

**Medusa Graduate Conference (Hybrid)**  
**April 2023**  
**Fantasy and Empire**  
CALL FOR PAPERS deadline **March 7,**  
2023

The Anthropology Graduate Student Union (AGSU) at the University of Toronto invites proposals for the 10th annual Medusa Graduate Conference. This year's conference will be hybrid and will take place over three days between 3-5 April 2023.

Medusa's 2023 conference theme is Fantasy and Empire. This theme reflects both long-standing trends in the history of the discipline of anthropology and how the current entanglements in the post-pandemic environment have reworked old and engendered new forms of imperialist fantasies along with a suspended dream of collective emancipation.

As the precursor of the discipline of anthropology, Empire has long been a recursive subject occupying disciplinary discussions and has recently been revived as an expanding and encompassing analytical object. More recently, anthropologists have drawn on fantasy to understand the mythic foundation of imperial ideologies. The post-pandemic world brought the invention of new methods of global governance and, in return, inevitably revealed the connections and multi-layered asymmetries of the global world order during an expansive austerity period. Popular claims to power become indissolubly tied to a desire for mobility, immunity, and access through the reflexive networks of a globalized world, thus rendering fantasy both constituting and constituted by Empire. This fantasy organizes the myriad realms of social life and has a political and affective hold over our imagination of and aspirations for the future. Thus, besides ongoing colonial and settler-colonial projects, or the legacies and histories of the world empires, imperial desire exceeds a set of territorial expansionist aspirations and comes to be entangled with ambiguous but widely shared fantasies that delineate intimate encounters in the everyday. How can we think of the emergent manifestations and entanglements of Empire and fantasy in these different contexts?

Fantasy offers a mode to explore the imaginaries that sustain and shape imperial statecraft. Fantasy, as an analytical tool, forefronts the systems of belief, the negotiation of identity, and the inventions of difference underlying the historical development of empires. As an ethnographic object, fantasy harbours a broad analytical potential and drives us to rethink some long-established methodological boundaries. The imagination of fantasy permits anthropologists to trace cultural and imperial roots in seemingly unlikely places in the present day and the material record alike. Fantasy as a realm of alterity, possibility, emotionality, and alternative temporalities sheds light on the history and future of anthropology as a discipline. Fantasy builds alternatives to the neoliberal present characterized by rumination over lost pasts and future threats of ruination.

**How to Submit:**

Submissions are open to all graduate students in anthropology and associated disciplines. For individual papers and posters, please submit your abstract in the [submission form](#) by **Tuesday, March 7, 2023**. For panel submissions, please submit a proposal as well as the abstracts for each paper on the panel (maximum 4 papers).

Our committee gratefully receives all submissions, including but not limited to works addressing the following themes:

- Fantasy and desire. How do fantasies shape our aspirations?
- Decoloniality as New Imperialism
- Emerging commons and struggles in the ruins of imperialistic formations
- Extractive frontier and revised modes of expansionism
- Social Imaginaries of Crises
- Hope, Fear and Frustration
- Trauma and Conspiracy
- Imaginations of Security, Policing and Future
- Anthropology of the otherwise and the possible
- Myths and ideological foundations of contemporary and historical empires
- The “Post-Truth” Era
- Speculative archaeology
- Archaeology of empire, and the study of colonial archaeology
- Fantasies of human origins

On behalf of the Medusa 2023 Organising Committee, we thank you for your interest and look forward to reviewing your submissions.

If you have any questions, please send them to [medusaconference@gmail.com](mailto:medusaconference@gmail.com)