

Updated Call for Papers: *Passing*
Cinema and Media Studies Graduate Conference
University of Southern California
October 23-24, 2020

Keynotes

American Artist, interdisciplinary artist whose work considers black labor and visibility within networked life and has been exhibited the Museum of African Diaspora, San Francisco; the Studio Museum in Harlem; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and Koenig & Clinton, New York

Jian Neo Chen, Associate Professor of English at Ohio State University and author of *Trans Exploits: Trans of Color Cultures and Technologies in Movement*

Sandra Harvey, Assistant Professor of African American Studies at UC Irvine and author of “Passing for Free, Passing for Sovereign: Blackness and the Formation of the Nation”

CFP

Passing is so *passé*, or so we’re told. In “The ‘Empire’ Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto,” Sandy Stone ambivalently articulates a personal and political imperative for transsexuals generally, and male-to-female transsexuals in particular, “to forgo *passing*” and, rather, to transition “to read oneself aloud” (232). For Stone, *passing*, or its necessity, involves the individual and collective scrubbing of enfolded histories, and forecloses the possibility of authentic relationships with others. According to Stone, gender *passing*—as a performance of hegemonic discourses, as a disidentification with gender normativity, as a movement towards new horizons of desire—is analogical to the experience of racial and sexual *passing*, against which people of color, gays, and lesbians have *already* imagined new modes of embodiment, resistance, and solidarity.

Stone’s earnest and urgent call to become posttranssexual—to actively not *pass*—opens problematics of subjectivity, agency, and authenticity that scholars across disciplines have long before and since complicated. In “A New Hope’: The Psychic Life of Passing,” C. Riley Snorton considers how the possibilities of failure, misrecognition, and misidentification inherent to *passing* “serves as a context for the emergence of selfhood” (82). In “Passing for Free, Passing for Sovereign: Blackness and the Formation of the Nation,” Sandra Harvey historicizes *passing* as a system of “the antebellum slave surveillance regime” (13), and the fabrication of *the pass* and its policing as the context through which Black racial *passing* came to signify fugitivity, deception, and freedom across identificatory milieus.

Following Stone, Snorton, and Harvey’s critical readings of the transitivity and transversality of *passing* across gender, race, and sexuality, the *First Forum* Cinema and Media Studies Graduate Conference at the University of Southern California invites emerging scholars, educators, researchers, artists, activists, and community members to consider *passing*, what Snorton identifies “as the practice of moving from an oppressed group to a dominant group” (79) and what we consider as a technology of and against visual, aesthetic, cinematic, televisual, and computational regimes of knowledge.

For us, questions like the following emerge: How do the theoretical approaches to *passing* offered by Black studies, Indigenous studies, Chicana studies, Asian-American studies, trans studies, queer theory, gender studies, feminist theory, and disability theory, among others, shift questions of (good) representation and authenticity fielded by cinema and media studies, and vice versa?

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How have racial, gender, sexual, able, and class *passing* been central to the historical and technical formation of American cinema and spectatorship? Does *passing* open new ways to think about systems of surveillance and capacities to perform opacities?

We invite applicants to think across *passing* both as a minoritarian and minoritizing technique of endurance and resistance, and in its idiomatic forms. How, for instance, do idioms such as “*passing* for,” “*passing* up,” “*passing* through,” “*passing* away,” and “*pass/fail*,” among others, gain their significance and cultural force through common sense understandings, lived experiences, and racialized/racializing and gendered/gendering systems of *passing*?

We take this conference as an opportunity to reflect critically on the disciplinary and cultural inheritances, of *passing* and otherwise, that have been *passed* on to us, and to project the futures that *passing* opens up. How do people and makers tactically (re)appropriate regimes of visibility that produce and are produced by paradigms of *passing* in order to survive, collect, escape, destroy, and (re)build? We welcome proposals that address *passing* from a variety of epistemologies, methodologies, and lived experiences. We encourage Black, Indigenous, person of color, trans, and queer applicants.

Possible topics for exploration include (but are not limited to):

transgender historicity, data doubles, racializing surveillance, ***making a pass***, deep fakes, provisionality, ***pass/fail***, attempts and desire, cinematic codes of passing, bots, borders, ***passing through***, ignorance, cruising, precarity, mourning, ***passing by***, paradigms of success and failure, ***passing away***, deep fakes, identity and identification, ***passing for***, belief, embodiment, unbelonging, ***passing over***, temporality, reading, clocking, rejection, transport, virality, transition, ***passing on***, genealogy, blood, informatic opacity, racebending, whitewashing, death, ***passing up***, interpellation, intimacy, disidentification, refusal, authority, aeriality, afterlives,

The conference will take place over two days. The first day will feature the keynote speaker’s address, with a reception to follow. The second day will showcase the work of participants. We invite scholarly and creative projects: papers, poetry, performances, programs, etc.

We are planning for the conference to be online. We will be in contact with participants about ensuring a disability accessible and technically accessible space.

Submission: Please e-mail an abstract of no more than 300 words for a 15 to 20 minute presentation and a biography (including institutional affiliation, if any) of no more than 150 words. PDF or Word formats are preferred.

Revised Deadline: June 14, 2020, at 11:59 pm PDT

Notification of acceptance: early- to mid-July

Please direct queries to the conference organizing committee at firstforum2020@gmail.com or Harry Hvdson at hgilbert@usc.edu.