

**UC Berkeley 6th Annual Comparative Literature Undergraduate Research
Symposium 2017 Theme: un/bounded**

While we accept abstracts of all subjects that fall into the category of “comparative literature,” we especially encourage students to think and present in terms of this year’s theme:

un/bounded

“Unbounded” is a word that contains a multitude of meanings and possibilities; its earliest recorded appearance is in a 1598 Italian-English dictionary *World of Wordes*, which lists “unbounded” as a synonym for “boundless” or “unlimited.” However, in opposition to this notion of illimitability are its etymological roots in the word “bound.” If we remove the prefix “un,” we expose the word “bounded” --- a state of constraint or limitation, that which has its limits marked. Drawing from this idea of demarcation, the concept of boundaries or borders emerges, delineating separations: between the familiar and the foreign, reality and fiction, self and other, among countless other dichotomies.

Boundaries can be spatial and concrete, such as in the case of physical, geographical, natural borders, or man-made walls that migrants and refugees alike scale to gain entrance to a new country. There are also symbolic boundaries: social, psychological, legal, or temporal barriers, invisible as they are oftentimes intangible. What does it mean to traverse a boundary, and what are the stakes in any such movement? How can we view crossing or transgressing borders, either literal or metaphorical ones, as acts of necessity, desperation, subversion, or outright rebellion? Additionally, we might ask if boundaries are always and inherently negative constructions. The word “bound” implies constraint, perhaps by ropes or by shackles, by stifling societal conventions -- but we can also be bound to someone or something in positive and productive ways, such as “bound together in solidarity,” or “in union with mankind.”

Given these multiple valences of “un/bounded,” what does it mean to be bounded or unbounded, and to set, negotiate, or transgress a boundary? Considering the meaning of the word “unbounded” itself as something limitless, is it conceivable to cross, or even surmount, a boundary that presses against limits of time, history, or the human imagination? In what way have boundaries been manifested literarily in the past, what relevance have they for the present moment, and how might they affect the future?

Guidelines: We invite talks to consider how a particular definition and/or aspect of the word “un/bounded,” however you interpret it, plays a role in literature and literary criticism. While it is customary at conferences for presenters to read from a prepared paper, we ask that our presenters engage with their audience by delivering a talk rather than reading from a prepared paper. Talks should be ‘comparative’ in nature, meaning that they examine literature, philosophy, and other critical texts across linguistic, cultural, or national boundaries. Presentations are expected to:

- Run roughly 30 minutes long (20-25 minutes for presentation, 5-10 minutes for audience Q&A and panel discussion)
- Be accessible for an interdisciplinary undergraduate audience
- Be formatted appropriately (e.g. have accompanying diagrams, powerpoints, handouts, etc.). Please note that there is no need to distribute copies of your paper, though we do require that presenters email a copy of their presentation and the accompanying paper to their panel moderator no later than one week before the day of the conference.

Questions?

Please e-mail calcomplit@gmail.com with any queries, concerns, or comments.