



# HOW TO DO THINGS WITH DISCIPLINES

Harvard English Graduate Symposium  
November 10-11, 2016

Plenary Speaker: Heather K. Love (UPenn)

*Call for Papers*

Our annual fall Graduate Symposium is an important event in the life of the graduate program, as it provides students and faculty the rare opportunity to think openly and collaboratively about research methods across subfields and specializations. This year's topic, "How To Do Things with Disciplines," occasions us to think about interdisciplinarity—its benefits and pitfalls, challenges and opportunities—in terms both pragmatic and theoretical.

Literary studies is perhaps unique in its openness to borrowing methodological tools from other disciplines, and while graduate students often feel pressure to do "interdisciplinary" work—especially at the dissertation stage—we rarely stop to consider what that means. Moreover, questions of method continue to preoccupy contemporary debates in literary criticism. Standard protocols of reading and interpretation are being called into question at the same time that tools and presumptions derived from adjacent and even non-adjacent disciplines—including sociology, psychology, evolutionary biology, statistics, and the visual arts, among many others—are increasingly being brought into the fold of literary studies.

Our Symposium, then, aims to think through these developments and dilemmas as they arise in our research: What does it mean to work across disciplines? What challenges does that process present? How might our disciplinary training enable us to train ourselves in other fields? How can we produce work that speaks to multiple scholarly communities? And how can we do justice to the disciplines whose methods we integrate with our own?

We invite submissions from students throughout the graduate program to present their current research without regard for subfield, specialization, or seniority. As in previous years, the Symposium should be taken as an opportunity to foreground unresolved problems and unanswered questions, rather than to present a typical conference-style paper. This emphasis on questions over arguments allows for open conversation among students and faculty, and better serves the mission of the Symposium. Professor Love will serve as respondent to all panels.

Please submit a 500-word proposal by 5:00pm on Friday, September 30. All submissions should include an abstract of the presentation (about 250-300 words), along with a brief account of the broader methodological questions you aim to pose and the intended outcome of your research (i.e. article, prospectus, dissertation chapter). Submit proposals for 15-minute papers to [englishcoordinator@g.harvard.edu](mailto:englishcoordinator@g.harvard.edu). And as always, please don't hesitate to reach out to the Symposium coordinator or any member of the steering committee with any questions, comments, or concerns!

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