personal and societal developments and diversifies the voices we learn from. By engaging in community literacy we can draw on the situated knowledge of community members and learn from individuals actually living and experiencing community concerns, and move forward in making changes with those voices and knowledge. The Black Lives Matter movement and the nationwide protests and conversations around police brutality after the murder of George Floyd have also brought greater attention to fundamental divides in our society and have demonstrated the imperatives of community engaged learning and education. As Desmond Tutu argues, “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” The Rhetoric Society of the Black Swamp at BGSU sees this conference as an opportunity to enact our field’s longstanding commitment to confront the critical divides in our society and make a difference with partners from across our various communities.

We invite individual and panel proposals from academics and community members on this theme prompted by, but not limited to, the questions below:

Learning Beyond the Classroom

- How does learning happen inside and outside of the classroom?
- What are the benefits and limitations of service learning or community-based learning?
- How can educators promote meaningful learning in online spaces?
- How can educators create and/or engage communities in online spaces?

The Academy-Community Connection

- How can access to educational programs/institutions impact communities?
- What responsibilities do academics have to serve and learn from the community?
- What responsibilities do community members have to teach and engage with academics?

Activism and Education

- What is the role of activism in education?
- What is the role of education in promoting activism?
- How can anti-racism be enacted inside and outside of the classroom?
- What responsibilities do educators and community activists have to teach our fellow citizens?

Submission Guidelines:

Please submit all proposals via email to 21stcon@gmail.com as Microsoft Word attachments.

If desired, you may submit multiple proposals for different types of presentations. For example, if you would like to give an individual presentation and a workshop presentation, you are more than welcome to submit two separate proposals. While we will allow two submissions for different types of presentations, we will not accept multiple submissions for the same type of presentation (ex. Two individual paper presentations).

This year's conference will be virtual with several options for presenting.

Live Zoom Individual/Project Proposals*: Please include a title, a 50 word abstract to include in the program, and a 250 word proposal. Also include presenter(s) name(s), email(s), and university/community affiliation(s). Presenters should plan on 15 minutes per project. Proposals of similar topics will be grouped in 75-minute panels (including Q & A) of 3-4 projects.

Live Zoom Panel Proposals: Please include a title, a 50 word abstract of the panel, a 750 word proposal, and a 50 word narrative of the relationships between the presenters to include in the program. Also include presenter names, emails, and university/community affiliations. Panels should plan for 75 minutes total, including Q & A time. There is no limit to the number of panelists, but we ask that all panelists are active contributors/facilitators during the panel.

Live Zoom Workshop Proposals: Please include a title, a 50 word abstract of the workshop, a 750 word proposal describing plans and activities for the workshop, and a 50 word narrative of the relationships between the presenters to include in the program. Also include presenter names, emails, and university/community affiliations. Workshops should plan for 75 minutes total. There is no limit to the number of panelists, but we ask that all panelists are active contributors/facilitators during the panel.

Pre-recorded YouTube Video Proposals*: Please include a title, a 50 word abstract to include in the program, and a 250 word proposal. Also include presenter(s) name(s), email(s), and university/community affiliation(s). Presenters should limit videos to 15 minutes.

Project Poster Display Proposals: Please include a title and a 250 word description to be displayed with the piece. Outside of the 250 word description, please include a description of the mode or software platform that will be used. Also include presenters(s) name(s), email(s), and university/community affiliation(s).

Artwork Display Proposals: Please include a title and a 250 word artist/author statement to be displayed with the piece. Outside of the 250 word description, please include a description of the mode or software platform that will be used, and, if possible, attach an image of the artwork. Also include artist(s) name(s), email(s), and university/community affiliation(s).

*If you have a project that is co-authored, we recommend submitting it as an individual/project proposal. If there are 3 or more collaborators, we recommend submitting it as a panel proposal.

In the spirit of innovation and presentations that explicitly invite collaboration with/among audience members, we invite projects and panels to structure their delivery in any interactive manner they please, such as workshops, teaching demonstrations, or creative readings.