

Call for Papers for WVU EGSU Conference 2018

Strange Matters

Keynote Speaker: Drew Daniel, Johns Hopkins University
“‘Varieties of Untried Being’: Materialism and the Threshold of Life”

In her essay “Posthumanist Performativity” Karen Barad writes that she wants to understand “how matter comes to matter.” New materialist scholars like Barad use “matter” as an anchor, closing in on the physical and metaphysical “matter” of politics, economy, ecology, technology, nature, and art. These scholars are shifting away from a framework of human representation to a framework of phenomena; eliding the anthropological and instead focusing on how they themselves are a part of an interconnected whole. From a literary perspective that “matter” is broadly defined and nebulous in its construction. It’s the coal that is buried in the southern hills of West Virginia in the works of Denise Giardina, the ocean water that surrounded Ahab, and the soundscapes that made up the world of Emily Dickinson; all phenomena that shaped the literature and the lives of the authors as much, if not more than, any human element. These “matters” provide the context of new materialist research and, more broadly, frame their attempts to navigate the perceivable (and often unperceivable, or strange) forces of the world.

The students of the English Graduate Student Union (EGSU) at West Virginia University want to understand this strange “matter” as well. We invite you to join us in investigating this fascinating field of research and in exploring the material world we inhabit. The conference this year will be held March 10th at the West Virginia University downtown campus in Colson Hall. This interdisciplinary conference seeks to look further at the multifaceted ways that we can think of and identify intersections between “matter” and “strangeness,” whether on a local, global, or individual scale. Guiding questions might include: What is strange about “matter”? What are the properties of materiality within a digital landscape? How does the Anthropocene affect our perceptions and evaluation of the material world? Beyond these, we urge you to broadly explore all questions of, or pertaining to, strangeness, “matter,” and the material. You may consider one or many of the following categories, but should not feel limited to them.

- Ecocriticism and Environmental Studies
- American, British, and World Literatures
- Women and Gender Studies
- Critical Race Theory
- Aesthetics
- Liminality and Marginality
- Posthumanism
- Pedagogy
- Disability Studies
- Hemispheric Studies
- Canonicity
- Adaptation and Representation
- Postcolonial Theory and Literature
- Trauma Theory
- Film Studies and Film Theory
- Queer Theory
- Material Culture
- Architecture and Urban Planning
- Digital Humanities
- Sensory Studies

Creative writing panels are also encouraged. Possible panel topics for creative writers might include how writers recognize their position as a part of the phenomenal world, the position or recognition of “matter” within their work, or the influences of outside genres on their work. Please mark in the subject line of your submission email if you will be presenting a creative work.

Proposal abstracts of 250 words should be submitted electronically to egsuconference@gmail.com by February 2nd, 2018. All proposals should include the title of the work, presenter’s name, institutional and departmental affiliation (if available), any technology requests, and a brief bio.

Notification of proposal status will be within one week of the submission deadline.