



## Department of Philosophy

**37<sup>th</sup> Annual Spindel Conference**  
***Decolonizing Philosophy***  
**September 28th-29th, 2018**  
**University Center – Fountain View Room**

**Friday, September 28, 2018**

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|-------------------------|---|
| 10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | Registration and Refreshments   |
| 10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. | Welcome and Introduction<br><b>Michael J. Monahan</b> , University of Memphis   |
| 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | <b>Kris Sealey</b><br>Fairfield University<br>“Pain and Play: Building Coalitions Toward<br>Decolonizing Philosophy”  |
| 12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m. | Coffee Break  |
| 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.  | <b>David H. Kim</b><br>University of San Francisco<br>“Alterity, Analectics, and the Challenges of Epistemic<br>Decolonization”                               |
| 1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.   | Lunch   |
| 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.   | <b>Carlos A. Sánchez</b><br>San José State University<br>“Emilio Uranga and the Decolonial Pretensions of <i>La<br/>filosofía de lo mexicano</i> : A Defense” |
| 3:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.   | Coffee Break  |
| 4:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.   | <b>Lewis R. Gordon</b><br>University of Connecticut<br>“Decolonizing Philosophy Through Critical Theory”  |

**Saturday, September 29, 2018**

10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.	<b>Grant Silva</b> Marquette University “How Comparative Philosophy Can Assist Decolonial Struggle”
11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Coffee Break
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	<b>Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò</b> Cornell University “Rethinking the Decolonization Trope in African Philosophy”
12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.	Lunch
1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	<b>Linda Martín Alcoff</b> City University of New York “Decolonizing Feminist Philosophy”
2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Coffee Break
3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.	<b>Roundtable Discussion</b> “Decolonizing Philosophy?”

## Abstracts

### **Linda Martín Alcoff, “Decolonizing Feminist Philosophy”**

Feminist philosophy is a project analogous in many respects to the project of decolonizing philosophy. The decolonization of philosophy requires the contextualization of master discourses in order to discern the persistent colonial content operating in our most cherished ideas and arguments. Much of feminist philosophy has been working to put context back into philosophy, to understand male embodied experience as working behind common ideas about the self, for example, and to highlight the social location and identity of knowers as part of how real world justification and judgment occurs.

Yet, feminist philosophy’s relationship to decolonial projects is fraught with specific challenges, as this paper will discuss. The current trend toward decolonizing is not simply an add-on of the colonial difference, or an extension of intersectionality to include another form of difference, but an attempt at shifting standard paradigms and methodologies about the way we understand our problematics in regard to gender. Inevitably, the decolonial challenge has generated new questions about how to articulate a transnational feminist agenda based on the imagined collectivity of women.

In the global North, both feminist political practice and feminist theory has been defined in increasingly generic and oppositional terms as resistance to identity itself, or the project of undoing gender, dismantling identities, and escaping cultural scripts. Thus, in the guise of producing an orientation to feminism that will avoid exclusions and recognize difference, this generalized stance of resistance to gender identity has become a new universal with little attempt at either intersectional or decolonial theorization. The argument of this paper is that a uniform take on gender deconstruction needs a decolonial critique. If gender identities are in every case mediated by other vectors of identity categories and communities—changing their form and their degree of intensity---then we need to think through what the intersectional mediations of gender mean for our universal deconstructive politics.

### **Lewis R. Gordon, "Decolonizing Philosophy through Critical Theory"**

This talk will offer some reflections on decolonizing philosophy through an examination of its privileged location in the world of what has become known as "critical theory," the crises of philosophy posed by epistemic colonization, and a reflection on what it means, paradoxically, to do philosophy beyond philosophy.

### **David Haekwon Kim, “*Alterity, Analectics, and the Challenges of Epistemic Decolonization*”**

This paper explores some distinctions and diagnostics to better understand the challenges of decolonizing philosophy. An important contribution to this project is the Decolonial Turn and its insistence that contemporary philosophy is being conducted under the condition of coloniality and that non-Western traditions occupy an analectical, or radically exterior, position relative to mainstream philosophical dialogue.

This paper begins with a critical exploration of an early expression of this view, specifically Enrique Dussel’s critique of Leopoldo Zea. While endorsing many of Dussel’s insights about the analectical status of Latin American philosophies being a result of Latin

America's colonial positionality, I argue that Dussel has underestimated the significance of another challenge to philosophical decolonization, namely the cultural alterity of certain non-Western philosophies, something that does not reduce to the political positionality of an analectical condition. The importance of cultural alterity for this project is most conspicuous in what is widely known as East-West philosophy, where Western philosophers either dismiss classical Asian philosophies as alien and esoteric, or seek to understand classical Asian philosophies precisely because they seem to be culturally anterior yet sufficiently philosophical. A counterpart to this phenomenon is that many mainstream Western philosophers are uninterested in Latin American, some kinds of African philosophies, and various hybridized/"occidentalized" 20<sup>th</sup> century Asian philosophies because they appear to be largely European-derived and seem not to have the kind of cultural alterity that they sense in classical Asian philosophies. From these considerations, we have some context for thinking about worries raised by thinkers like Manuel Vargas and Leigh Jenco that many critiques of Eurocentrism, precisely like those in the Decolonial Turn (as well as subaltern studies), are launched from the very theories that they seek to criticize. The paper concludes with some reflections on two deflationary strategies for dealing with the kinds of challenges to philosophical decolonization raised by these thinkers.

**Carlos A. Sánchez**, "Emilio Uranga and the Decolonial Pretensions of *La filosofía de lo mexicano*: A Defense"

Emilio Uranga's *Análisis del ser del mexicano*, the significant work of 20th century Mexican philosophy, pretends to go beyond Eurocentric philosophy in its analysis of Mexican existence. For this purpose, it searches Mexican poetry and indigenous onto-theology for an articulation of being rooted in history and place, one that is both revelatory and transformative. However, Uranga's philosophical effort (as *la filosofía de lo mexicano* itself) has been dismissed by a subsequent generation of Mexican philosophers that consider it as either a *derivation* of Heideggerian existential phenomenology or as a politically motivated *ideology* in the service of the State. The significance of this is that contemporary critiques, in characterizing Uranga's philosophy as derivative or political, dismiss its philosophical credentials and in the process demean the Mexican philosophical project itself. It is my view that the suspicion that gives rise to the dismissive critique of Uranga's "Mexican" philosophy is framed by coloniality itself and that there is, in fact, much in Uranga's decolonial efforts worth preserving and re-interpreting.

**Kris Sealey**, "Pain and Play: Building Coalitions toward Decolonizing Philosophy"

Given the multiple histories and social locations from which we commit to the work of decolonization, how might we build conditions that are sufficiently attuned to the multiple ways in which our individual identities are always-already shaped in colonial power? And, perhaps most important of all, how might we foreground the plural ways in which our identities position as complicit in that colonial power? These questions take seriously the first premise that we take our historically-constituted identities with us into the coalitions we build. Hence, the question of coalition-building for the sake of decolonization must also take on the question of not only how we understand the production of our identities, but also how we produce relationships (the relationality, if you will) among these historically-constituted identities. In what follows I explore a possible dialogue among three theoretical frameworks out of which we might think through coalition-building against the multiple

forms of oppression that we, ourselves, are shaped by as we collectively work to resist them. The first (and this is in no particular order) is Maria Lugones' account of playful world-travel. The second concerns the practice of un-suturing, developed George Yancy in his recent work on white self-criticality. And the third is Édouard Glissant's notion of opacity in his conception of errantry (as that conception plays out in the formation of the composite community). In bringing these together, I hope to foreground opacity as the cornerstone of an encounter between self and Other, as that encounter figures both in Lugones' account of world-traveling, and in Glissant's account of errantry. I show that, for Lugones, opacity occupies a political register that finds poetic support through Glissant's conceptions. I then use this poetic-politics of opacity to position Lugones' emphasis on play (the playfulness of world-traveling) for dialogue with George Yancy's conception of un-suturing. I do so to show that it is more productive to think of world-travel's play as coupled with un-suturing's pain, rather than to think of these compartments as mutually exclusive. That is to say, it is through the playful attitude's invitation to being de-centered that one might encounter the pain of un-suturing, or of staying within the orbit of the exposure that de-centering brings. Out of the pain-play compartment, our collective commitments to decolonization might result in coalitions that are sufficiently attuned to the workings of colonial power, so as to gesture toward the possibility of alternative (decolonial) worlds.

#### **Grant Silva, "How Comparative Philosophy Can Assist Decolonial Struggle"**

How does one traverse or "compare" philosophical traditions where histories of colonialism (and the persistence of coloniality) produce various forms of cultural, geopolitical, and economic asymmetry? Whereas most comparative efforts typically occur between "East" and "West," ripe comparisons await exploration not only between the global North and South but also, and perhaps more importantly, from "South to South." Insofar as one part of the historical justification for colonization was the denial of wisdom traditions and philosophical perspectives outside the West (or even the "East"), comparative efforts that move contrary to the sense of historical progress that undergirds Western philosophy's self-understanding are attempts at rectifying the epistemic injustices of European colonialism. Such comparisons, however, should take place with an eye towards the kind of vices that plague cross-cultural comparisons (e.g. the over-exaggerated effects of linguistic incommensurability, various forms of epistemic hubris and bias, vices such as "descriptive chauvinism" and "perennialism," as well as comparative efforts that reify political ideologies and paternalistic attitudes at the heart of colonialism). Overall, this essay explores the sense of decentering and sociality necessary for the decolonization of philosophy as well as abandons the notion that comparative philosophy helps one get inside the mind of "the Other."

#### **Olúfẹ́mi Táíwò, "Rethinking the Decolonization Trope in African Philosophy"**

This piece takes a very close look at the contributions of two very important thinkers whose works have, in the main, framed the deployment of what I call the decolonising trope in contemporary African philosophy: Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Kwasi Wiredu. I shall be arguing that, in light of current discussions in African life and politics and current trends in African philosophical discourse dominated by this trope, it may be time to, at least, rethink, if not abandon, the trope.

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Each year, the proceedings of the conference are published as a Supplement to The Southern Journal of Philosophy. Contents and ordering information for prior supplements can be found online at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/page/journal/20416962/homepage/spindel>

**Thank you for your participation in the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Spindel Conference**

