

Call for Papers Stranger 'Things'

Symbols, Objects and Interpretations of Literature and Culture

Graduate Conference in English and the Humanities

Southern Illinois University-Carbondale

February 22-23, 2019

"What we have forgotten is that thoughts and words are conventions, and that it is fatal to take conventions too seriously. A convention is a social convenience, as, for example, money ... but it is absurd to take money too seriously, to confuse it with real wealth ... In somewhat the same way, thoughts, ideas and words are "coins" for real things."

- Alan Wilson Watts

As our world becomes more virtual and less material, the question of what defines a thing, object, or subject becomes progressively more important philosophically and aesthetically. The technological advancements of the internet, self-publishing, and electronic books allow new access to literature, to writers, and to artists while challenging our interpretations of the meaning of things in our lives. The tiny house movement and other campaigns to reduce material clutter encourage us to question the value of the things in our lives and keep only those things that carry genuine meaning—to define our lives by something that reaches beyond objects themselves and enters the realm of the hermeneutic value of those things.

Our twelfth annual AEGIS Conference invites participants to engage in discussions of things—stranger and less strange. Culture is contained in the things we use, the things we create, and the things we interpret. The word 'thing' is, by definition and necessity, vague and encompasses both physical and metaphorical items—units of thought, snippets of meaning, animals, people, chairs, a stage-set. Anything, really, that can be imagined, and some things that perhaps can only be alluded to. Thing theory and its companion theories (semiotics, hermeneutics, cultural studies) ask what happens when the things that make up our shared experiences lose their meaning/use and no longer work for the subject. We encourage broad creative, innovative, and even experimental explorations and approaches to our theme. Possible panel topics include, but are in no way limited to:

Cultural Studies

Thing Theory

'It' Narratives

Architectural Structures in Literature

Structure and Form

Semiotics

Science Fiction and Fantasy

Historicism (New and Old)

Hermeneutics

The Aesthetic

The Traumatic

Geography and Landscape Studies

Product and Process in Composition

In keeping with our commitment to interdisciplinary cooperation, we welcome papers on a wide range of topics on English and the Humanities including cross-disciplinary panels especially from History, Communications, Philosophy, Theater, Education, Fine Arts, and Foreign Language studies and other related areas.

Please send session proposals (~500 words) and/or individual paper abstracts (~250 words) to Sarah Curtis at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale: 1000 Faner Drive, Mail Code 4503, Carbondale, Illinois 62901 or electronically at sarcurt@siu.edu. For electronic submissions, please attach your submission as a Microsoft Word, PDF, or Pages format. The deadline for panel proposals is **January 30, 2018**. Individual paper abstracts are due by **February 15, 2019**.