

University of Washington Southeast Asia Center
Graduate Student Conference 2017
24 - 25 March 2017
Call for Papers

The Palimpsestic Past and Present of Southeast Asia: Rewriting Lives Beyond
Boundaries

The Southeast Asia Center at the University of Washington-Seattle is pleased to announce its Graduate Student Conference, which will be held at the Southeast Asia Center (directed by Professor Celia Lowe) on the UW campus in Seattle, Washington, on March 24-25, 2017. In order to commemorate the contribution of Professor Benedict R. O’G. Anderson (1936-2015) to the field of Southeast Asian studies and facilitate constructive engagement with his intellectual legacies, the theme of this conference will be “The Palimpsestic Past and Present of Southeast Asia: Rewriting Lives Beyond Boundaries.”

Professor Anderson, dearly known to Southeast Asianists and Southeast Asians alike as “Ben,” passed away in Indonesia in mid December 2015. Four years earlier, he had given a well-attended talk entitled “Long Live Shame! The Good Side of Nations and Nationalism” at the University of Washington-Seattle. The lecture reflects his intellectual styles and preoccupations throughout his academic life, especially during his last years: the persistence of nationalism in an increasingly globalized world, the interconnectedness between the political and the personal, the predilection for exemplary anecdotes and edifying ironies, and his cosmopolitan introspection which appears fully fledged in his memoir *A Life Beyond Boundaries*.

Interweaving his childhood memory with his insightful reflection on nationalism, Professor Anderson reinvigorates the discussion of the controversial category “nation” by drawing attention to its affective and transhistorical underpinnings. He argues that it is precisely the ghostly imaginings of the dead and the yet-unborn

that place the nation of our own times as a brief transitional event or condition anchored between the past and the future. Such continuity and attachment between different generations become a condition of possibility for shame toward the ancestors and the descendants, a feeling he views as a key to the power of nationalism. His discussion transcends not only the boundaries of academic disciplines but also, by dint of his famous comparativism, those between nations as well as those between the past, the present and the future. In this way, we can understand his lifelong intellectual projects as palimpsests on which texts are inscribed, attenuated, juxtaposed and reinscribed layer upon layer, blurring the demarcation between the old and new ones. His work, in other words, is one of writing and rewriting lives beyond boundaries.

This conference hopes for scholars to engage with these intellectual legacies and habits of thought, and papers that are thematically congruent with Professor Anderson's ideas are most welcome. We also encourage students in various disciplines and fields of study to submit their papers: political science, history, anthropology, philosophy, literary studies, art history, film and visual studies, ethnomusicology, sociology, geography, architecture and urban studies, etc.

Abstracts (up to 500 words) should be sent to the UW Southeast Asia Center (seac@uw.edu) at UW by February 13, 2017. Please make sure to include “SEAC Graduate Student Conference 2017” in the title of your email. Abstracts should include your name, affiliation, discipline and contact information, including email address. A CV would be appreciated but is not required. Applicants will be informed by February 20, 2017 whether or not their papers have been accepted. Only successful applicants will receive an email notification.

We regret that subsidizing the travel expenses of conference attendees will not be possible, but arrangements will be made for UW graduate students to host conference attendees from other universities gratis.

Abstract submission deadline: February 13, 2017