



Centre for Gulf Studies

2017 EXETER GULF CONFERENCE

Hegemonic Boundaries and Asymmetric Power in the Gulf

Call for papers

10-11th July 2017

In recent decades, scholarship on the Middle East has benefited from a dynamic approach to the relationship between identities and boundaries. The post-structural turn encouraged us to think beyond bounded communities to reveal the interconnections, exchanges and forms of relationality that cross and contest perceived cultural and national boundaries. More recently, the Arab revolutions brought our attention to discourses of liberation throughout the region along with collective challenges to hegemonic power and hopes for new moral communities. While paying heed to the ways in which boundaries are being transgressed and disintegrated, this conference alternatively asks how boundaries have been actively constructed and constituted throughout the Gulf region (Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq) in the production of social, ethnic, linguistic, religious, political and even ontological distinctions. While communities and flows of people regularly transcend enforced and imagined boundaries, the active and conscious formation and maintenance of such boundaries remains a felt social reality. Throughout the region, 2016 has been a year of creating and reproducing hegemonic boundaries as much as it has been one of transgression and mass movement. We ask what role boundaries have played in the formation of identities, distinctions and hierarchies in the Gulf, past and present. What can a renewed focus on boundaries tell us about the use and abuse of power in the region? We invite participants from across various disciplines to critically engage with the concept of the boundary, raising questions as to its materiality and/or immateriality:

- How do boundaries and identities inform one another? Must the term boundary imply a binary distinction between inside/outside, known/other, citizen/alien? How does boundary-making relate to the distribution of social and economic capital, privilege and rights?
- What is the relationship between boundary and the imagination in the construction of difference and the flow of power? What are the conscious and/or unconscious practices and actions through which boundaries are made? What forces create hegemonic boundaries? How are they enacted, embodied or performed?
- How are racial, ethnic, and gender boundaries valorized by institutions such as the state or the 'mosque/matam'. How do different groups actively engage in boundary-making, marking and unmarking their identity, excluding others or refusing exclusivity?
- Is the role of colonialism or imperialism overstated in the construction of boundaries? Does this discourse strip local actors of their agency? Are there other forms of colonialism or imperialism at work?

Possible topics for papers include:

- Gender, sex and identity
- Race, ethnicity, purity, eugenics, biopower, anti-miscegenation
- Class and alienation
- Religious studies
- Public sphere, political participation and citizenship
- Temporal boundaries, age and 'youth'
- Family, household and nation
- Moral communities
- Religion, sectarianism, Sunni-Shi'i counter-distinctions and dialectics
- Rural and urban
- Tribes and states
- Resource management
- Nationalism, citizenship, territory, sovereignty
- Revolutionary and activist movements
- Othering practices and discourses
- Liminality, liminal spaces
- Legal issues and justice
- Immigration, movement and belonging
- Technology, social media, surveillance
- Urban sociology, space and architecture
- Archaeology, materiality, cartography and heritage
- Political economy

The proceedings of the conference will be published in an edited volume by a leading academic press.

How to apply

Interested parties are asked to submit paper proposals (abstracts of 300-500 words), as well as a full CV including affiliation and contact details, before 1st April 2017 to gulfconference@exeter.ac.uk. Candidates whose abstracts are accepted will be notified by 1st May.

Practical Information

All presenters whose papers are accepted for the conference will have their accommodation arranged and paid for by the organizers, as well as all lunches and the conference dinner. Unfortunately we are unable to cover travel expenses to and from Exeter.