SEXUAL MODERNITIES
University of Michigan Graduate Conference
March 14-16, 2019

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Keynote Speakers:

Benjamin Kahan
English, Women’s & Gender Studies
Louisiana State University

Heather Love
English; Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies
University of Pennsylvania

Marcia Ochoa
Feminist Studies, Critical Race and Ethnic Studies
University of California, Santa Cruz

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Call for Papers:

Does modernity have a sexuality? Such is the question posed by Benjamin Kahan and others in a recent print+ cluster of Modernism/modernity. As Kahan notes, the deployment of sexuality and the rise of biopower marked for Michel Foucault the dawning of modernity. Numerous scholars have since complicated these claims. Susan S. Lanser, for instance, argues in The Sexuality of History (2014) that sexuality takes an active role in constructing history, rather than being merely a product of it, and that the emergence of sapphic sexual possibilities is also the story of modernity. Heather Love, in Feeling Backward (2007), argues that Foucault’s emphasis on “reverse discourse” has led scholars of queer modernity to overemphasize positive affect and progress narratives while smoothing over the pain of sexuality’s history. As these and numerous others emphasize, the question of the sexuality of modernity—and the modernities of sexuality—is still wide open.

Alongside these social and historical investigations, modernist cultural productions have much to say about the relationships between modernity and sexual subjectivity. Modernism, as an artistic movement often defined by its defiance of convention, would seem of a piece with the “outsider” status of queer sexualities. Literary modernism is frequently recognized as prolific in its representations of nonnormative sexualities and “bent” genders: one need only think of Virginia Woolf’s Orlando, E.M. Forster’s Maurice, or Djuna Barnes’s Nightwood, or even of the famed polyamorous orgies of the Bloomsbury group and the Sapphic cocktail parties at Gertrude Stein’s Paris apartment. At the same time, any easy equivalence between modernism and marginalized sexualities shatters when we consider modernism’s association with cultural and economic elitism, global capital and the commodification of sexuality, or colonialism and the exoticization of “other” sexual practices. What, then, is the relationship between modernist art and the emergence of modern discourses of sexuality?
This conference follows the call of Kahan and others for further interdisciplinary dialogue on the emergence of sexual modernity and sexual subjectivities. We invite papers that relate to the theme of “sexual modernities,” addressing topics such as (but not limited to):

- The emergence of biopolitics and its relation to sexuality
- Rethinkings of Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality*
- Queer modernism(s) and sexual aesthetics
- Modern gender roles
- Sexual subcultures and subjectivities
- The commodification of sexuality
- Modern pornography, the “lowbrow,” and obscenity
- Modern sex panics and the law
- Sexology, inversion, and its legacies
- Modern convergences of disability and sexuality
- Queer temporality and historiography
- Sexual reading practices
- Bodies, flesh, and the racialization of modern sexuality
- Neo-/Post-/Colonialism and sexual imperialism
- Modern sex work, sex tourism, and neoliberalism
- Homonationalism, pinkwashing, and modern warfare
- Modern proliferation of sexual and gender identities
- Industrialization, the urban/rural binary and sexual geographies
- Homonormativity and the modern state
- Modern relationality, alienation, and the (anti)social

The above list represents only a handful of topics that would be pertinent to this conference, and we welcome other reflections on sexual modernities that exceed the above suggestions.

Please submit abstracts of no more than 250 words (along with presentation title, institutional affiliation, phone number, and email address) to sexualmodernities.umich@gmail.com by **December 15, 2018.**