

Call for Proposals

Still Dreaming: Race, Ethnicity, and Liberal Arts Education

The Nineteenth Annual Conversation on the Liberal Arts
February 27–29, 2020
The Gaede Institute for the Liberal Arts, Westmont College
Santa Barbara, CA

In what ways has liberal education, past and present, fostered racial privilege? How can liberal education cultivate racial justice?

The Gaede Institute for the Liberal Arts is pleased to announce the nineteenth annual *Conversation on the Liberal Arts*, “Still Dreaming: Race, Ethnicity, and Liberal Arts Education,” February 27-29, 2020.

Advocates of liberal arts education have long understood themselves as essential contributors to a society that is more prosperous, more integrated, and more just. But their vision of a better society has often been narrow and self-interested; it has privileged certain voices and priorities and systematically excluded others. This contradiction has been especially evident with respect to race and ethnicity. With a few notable exceptions—for example, HBCUs, or colleges that made antislavery or civil rights fundamental to their identities—modern liberal arts institutions have historically replicated, defended, or even promoted racially based patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Nonwhite students continue to be underrepresented at these institutions, and nonwhite faculty and staff often struggle to own and shape the identities of their colleges and universities.

Recent developments in American society have laid bare these longstanding patterns of exclusion, and liberal arts institutions are grappling in new ways with the very present legacies of racial inequity on their own campuses. There are questions of access: Who should enjoy the benefits of a broad and integrated education, and how do they get in the door? There are questions of power: Who shapes the ethos of campus life, determines the academic curricula, or sets the standards for professional advancement? There are deep structural questions: If liberal arts institutions have been products of and contributors to the racial status quo, is there hope that they can articulate and pursue a genuinely inclusive vision of higher education?

The nineteenth annual *Conversation on the Liberal Arts* will gather scholars, administrators, students, and practitioners to consider these questions and more. Specific themes that presentations and discussion might address include:

- **Historical Origins and Legacies:** How American higher education has contributed to or combatted racial divisions and racism, and how members of contemporary academic communities might deal with those legacies;
- **Pedagogy:** How syllabi, classroom instruction, and student interaction can be designed to promote broad inclusivity;
- **Campus Culture:** How practices, relationships, spaces, and symbols shape people’s sense of belonging, especially in a residential campus community;
- **Institutional Dynamics:** How major constituencies (students, faculty, student life personnel, staff, administrators, parents, donors, or others) each encounter, bear responsibility for, or could address racial inequities;
- **Campus Contexts:** How liberal arts institutions engage, or could engage, with their surrounding communities on matters of race and racism;
- **Resources from the Liberal Arts:** Whether and how the distinctive features of liberal arts education suggest avenues for creative pursuit of racial justice.

Who should attend?

- Faculty and administrators who wish to begin, broaden, or sharpen conversations about racial justice at their institutions;
- Scholars whose research illuminates the relationship between race and education in America;
- Student life professionals who are working to create inclusive communities;
- Undergraduate and graduate students whose scholarship or experience gives them insight into the challenges of inclusivity on campus;
- Practitioners whose work gives them perspective on the ways race operates in the arena of higher education;
- Anyone with an interest in the value and practice of liberal education.

Format

One of the highlights of the *Conversation on the Liberal Arts*, as the name suggests, is the rich discussion it promotes. Plenary sessions include full-length paper presentations and extended times of conversation. Concurrent sessions are devoted primarily to open discussion of papers, which are distributed in advance. We ask concurrent authors to give very brief (3-5 minute) précis of their work, leaving most of the time for unscripted interaction.

Submissions

Please submit either a 350-word abstract or a completed paper (maximum 25 pages in English, and including a short abstract) to libarts@westmont.edu. All standard academic citation and formatting styles will be accepted, but Chicago is preferred. Be sure to include: 1) First author's full name, academic rank or job title, name of institution or organization, and contact information—mail, phone, and email; 2) Full names, ranks or titles, and institutions/organizations of all co-authors; 3) Title of abstract or paper. All student work should be clearly identified as such.

The deadline for submitting a proposal is November 15, 2019. If accepted, full papers should be submitted by January 27, 2020. Please contact Aaron Sizer (asizer@westmont.edu, 805-565-6124) with any questions.

For more information on the Conversation on the Liberal Arts, visit westmont.edu/conversation.