

Transverse Disciplines: Working across and beyond Academic Communities

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In January 2019, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported on the radical decline in language programs across colleges and universities in the United States since 2013; such trends have been charted across the anglophone world. Beginning from the thought experiment that maybe our discipline should “dismantle itself altogether” despite warnings to the contrary (Norbert 13), the proposed volume uses “German Studies” as a litmus test for what might be possible when the value and conduct of research is located already from the outset beyond disciplinary specificities and histories. Thus “German Studies”—unmoored from the confines of disciplines and departments proper and considered instead through feminist, queer, anti-racist, and decolonial academic practices and commitments—becomes a knot tying together scholars interested in the unsettling of disciplinary-based academic structures, including also work with industries, community-based work, research-creation, and scholar-activism.

Languages serve by no means as a singular example: petitions against the closure of this or that program in the humanities or social sciences circulate with alarming regularity on email and social media, and the crisis rhetoric has become its own self-perpetuating academic industry. Attendant to program closures is the ongoing fight to maintain disciplinary integrity, even as universities seem increasingly less willing to support disciplines in thriving; the “adjunctification” of the labor pool is just one stark example. At the same time, there is little internal support for the development of creative structures that might formulate alternate responses. The holes left behind by these closures prompt some of the radical rethinking that this volume intends to capture. The volume seeks to include contributions that grapple with imagining a different future that begins with an investment in and accountability to social justice, allowing a restructuring of units in ways that maintain core intellectual values without reifying ossified canonization impulses, methodologies, or theories nor merely replacing these with new ones.

This volume seeks to offer approaches that do not dilute the political capacity of the kind of work that happens inside and outside of the academy. In order to unsettle the restrictive nature of working exclusively within disciplinary structures, scholars and teachers must rethink the ethical and social impact of academic work as activists in our spheres of influence. If the university writ large is invested in bringing together different approaches and forms of knowledge and making social justice a sustainable politics of being, transverse disciplines built of queer-feminist approaches act as a lightning rod for transformative thinking. In this manner, the reshaping of a discipline and disciplinarity itself becomes an activist project. Interrogating positionality, relationality, and ethical principles of academic work, this volume will feature a series of theoretical essays that explore future possibilities punctuated by short, diagnostic stories or testimonies on present experiences of being in the academy.

We are seeking theoretical essays (6,000–6,500 words in length) that are future-oriented and address such topics as (though not limited to):

- rethinking of key concepts such as disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, and transdisciplinarity
- reshaping of disciplines and disciplinarity as political projects
- valuing disciplinary legacies while also accessing feminist, queer, antiracist, decolonial agendas
- cooption mechanisms that target concepts such as intersectionality and decolonization
- dialogues with feminist, gender, queer, critical race, or ethnic studies as discipline redefining two-way streets

- alternatives to current institutional structures, assessment categories for funding, and performance evaluation to push back against normative progress narratives (success, career goals, and employment)
- the emergence of epistemological and ontological questions/concepts when (inter)national communities and/or local contexts are taken into account
- new modes of working for language and area studies in a neoliberal, capitalist, settler-colonial context, particularly when digital worlds open up avenues while at the same time policing and reaffirming geopolitical and national boundaries more tightly than ever before
- academic and activist work in conversation with industry, government, and NGOs
- different ways of creating impact and reaching audiences through such avenues as research creation and maker cultures
- forging of alliances and coalitional partners locally and (inter)nationally
- professional bodies and their potential facilitation of multi-institutional transformation

We are also seeking personal stories and diagnostic testimonies (around 2,000 words in length) that assess the current state of the academy from different positionalities.

Please send an abstract (200 words) and a brief bio (no more than 150 words) for either format to Simone Pflieger (pflieger@ualberta.ca) and Carrie Smith (carrie.smith@ualberta.ca) by August 15, 2019. Full contributions will be due January 15, 2020.