

The 5th Biennial Borderlands International Graduate Student Conference

Forging Faith(s) in Global Borderlands

March 11-13, 2016

The Borderlands Research Focus Group at the University of California, Santa Barbara invites graduate scholars from all disciplines to submit abstracts for papers addressing the theme of *Forging Faith(s) in Global Borderlands*. Borderlands are spaces where people of different ethnicities, cultures, religions, political systems, or linguistic traditions come into contact, often without any one authority exercising complete control. We also acknowledge that borderlands needn't necessarily be physical spaces but can be conceptual or metaphorical areas of contestation, thus allowing a diversity of approaches.

The 2016 Borderlands International Graduate Student Conference seeks papers that address the ways that borderlands encounters have stimulated the creation, definition, and/or adaptation of faith identities among various groups of people. This topic encompasses a variety of inquiry into the role of faith(s) in borderlands, from formal religious affiliations to loosely defined mystical practices, and from folk religions to new age spiritual syncretism. We are interested in how borderlands interactions affect faith communities and how those communities utilize borderlands contexts for the fashioning of group identity. Some topics of interest to the conference organizers include, but are not limited to, belief and practice, persecution and diaspora, orthodoxy and heresy, and conflict and accommodation.

The study of borderlands is well suited to an interdisciplinary approach, thus the conference seeks to include a range of disciplinary perspectives and methodologies. Papers are welcome from scholars in history, anthropology, art history, theology, religious studies, literature, linguistics and all related disciplines. We also encourage, but do not require, papers that engage with theorists whose work has relevance for borderlands studies, such as: Gloria Anzaldúa, Fredrick Barth, Daniel Boyarin, Bradley Parker, Pierre Bourdieu, Gayatri Charkravorty Spivak, Thomas Tweed, and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen.

We welcome proposals for individual papers or full panels that address the conference theme in any geographical region or historical period.

Please send a 300-word abstract to UCSBborderlands2016@gmail.com by **December 20, 2015**. If you are submitting a proposal for a full panel (3-4 papers) please send all abstracts together. If accepted, each paper presentation should be between 15 and 20 minutes long. Limited travel funds may be available for those who cannot secure funding from their home institution.

This year's conference theme is inspired by the late Tom Sizgorich (1970–2011), a graduate of UCSB's history PhD program and professor of history at UC Irvine, whose research focused on the interaction of early Islam and Late Antique Christianity. His 2008 book, *Violence and Belief in Late Antiquity: Militant Devotion in Christianity and Islam*, argued for a reconsideration of the relationship between these two groups, seeing it as an ongoing conversation about religious identity informed by interaction among neighboring communities. His posthumously published research on the ways in which Muslims and Christians living within the first Muslim empires imagined, fantasized about, and narrated their relationships with each other has been path breaking. Tom's work and its theoretical trajectories are, we believe, deserving of further consideration in the context of borderlands studies and this conference is meant to recognize and celebrate his efforts.