



**Interrogating Self-Care:
Bodies, Personhood, & Movements in Tumultuous Times**

*A Graduate Student Conference on Gender, Culture, Women & Sexuality
March 29th & 30th, 2019*

CALL FOR PAPERS

In her 1988 book *A Burst of Light*, Audre Lorde said, “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare.” The concept of self-care, which arose through the activist practices specifically of marginalized groups, has been increasingly adopted and discussed by health care settings, non-profit organizations, commercial and marketing enterprises, and psychological approaches. National discourse around self-care has increased exponentially since the 2016 presidential election. Yet, few academics have explored the theory, implementation, and impacts of this concept. While many advocate for cultures and movements where we can embrace Lorde’s philosophy as a radical act, others contend it has been co-opted through commodification, cultural appropriation, and self-indulgence.

This conference seeks to explore:

- How can the practice of self-care benefit or hinder activism for social justice and/or life in the academy?
- What is the place of community-based care?
- What are the different modes of identity or power that allow an individual to have access to self-care?
- What are the social or cultural politics of self-care?
- How do questions of race and racism, disability, and gender impact the politics of self-care?

Topics to be explored in papers and presentations may include (but are not limited to):

- Activism (e.g., disability and accessibility, LGBTQIA+ communities, history and rise of social justice movements, activist burnout, incarceration and/or prison abolition)
- Cultural practices and cultural appropriation (e.g., yoga, sage burning, meditation, herbalism, religious/spiritual practices)
- Body positivity (e.g., self-esteem, self-image, fat activism, erasure of trans bodies)
- Labor (e.g., emotional labor, under or unpaid labor, exploitation of care-giving, single parent households, labor of appearance, global care chain)
- Business (e.g., work-life balance, commercialization of self-care, capitalism and profiteering from self-care techniques/practices)
- Displacement (e.g., housing crisis, refugees, migration, (un)documented immigration, DACA, TPS)
- Health issues (e.g., health care access, mental health access, food access, self-diagnosis, acute and chronic medical conditions, impacts of trauma)

- Social media and communications (e.g., semiotics of hashtags, #treatyourself, #selfcare, exposure to 24-7 news cycle, transnational dissemination of information, global reach of social media)
- Policing bodies (How the intersections of identity - race, sex, gender, sexuality, ability, class, age, political affiliation, religious beliefs, spirituality practices, etc - and society/culture can impact the implementation of self-care)

We welcome proposals for papers and/or projects (i.e. paintings, sculptures, film, performances, poetry/literature, songs) from graduate students of all disciplines that explore issues of marginality, repression, the conflict between self and society, and resistance through the lenses of gender and/or sexuality.

Academic Paper Submission: Paper submissions should be for 15-minute presentations. Please submit a 250-300 word abstract to <http://tinyurl.com/2019GCWS> by Friday, January 4, 2019.

Submissions should also include your name, program, university affiliation, e-mail address, a short bio (3-5 sentences), three to six keywords, and any audio/visual requirements. Participants will be notified about the status of their proposal no later than January 21, 2019. The conference itself will be held on March 29-30, 2019.

Projects: Project proposals should include a 250-300 word abstract as well as your name, program, university affiliation, e-mail address, a short bio (3-5 sentences), three to six keywords, and any audio/visual requirements. Also include the scale and duration of your piece (if relevant), as well as space or presentation preferences. Lastly, please provide a web link to relevant visual, audio, portfolio, or support materials (no more than 5 images or 5 minutes of audio or video). Please submit this to <http://tinyurl.com/2019GCWS> by January 4, 2019.

Note: The conference will be held in an academic building at MIT that is not normally used or set up for some art displays or performative works. The building has outlets in the classrooms and common spaces. Video projectors and screens are in the classrooms. Individuals with projects that have tech requirements beyond this will need to bring their own materials. Accepted projects will be programmed into the conference schedule by the selection committee. If you have a specific vision for how you would like your project to be included please note that in your abstract. Those with accepted projects will be able to schedule site visits.

All participants will be notified about the status of their proposal no later than Monday, January 21, 2019.

For more information contact the Consortium for Graduate Studies in Gender, Culture, Women, and Sexuality at gcws@mit.edu and <http://web.mit.edu/GCWS>.