Re-Imagining Communities and Civil Society Conference

Second Call for Papers

University of Guelph   October 25-27, 2013

Languages of the conference: English, French and Spanish
Papers will be considered for publication
Guelph is 80 km from Toronto, 50 km from the Toronto airport.

Keynote Speakers**:** James F. English**, John Welsh Centennial Professor of English and Director of the Penn Humanities Forum,** Judith Adler Hellman**, Professor, Coordinator of Latin American and Caribbean Studies Program, York University,** Philip Oxhorn**, Professor, Founding Director of the Institute for the Study of International Development, McGill University**

The aim of this conference is to explore what role social movements, artists, intellectuals, writers, cultural institutions and others play in shaping our ideas of community, civil society and the connections between the two. We are especially interested in papers and panels that examine how the creation and strengthening of ties between communities and civil society promote democratization in Europe and/or Latin America. However, we welcome abstracts on any aspect of community and civil society.

Civil society is the nongovernmental space of associational life. As Philip Oxhorn, author of Organizing Civil Society, explains, civil society is composed of groups that "simultaneously resist subordination to the state and demand inclusion in national political structures" (252). These groups can be grassroots political associations, church groups, bowling leagues, book clubs, etc. While academics in the humanities are familiar with the concept of "community," the term "civil society" has largely remained in the realm of the social sciences. This conference seeks to expand the boundaries of the terms and to explore relationships of communities and civil society by considering the following topics:

- What role do civil-society organizations play in the formation of (artistic, ethnic, sexual, local, etc.) communities?
- Who sponsors civil societies? How are communities and civil-society organizations funded and maintained?

- How have philosophers, artists and producers of culture defined the concepts of community, civil society, and the interplay between the two? What is/has been the role of culture in shaping and bringing together communities and civil society?
- How do cultural institutions (academies, literary and artistic prizes, cultural festivals) contribute to civil society? As civil society organizations, what role do cultural institutions play in the creation of new communities or preserving communities? How is a community shaped by its inclusion or exclusion from canonical/ mainstream/ recognized cultural events sponsored by cultural institutions? What are the relationships between cultural institutions and the communities they are intended to serve? How do communities and civil society define cultural value?
- What has been, and what is likely to be, the role of both mainstream and alternative news media in shaping our understanding of civil society? Do social media strengthen civil societies and empower organized societal actors to assert claims vis-à-vis the state and corporations? How does this vary within and between societies in the Americas and Europe?
- What effect has the discourse of civil society had on language policy, linguistic rights, language revitalization, and identity? What are the roles of marginalized speech communities in the construction of a civil society?
- Are think-tanks part of civil society in Europe and the Americas? What role do they play, and what role should they play, in efforts to make the term "civil society" known to a broader cross-section of society, for example through University courses and programs? What role do think tanks play in organizing and shaping the claims-making by collective actors toward the state and corporations?
- How do artists, writers, and other cultural producers shape community or a civil society into arenas in which non-citizens can participate?
- Can civil society usher in new forms of art and/or enable artists to reclaim public spaces for social action? Can forging a connection between civil society and communities also bridge the space between politics and aesthetics?
- How can we create forms of collective action that are attentive to class and racial differences by forging connections between local communities and civil society?
- How do NGOs help enrich civil society? How can NGOs mediate the relationship between community and government?
- Has the discourse of culture been displaced by the discourse of civil society (David Chandler 2010), particularly in multiethnic communities in Latin America?

A 500 word abstract of individual papers or sessions should be sent by June 30, 2013 to the conference committee at **gyovanov@uoguelph.ca**