

Film & Media Studies Grad Conference (Pittsburgh, 19–20 Sep 25)

University of Pittsburgh, Sep 19–20, 2025

Deadline: Jul 15, 2025

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University of Pittsburgh Film & Media Studies Grad Conference 2025.

Marginality is commonly associated with peripheral zones—it evokes images of borders, lines of control, and bare life. It has connotations of being and practising away from the nodal points of power and privilege. While the experiences of imperialism, colonialism, climate crisis, and other geopolitical and ecological catastrophes may shift the contours of marginality over time, marginality is, however, reproduced at the heart of state and society, through processes of exploitation and extraction, by enforcing heteronormative conceptions of gender and sexuality, and routinely criminalizing migrants and minorities. It assumes specific shapes in varying cultural, social, and institutional contexts, bearing traces of specific social environments.

Often referred to as “the stuff you can kick” (Parks, 2015), infrastructures then become the in/visible sites and objects that are organized to produce a larger, dispersed yet integrated system to distribute “materials of value” and further the dominant impressions of varied socio-cultural contexts. Such an understanding of infrastructure that is contingent upon materiality and popular notions of value suspends the creative and transgressive potentials associated with networked arrangements that can emerge from the complexity and diversity characterizing liminal spaces. How do local media infrastructures reproduce and impact marginalities in media practice and reception? We are looking for critical engagements with real practices that will redefine the relationship between marginality and media infrastructures. How much marginality is a product of representation? How does mainstream media represent and/or obscure marginality? How does being on the margin influence the nature of local media infrastructures? How do factors such as piracy, underdevelopment, migration, and displacement shape and reshape the way media forms and devices gain new meaning and purpose? How do filmmakers, artists and media practitioners around the world come up with alternative means of mediation which challenge exploitative notions of marginality?

In our conference, we wish to explore the ways in which the tension between these spaces can be both charted and blurred. We aim to engage with how lives both in the center and margin are shaped by the limitations that marginality brings and, on the other hand, resist these conditions through creative engagement with audiovisual media. We welcome research that talks about actual practices involving the production, distribution, and exhibition of film and media objects. We also seek new theoretical and methodological frameworks which combine film and media theory with methods of political philosophy, art history, political economy, sociology, ecocriticism, queer

theory, critical race theory and so on, to offer fresh insights into the complex configuration of marginal infrastructures.

Date: 19-20 September 2025

Keynote Speaker: Hatim El-Hibri, George Mason University

Mode: In Person

We invite papers which engage with but are not limited to the following topics:

1. Media infrastructure in the margins;
2. Archival analysis;
3. Third cinema and other alternative film movements;
4. Marginality, bare life and film aesthetics;
5. Marginality, liminality and film-philosophy ;
6. War films;
7. Intermediality;
8. Media in the borderzone;
9. Migrant media;
10. Film and media piracy;
11. Cinema and censorship;
12. Political cinema and activist film practices;
13. Film festivals;
14. Media industry and political economy;
15. Media surveillance;
16. Experimental media practices;
17. Disaster media;
18. Media and Anthropocene;
19. Documentary and witnessing;
20. Citizen journalism;
21. DIY media;
22. Viral media;

Interested graduate students should submit abstracts (maximum 300 words) – along with biographies (maximum 100 words), institutional/departmental affiliations, and current email – to pittfilmgradconference@gmail.com by July 15, 2025. For more information, please contact the Pitt Film and Media Studies Graduate Student organization at the following email: mah262@pitt.edu.

Reference:

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