



Southern Deserts – History, Change, and the Future A Humanities-Based Approach to the Deserts of Australia

Research on the deserts of Australia has a long and illustrious history. Much of this research has been conducted by natural and social scientists and has made major contributions to our understanding not only of Australia but of deserts in a global context. In conjunction with one of the organizer's Fulbright grant to work at the University of Western Australia in Perth, you are invited to participate in a symposium devoted to bringing the humanities more centrally into thinking about Australian desert worlds.

We hope that participants can take up one or more of the following general questions in their contributions:

1. To what degree can European settler colonial interaction with Australia's desert environments be understood/explained/elucidated by comparison with desert tropes and experience in other desert regions? Some of the best informants on European settlement projects are the Indigenous people who advised and worked with them.
2. How do Indigenous desert interactions, both contemporarily and archaeologically, complement and contrast with these European interactions?
3. How have changes in the Australia desert regime over the *longue durée* shaped human interaction with deserts?

A preliminary outline of topics and organization for the symposium, subject to change depending on participants and their proposed papers, is as follows.

Deep time in the deserts of Western Australia

Literature of the desert

Ecology of deserts with a humanities twist

Australian deserts meet the deserts of the world

Facing the future – the contribution of the humanities

Organizers: Andrea Gaynor, Associate Professor of History, UWA, and Gary Reger, Professor of History, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, USA, and Fulbright scholar.

Date and place: October 27-29, 2020, at the Institute for Advanced Studies, UWA, Perth, Western Australia

Format: papers will be pre-circulated; during the symposium a discussant will offer opening comments followed by a response from the author and general discussion.

Schedule:

1. If you are interested in being considered for potential participation, please send a preliminary title and 150-word abstract by **March 15, 2020**.
2. Abstract of paper due by **June 1, 2020**.
3. Paper for distribution to symposium participants due by **September 15, 2020**.
4. Symposium **October 27-29, 2020**.

Confirmed participants include Kathrine Morrissey, Associate Professor of History at the University of Arizona in Tucson and author of *Mental Territories. Mapping the Inland Empire* (1997) and editor, with J.M. H. Warner, of *Border Spaces. Visualizing the US-Mexico Frontera* (2018). She is a faculty affiliate of Arid Lands Resource Sciences, the Gender and Women's Studies Department, the Institute of the Environment, and the Southwest Land, Culture and Society Program at the University of Arizona.

Financial support: We ask participants coming from outside Perth to seek funding from their home institutions to cover the costs of transportation and housing in Perth (estimated at AUD\$120/night for three nights). We may be able to provide some support for participants who cannot obtain funding from other sources, but be aware that our resources are limited. Please let us know as soon as possible if you cannot participate without funding from us.

We hope you will see this as an exciting opportunity to think broadly about deserts and humanities and the intersections between disciplines. We expect to publish revised versions of the papers.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions;

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We look forward to hearing from you!