

(Un)Limited
Duke University Department of English Graduate Conference
February 16 & 17, 2024

Keynote Speaker: Joseph Albernaz (Columbia University)

At the outset of *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Jacques Derrida quite clearly announces the program of his essay: “Limitrophy is therefore my subject.” He expounds upon this neologism, specifying that limitrophy “concern[s] what sprouts or grows at the limit, around the limit, by maintaining the limit, but also what feeds the limit, generates it, raises it, and complicates it.” While limitrophy emerges in the specific context of the deconstruction of the abyss that divides Man and Animal, it is tethered to a more general obsession with limits that pervades Western thought. From the ancient Greek concept of infinity to German idealist critiques of the limits of reason; from inquiries into the limits of sense and subjectivity grounded in the phenomenological reduction to recent developments in Black studies and postcolonial theory that articulate the deadly limits of the Human and the nation; or from the logical investigations that defined set theory to existentialist meditations on human finitude and freedom...— it seems that all we ever think is a limit.

For this conference, limits will be our subject. We invite papers that take up a “limitrophic” project and identify, investigate, and challenge the articulation and figuration of a limit or limits as they manifest across boundaries of discipline, genre, medium, period, geographical area, language, etc. In de-limiting limitrophy from its original frame, we aim to widen the scope of the concept and the conference such that the only limit is that of “limit,” taken in the broadest sense.

Potential topics to be addressed may include:

- ☐ the limits of language and literature; what is and is not speakable
- ☐ figures of divides, cuts, gaps, holes, voids, and what/how different figurations mean
- ☐ the aesthetics of limits and the limits of aesthetics
- ☐ the limits and genres of the Human and their political implications
- ☐ intersubjectivity and the limit(s) between self and Other
- ☐ borders as limits between peoples, communities, nations, etc.
- ☐ limits of the body
- ☐ rac(ializ)ed, sex(ualiz)ed, and classed limits, and other limits of identity
- ☐ (in)finitude, birth, death
- ☐ transgressions of limits as a political, ethical, or aesthetic acts

We are especially interested in papers that deal with limits of/within literary studies: the utility of intra- and interdisciplinary limits; limits of periodization; boundaries created by specialization in genre, style, geographical area, or publication type; limits of approach or methodology for literary analysis (continental vs. analytic philosophy, “symptomatic” vs. “surface” reading, etc.).

Please send brief abstracts (250–300 words) and a brief biographical statement to britton.edelen@duke.edu by December 1. Acceptances will be sent out by the middle of December.

