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Transnational Americas: Difference, Belonging, Identitarian Spaces

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National borders and transnational relations have long been of central importance to the Americas. From Simón Bolívar's idea of a "gran patria" to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "Good Neighbor Policy" and the work of the Organization of American States there is a long history of both theoretical and practical approaches to fostering transnational relationships and forms of cooperation. However, U.S. exceptionalism, imperialism and isolationist policies throughout the Western Hemisphere have often overshadowed inter-American relations and prevented approaches beyond dichotomies. In recent decades, massive migration movements, the transnational orientation of media along with the rise of New Media and the onset of the Information Age, an inter-American culture industry, the transnationalization of business and economy, trans-border consumer culture, cosmopolitan writers, artists and performers, governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as transnational alliances like those of the New Indigenous Left have promoted the crossing of multiple borders in the Americas. Yet localist and regionalist tendencies, separatist movements, or gated communities uphold the primacy of smaller entities.

Transnational interconnections are simultaneously being intensified and hampered; they are a highly complex (and a highly politicized) matter. In order to explore the intricate dynamics of transnationalism in the Americas, Border and Transborder Studies, Area Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Popular Culture Studies, Urban Studies, Economics, Sociology, Anthropology, Political Science and numerous other academic disciplines have joined literary, cultural and media studies in initiating a lively and fruitful interdisciplinary dialogue on questions of difference, belonging, and identitarian spaces. Those are central to analyzing the impact of transnational developments on individual, communal, and national identities.

With a focus on past and present transnational developments in the Americas, the conference seeks to conceive of the New World beyond the scope of nation states—relationally and transnationally. Considering shared experiences and issues (e.g. indigenous heritage, Black Atlantic, condition of coloniality, history of inequalities, multicultural societies, transnational media and
economies, glocal approaches etc.) it seems imperative to think in inter-American terms. With this goal in mind, the conference will address the following issues.

Academic Approaches: theories of national, cultural, regional, communal, individual identity and belonging; methodologies for analyzing transnationalism (e.g. the "reciprocal method"); identity politics (Bourdieu, Wacquant etc.); Inter-American Studies as comparative Social, Area, Cultural, Literary, and Media Studies; Ethnic Studies and ethnic identity in the context of transnationalism.