
INTIMACIES/INTIMATIONS

Conference Date: April 23rd 2021 | Proposals Due: January 25th 2021

In the introduction to the Winter 1998 edition of *Critical Inquiry*, Lauren Berlant suggests that “the inwardness of the intimate is met by a corresponding publicness.” Over two decades later, Berlant’s pronouncement remains pertinent, particularly as the transition of our work and social lives to online spaces complicates the relationship between the private and the public. Stripped of actual bodily closeness and intimacy, the virtual body, along with its intimations and those of its domestic space, has been thrown into relief.

The COVID-19 pandemic’s digital mediation of our private and public intimacies (to the extent that this dichotomy is real, solid, useful) speaks to concerns raised by Berlant and other theorists of affectivity, gender, queerness, and race. As an adjective, “intimate” describes those close interpersonal spaces and states which make us—particularly those of us whose identities are marginalized—vulnerable. This form of “intimate” can also describe an affective attachment or space wherein differences can be bridged. As a verb, “intimate” speaks to those subtle codes which humanities scholars across disciplines and time periods are so attune to—the scene of flirtation, the dog-whistle in the political speech, the gesture of the theatre actor. As a noun, “intimate” can denote privilege within institutions as Paul St. Amour warns us, and, as such, might intimate relationships in social networks worth unsettling.

With an emphasis on these complex relationships between the public and the private, the said and the unsaid, this year’s University of Toronto Graduate English Association’s conference seeks papers on intimacies and intimations as content or as methodology. Where are the sites of the intimate and the intimation throughout literary/cultural history? How do we go about reading intimations or reading intimately? What is the value of intimacy and its intimations today?

We invite topics on intimations/intimacies across disciplines. Approaches may include, but are not limited to:

- Digital humanities and theories of digital media; AI studies
- Queer and affect theories of intimacy, queer semiotics
- Queer and gendered theories of embodiment
- Disability studies, narrative medicine
- Political intimacies, borders, nationalities
- Sociologies of literature, theories of reception
- Reader response methods
- Archival theories/practices; material culture studies
- Critical theories of media
- Eco-critical/actor-network/complex systems theories of environmental networks
- Weak theory/surface reading

Submissions are due by January 25th 2021. Please submit abstracts of 250-300 words and a brief bio of 50 words (including your pronouns) to uoftenglishconference2021@gmail.com.