

CALL FOR PAPERS

Feminist Perspectives on Law and Literature

15.09.-16.09.2022

SFB 1385 “Law and Literature”

University of Münster

As an interdisciplinary field law and literature has long established itself as a crucial nexus within academia, yet its potential for the critical analysis of intersectionality has been understudied so far. While both law and literature are inextricably linked to questions of gender and equality, the interdisciplinary convergence of the two fields has not received sufficient attention as of yet, both theoretically and practically. Within literary studies, feminist approaches have been dominant at least since the 1970s, but feminist studies of the law have not generated the same scholarly interest in the legal field. The Collaborative Research Centre 1385 “Law and Literature” at the University of Münster, Germany, therefore plans a two-day conference in September 2022 in order to address crucial points that help bring these disciplines together.

Surveying the state of research in the interdisciplinary study of law and literature in 1997, literature professor Carolyn Heilbrun and law professor Judith Resnik were dismayed to find that the law and literature movement reproduced the biases they experienced in their respective disciplines. It centred largely around the voices of “white men attempt[ing] from a place of power to speak as if for us all” (p. 1913). Scholarship at the intersection between feminist, literary, and legal theories has, for instance, focused on challenging demeaning and repressive representations of women or disruptive women to demonstrate the persistence of gender stereotypes (Heinzelman and Wiseman 1994; Heinzelman 2010). Certain studies have focused particularly on the intersectionality of gender and race (Crenshaw 1989; Harris 1997). Other approaches set out on a meta-critique of the field of law and literature, suggesting that the relationship between the two disciplines was often conceptualized in gendered terms. However, research on the intersection of law, literature and feminism remains sparse and insular. Most recently, important work has been carried out on transgender issues through a law and literature lens (Borchert and Olson 2022) and there is ample opportunity for more work beyond cis-normative perspectives and the gender binary. The understanding of feminism in this context therefore specifically includes marginalized groups in general. Our interdisciplinary conference aims to contribute to the ongoing effort to leave lingering universalist tendencies in law and literature behind, and would like to provide the opportunity for nuanced discussions about gender within the context of law and literature. It is our goal to open the discussion to diverse intersectional concerns.

We invite contributions which address, but are not limited to, the following disciplines and topics:

- feminist legal studies
- critical legal theory
- critical race theory
- disability studies
- LGBTQ+ studies
- law in feminist cultural production
- legal and/or literary representation or oppression of marginalized groups

- queering law and/or literature
- feminist, trans, queer (legal) literatures
- narratives of gender in law and/or literature
- gender and genre in law and/or literature
- reproductive justice in law and/or literature
- canon formation in law and/or literature

We welcome contributions from researchers of all stages and also invite students who would like to present a project in a poster session. We particularly encourage contributions that focus on legal systems and cultural spheres that have not received much attention so far from a feminist law and literature perspective. The conference language will be English.

Please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words and a short CV to fem-law-lit.2022@wwu.de by 31 March 2022. Accepted speakers may apply for a stipend to help with travel costs and accommodation. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions you may have.

Bibliography

Crenshaw, Kimberlé (1989). *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*. University of Chicago Legal Forum, Iss. 1, Article 8, 139–167.

Harris, Angela P. (1997). *Race and Essentialism in Feminist Legal Theory*. In *Beyond Portia: Women, Law, and Literature in the United States*. Jacqueline St. Joan and Annette Bennington McElhiney. Boston, MA: Northeastern UP, 114–128.

Heilbrun, Carolyn and Resnik, Judith (1990). *Convergences: Law, Literature, and Feminism*. Yale Law Journal 99, Iss. 8, 1913–1956.

Heinzelman, Susan Sage, and Zipporah Batshaw Wiseman, Eds. (1994). *Representing Women. Law, Literature, and Feminism. Post-Contemporary Interventions*. Durham: Duke UP.

Heinzelman, Susan (2010). *Riding the Black Ram: Law, Literature, and Gender*. Redwood City: Stanford UP.

Olson, Greta (2012). *Law is not Turgid and Literature not soft and Fleshy: Gendering and Heteronormativity in Law and Literature Scholarship*. Australian Feminist Law Journal 36, No. 1: 65–86.

Olson, Greta and Borchert, Laura (2020). *Narrative Authority, Affective Unreliability, and Transing Law*. Forthcoming in the *Research Handbook in Law and Literature*. Peter Goodrich, Daniela Gandorfer, Cecilia Gebruers, Eds. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.