

Empire on the Move: Teaching and Researching Colonization and Mobility
AALAC Faculty Workshop
October 3-5, 2019
Swarthmore College

Background:

A British guidebook in 1872 informed travelers in Greece that the country “has no modern history of such a character as to obscure the vividness of her classical features.” The tourist could be sure to see only the Ancient Greece they had journeyed to discover; modernity would be nowhere in sight. The British denial of Greek modernity echoes in Edward Said’s critique of orientalism, and indeed, such attitudes were only amplified when Britons and other Europeans witnessed empire first-hand while enjoying vacations in “their” colonies. In the early modern and modern periods, travel and tourism led to new visions of the colonized world. Even those who could not afford the increasingly reasonable price of travel could consume the empire in the form of popular literature or local exhibits featuring supposedly authentic representations of far-off lands, which reinforced Europeans expectations of the colonies. However, with the amplification of encounters came new challenges to the prestige of the imperial project. In the post-independence period, tourism became a way for newly independent countries to craft a postcolonial national image that they could project to the world. Beyond travel for pleasure, conflicts surrounding the independence of colonial territories also often resulted in the mass movement of refugees around the world.

Workshop goals and scholarly significance:

This workshop aims to open a dialogue about research and teaching among an interdisciplinary group of scholars whose interests align with the themes of empire and mobility described above. New works in history, literature, and anthropology, among other disciplines, demonstrate the significance of this topic, particularly because their visual, literary, and cartographic analyses lend themselves to digital learning initiatives. “Empire on the Move” will thus invite discussions of the intersections of scholarly work and pedagogy. Features of the workshop will include activities centered around in-progress research and round table discussions of the state of the field. It will also open up teaching conversations that focus particularly on how technology can facilitate collaboration between campuses and inspire new ways of engaging with students. By encouraging participants to think through teaching and research together, it will invite scholars to embrace this field as a way of enhancing cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary endeavors. These are lessons we would bring back to our respective AALAC institutions.

Outcomes and ongoing learning:

After the workshop, all participants will return to their own campuses with new ideas about the state of the field, digital teaching techniques (including mapping and inter-campus exchange), and collaborative opportunities in research and teaching between institutions. All workshop participants will complete an evaluation form in late October that will ask them about next steps

they plan on taking. This will be followed up with an online discussion in March 2020 that will allow us to disseminate our findings to the greater AALAC community. Select participants will also propose future conference activities, notably a panel on in-progress research at the Western Society for French History Fall 2019 meeting and a pedagogy roundtable for the American History Association 2020 meeting.

Organizers:

- Ellen Boucher, Amherst College
- Megan Brown, Swarthmore College (liaison)
- Jessica Pearson, Macalester College
- Joanna Tague, Denison University

Participants:

- Thomas Parker, Vassar College
- Stéphanie Ponsavady, Wesleyan College
- Elizabeth Prevost, Grinnell College
- Joshua Schreier, Vassar College
- Adrian Young, Denison University

Speakers:

- Sarah Griswold, Oklahoma State University
 - Participant in Spring 2019 teaching collaborative with Brown and Pearson.
- Minayo Nasiali, UCLA
 - Historian of French empire focused on shipping and the movement of people.

Additional participants:

- In Spring 2019 we will invite additional participants in order to include representation from up to four other AALAC member institutions, bringing the total number of participants and speakers to 15.

Liaison information:

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Schedule:

Thursday, Oct. 3:

- Travel day and welcome dinner

Friday, Oct. 4:

- “Teaching the French Traveler: Reflections on a Pedagogical Collaboration Across Three Campuses”: Presentation by Megan Brown, Sarah Griswold, and Jessica Pearson on a Spring 2019 teaching collaboration (Swarthmore-Oklahoma State Honors College-Macalester), with 2-3 Swarthmore students from the collaboration present to comment and answer questions.

- Participant's work-in-progress #1: Elizabeth Prevost, "Agatha Christie's Timeless Empire."
- "Digital mapping and the classroom: Teaching with technology": Presentation by Swarthmore librarians and Quaker Friends librarians
- "Port Cities and Sites of Entry as Fields of Inquiry": Round table discussion led by Minayo Nasiali, Joshua Schreier, and Adrian Young.

Saturday, Oct. 5:

- Participant's work-in-progress #2: Stéphanie Ponsavady, "The System of Automobility and the Making of French Indochina."
- "Means of Traveling through Empire, Real and Imagined": Round table discussion led by Stéphanie Ponsavady (automobiles), Elizabeth Prevost (literature), and Thomas Parker (foods).
- Participant's work-in-progress #3: Thomas Parker, "Object Oriented Ontology and the Subnatural Oyster."
- Organizer-facilitated conversation: Incorporating notions of mobility and empire into research and teaching practices
- Concluding reception
- Departure