

Inventing Your Tradition (COMMRC 3317). Instructor: David Marshall

Intellectual history is concerned with where, when, how, and why ideas emerge and change. *Contemporary* intellectual history focuses on taking up someone who is important to your own work in order to think about what to adopt, adapt, and/or reject. No matter your theoretical polestar, all researchers work in a tradition. Engaging in a prolonged investigation of another researcher in your tradition can be a powerful way of refining your own voice and your own ideas about where critical energy can be found in a given field of inquiry. Working through such attachments is a key part of graduate school, and this seminar carves out time for you to do that work in a concerted way. If you feel like you're not getting enough time on key texts in your various courses, this seminar is an opportunity to really dig in. In this seminar, you'll learn about ways of doing contemporary intellectual history to productively engage with past scholarship. You're free to focus for the semester on any thinker (including a historian) who is significant to you—Sara Ahmed, Lauren Berlant, Marisol de la Cadena, Penelope Eckert, Frantz Fanon, Édouard Glissant, Erving Goffman, Marjorie Harness Goodwin, Saidiya Hartman, Jodi Melamed, Walter Mignolo, Priya Satia, Anna Tsing, ...whoever. And you can reach further back if you wish—a Wallerstein, Nora, Said, Spivak, Bourdieu. In my own work, I've taken up Vico, Heidegger, Arendt, Benjamin, Warburg, and Brandom. All lists here are suspect! You will have other names, and that is good. We begin by thinking together about the ways in which the work of another can matter to us by engaging with Terrance Hayes's reflections on what Ethridge Knight has meant to him as a poet in *To Float in the Space Between* (2018). You'll then identify the following: a field to which you're speaking, an author of interest (which might be a collective), and a central work by that author. From there, the seminar functions as a workshop for scaffolding writing projects that build toward a conference paper (which might later become a journal article or part of the theory section in a dissertation prospectus). Each week, you'll develop new skills and write new material on the following sequence of topics: surveying an anthology, choosing an author, establishing a corpus, engaging a text, exploring an archive, assessing a scholarly literature, articulating a context, tracing an affiliation, following an appropriation, crafting a purpose, and drafting a paper. The seminar concludes with an open one-day conference at which you all present the paper you have been working on over the term.