



**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**  
**Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life**  
**Ninth Annual National Conference**

**Public Engagement in a Diverse America: Layers of Place, Movements of People**  
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA  
October 2-4, 2008

**Conference Theme**

Imagining America invites faculty, students, and community partners to participate in our October 2008 conference in Los Angeles, hosted by USC. A particular focus will be the diverse layers of people, places, and disciplinary intersections that shape the work of public engagement.

Los Angeles is a world city that attracts and reconfigures people, culture, ideas, and capital from across the globe. It is an urban center, an overlapping convergence of local communities and landscapes - spatial and imagined, urban and suburban, cultural and commercial, racial, ethnic, and generational, religious and ideological, agricultural and preserved wilderness. These layers of place and populations create multi-textured, intersecting, and contested meaning.

We invite conference proposals for seminars, roundtables, workshops, and panels (see descriptions below) on partnerships and projects touching on these topics as they relate to diversity and engagement:

**Layers of Peoples, Places, and Histories:** What is the relationship of colleges and universities to the layers of local life, both evident and submerged, all around them? How can we peel back the strata of these landscapes and histories in order to draw attention to what came before? In what ways can scholars and artists respond to the displacement of peoples and sites that result from the "development" of the university, college, city, or town?

**Social Movements & Diversity:** What role do public scholars and artists play in political and cultural conversations about the meaning of demographic, racial, and ethnic change within rapidly changing communities of all sizes, nationally and internationally? How do scholars and artists contribute to public understanding of social movements that connect or divide people locally and across the nation? How might recent developments in the worlds of politics and culture (the 2008 election, the immigration reform debate, reconfigurations in technologies of communication) reshape the research and artistic agendas of public scholars?

**Engagement across Sectors:** How does scholarship in the humanities and the arts serve as a bridge between colleges and universities and the local, national, and global communities in which they reside? How might collaborations between scholars in the humanities and the arts contribute to public discussion of demographic, social, and political change?

## **Session Formats: Seminars, Roundtables, Workshops, and Panels**

All conference sessions are one and a half hours in length, and should take one of the following formats. Information about poster sessions follows at the end of this Call for Proposals. **Please note: our sessions on Saturday, October 4th, will take place outside of the conference facility, and will meet instead at a cluster of downtown sites of public and cultural engagement. On account of this varied and mobile format, audio-visual equipment (beyond a microphone) will not be available to sessions that meet that day. While there will be audio-visual equipment available to sessions falling on Friday, we cannot guarantee a Friday time-slot for any particular session. Please plan your proposed session accordingly.** Presenters will be informed by the end of June on which day their session will take place, and whether or not audio-visual equipment will be available to them.

**Seminars:** Seminar participants submit an unpublished work or works such as a brief "position paper" (5-7 pages) or an excerpt from a performance. The works will be posted one month prior to the conference on the IA website, and hard copies of papers or synopses of performances will be made available at the conference itself. During the seminar, the leader moderates a discussion about the piece. We intend that these seminars generate immediate exchange of ideas and conversation, assist these works towards publication, and produce networks of scholars who continue to work together beyond the conference. While a single public scholar may submit, we encourage submissions from collaborative and cross-institutional groups. We request that only those who have previously familiarized themselves with the work under discussion attend the seminar.

Seminar proposals include a title for the seminar; contact information of the seminar leader; the work(s) or paper(s) to be discussed; and a four-to-five sentence description of the issues and questions that will be raised in discussion.

**Roundtables:** Roundtables gather a group of participants around a shared concern in order to generate discussion among the roundtable participants and with the audience. To this end, instead of delivering standard conference-length presentation, participants typically deliver short position statements (5-10 minutes) in response to questions distributed in advance by the organizer, or they take turns responding to prompts from the moderator. The bulk of the session is devoted to discussion. Roundtables are limited to no more than five participants, including the organizer. We encourage roundtables involving participants from different institutions, centers, and organizations.

Proposals for roundtables include a title for the roundtable; the organizer's name, title, and contact information; the names and titles of the proposed roundtable participants; and a 3-4 sentence description of the position statements, questions, or debates that will be under discussion.

**Workshops:** Workshops have a facilitator who sets the agenda, poses opening questions, and organizes the activities for the participants. The facilitator is responsible for gathering responses and results from the participants and/or small groups, and helping everyone digest and integrate them into their thinking. Proposals to conduct workshops include not only the facilitator and topic, but also the activities that will be conducted.

For example, in a workshop on "Public History of the Suburbs," the facilitator would describe the topic and give some opening remarks (5 minutes). She might then break the audience into groups and ask each group to brainstorm a list of five key principles for organizing a community partnership in this setting. After 15 minutes, a reporter from each group would then give the results, typically written by the facilitator on a chalk board or easel. Then it's time for critique and second stage, for example, moving on

to typical obstacles, resource challenges, and so forth. We intend that this process produce substantive and useful conclusions to all participants.

Workshop proposals include a title for the workshop; the organizer's name, title, and contact information; and a 4-5 sentence description of the topic or issue that will be under discussion.

**Panels:** Panels take the format of a team or individuals presenting their work and experiences, leaving at least a full half-hour for questions and inclusive discussion. Before submitting a panel, we urge you to consider whether your proposed subject matter could be adapted to one of the previous formats.

Panel proposals include a title for the panel; the organizer's name, title, and contact information; the names, titles, and affiliations of all panelists; and a 4-5 sentence description of the panel's topic.

### **The Deadline and Destination for Conference Proposals**

Send all proposals in electronic format only to Juliet Feibel at [jufeibel@syr.edu](mailto:jufeibel@syr.edu) by **Friday, April 25, 2008**. The Program Committee will send out responses by May 15th.

### **Poster Presentations**

Often, our conference attendees are part of wonderful partnerships or are conducting research projects that don't fit well with the annual theme or the issues driving the conference sessions. We offer the opportunity to present these projects in a poster or table-top format, a display of the project or research. Such a display is usually a mixture of a brief narrative description, intermixed with photographs, organizational or historical charts, maps, and other presentation formats. Brochures or hand-outs may be available for distribution, or the presenter might display a presentation or DVD on her laptop. Poster presentations ideally articulate a project and its significance without its author being present. We will, however, designate a time in the conference program for presenters to attend their display and meet interested people, answer questions, and talk about their work.

Presentation space is limited to conference participants and to projects that involve public scholarship in the arts and humanities, or work that engages Imagining America's research and policy agenda. A project may be at any stage of development. As always, there will be table space available for participants who simply want to distribute information or display publications.

To submit a proposal for a poster presentation, please send a brief description of your project and how it will be displayed in electronic format only to Juliet Feibel at [jufeibel@syr.edu](mailto:jufeibel@syr.edu) by **Friday, April 25th, 2008**. Responses will be made by June 30, 2008. Space is limited: if you do not require an entire table, we would appreciate you requesting only half. We will take the liberty of consolidating smaller displays if need be. We are not able to provide A/V equipment or electrical points for table top displays.