

**UC Berkeley 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Comparative Literature Undergraduate Research  
Symposium 2016 Theme: (em)body**

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:

**(em)body**

Theorizations of the body have appeared in discourses across the humanities and social sciences, with theorists like Freud, Lacan, Butler, Derrida, Nietzsche, Merleau-Ponty, Bakhtin, and Descartes having made significant contributions to the definition of the body within their respective disciplines. Whether it is The Bible, Francois Rabelais, John Milton, or Hannah Arendt, the metaphor of the body has transcended any historical or genre constraints to become intrinsically tied not only to literature, but also to the creation of literature. The multi-valence of the word “body” makes it unique in its numerous possibilities of usage. “Body” can refer to both an individual or a collective, a concrete form or an abstraction, an action or a subject.

What is a body, or what constitutes a “body”? What does the term ‘body’ signify? Does the word “body” emphasize the individual over the collective, or vice versa? How does the transition from disparate, individual bodies to a unified, collective social or political body occur? Considering the notion of “embodiment,” we may also ask what it means to embody something.

The conference encourages consideration of historical, cultural, and theoretical perspectives of the body across comparative literatures and media. Think of bodies in contact with one another, bodies in flux, and forms of non-human or posthuman bodies, or the legitimacy of books/works of art as “bodies” as well. If we are to understand the body as an aesthetic product, how do bodies proliferate? How are bodies represented in literary texts, and what is the relation between body and language? What is the role of the body within the construction of the self and the Other? How are bodies shaped by ideological or historical forces?

**Guidelines.** We invite talks to consider how a particular definition and/or aspect of the body, or the formation of bodies, 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 two weeks before the day of the conference.

**Questions?**

Please e-mail [calcomplit@gmail.com](mailto:calcomplit@gmail.com) with any queries, concerns, or comments.