

Work: The Politics of Laboring in American History, Graduate Student Conference (Michigan)

Posted on January 21, 2014 by Rosemary Feurer

May 9-10, 2014. This conference will consider the myriad forms of work throughout American history, in order to engage scholarship in a wide range of subfields and disciplines. While race, gender, and class have become assumed and necessary categories of analysis, we offer “work” as a productive avenue for rethinking the politics of laboring. This year’s conference will feature a keynote address by Dr. Cynthia Blair, Associate Professor of History and African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. **Proposal deadline: February 3.**

Farming, selling, creating, producing, reading, believing, policing, organizing, ministering, cooperating, dissenting, buying, writing, and nurturing. This conference will consider the myriad forms of work throughout American history, in order to engage scholarship in a wide range of subfields and disciplines. While race, gender, and class have become assumed and necessary categories of analysis, we offer “work” as a productive avenue for rethinking the politics of laboring. The question of work has been central to subfields such as labor, women’s, and Latino history, but we propose to center work as a useful framework for historians across the broad landscape of colonial American, transnational, and modern US history. This conference will reflect on work in all of its forms, including slavery, waged and unwaged labor, industrial and domestic work, intellectual and cultural production, and the laboring body. We welcome individual paper proposals from graduate students investigating work in all periods of American history. What roles have race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, religion, and related categories played in shaping processes of laboring throughout American history? How might a reconsideration of work augment new scholarship on the history of capitalism?

This year’s conference will feature a keynote address by Dr. Cynthia Blair, Associate Professor of History and African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Dr. Blair studies the intersection of race and sexuality in American society, African

American urban history, and women's history. Her first book, *I've Got to Make My Livin': Black Women's Sex Work in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago*, expands our view of prostitution, as well as black women's labor, the Great Migration, black and white reform movements, the emergence of modern sexuality, and the criminalization of Black women in Chicago who worked as prostitutes in the early twentieth century. The book won the Lora Romero First Book Prize from the American Studies Association.

We encourage **paper proposals** from a wide range of subfields, including political history, labor history, the history of the Atlantic World, African-American history, urban history, legal history, ethnic studies, gender history, labor and economic policy, and the history of U.S. empire and foreign policy. Proposals should include a **300-500 word** abstract and a **one-page c.v.** Proposals should be in the form of individual papers only; a graduate student steering committee will make the selections and assemble the panels. Please direct any questions, and email your application materials, to usgradconference@umich.edu by **February 3, 2014**.

Author



[Rosemary Feurer](#)

Rosemary Feurer is Professor of History at Northern Illinois University. She is the author of *Radical Unionism in the Midwest, 1900-1950*, among other books and essays. She is working on *The Illinois Mine Wars, 1860-1940* and a new biography of Mary Harris "Mother" Jones.