

The Centre for the Study of Theory & Criticism at Western University

2026 Annual Theory Conference

Raising a Mirror to the University:

Theory and the Canadian Institution

CALL FOR PAPERS (CFP)

Submission Deadline: February 20th, 2026

The Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism at Western University is pleased to announce our in-person 2026 Annual Theory Conference, an event that will also commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Theory Centre. The Conference will take place from **Thursday, April 23 - Friday, April 24 2026**.

The theoretical objective of the conference is twofold. Our first objective is centered around the ceremonious occasion of the CSTC's 40th anniversary. This occasion allows us to foreground theory as an intellectual tradition and academic practice that has shaped the Canadian university. This comes at a critical time when the programs of the humanities and social sciences within the university are being challenged across the country by austere policies and ideologies that have increasingly favoured more practical (or profitable) disciplines. This poses the broader question of the university's role as a public institution, as well as the function that it ought to play in contributing to broader social goods such as culture, aesthetics, and democracy.

Our second objective is centered around the problematic of Canadian identity. Building off our first objective, this conference aims to provide a ground for theorists and critical scholars to consider theory's role in shaping the various institutions that affect Canadian identity. This comes at a time when the question of national identity has taken center stage within political discourse and has been continuously leveraged by power players to achieve political outcomes within Canada. In posing this question, our conference aims to establish space for critical theory to engage with the public discourse in ways that are both nationally situated and generative of a Canadian intellectual tradition not necessarily tied to national frameworks.

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- The role of theory within/outside the university
 - Theory as praxis; theory and hegemony
 - The question of theory and practice
 - The Canadian intellectual tradition (Canada's successes and failures)
- The commodification of the university
 - Historically contingent vs structurally necessary
 - The division of disciplines and the defunding of the humanities
 - Democracy and Capitalism, the University as a site of struggle
- The question of Canadian Identity
 - Canadian self-conception: One or many or (no) Canadas?
 - Literature and Canadian Identity (e.g., Frye's 'garrison mentality'; Atwood's 'Survival')

- Negation of Americanism; Canadian identity in an era of declining American hegemony
- Mosaic vs. Melting Pot; Cultural Diversity vs. Cultural Difference (immigration and the Canadian University)
- Localized cultural identities
- Theory, Indigenous Sovereignty and Decolonization
- Does Canada have a national question?

The Annual Theory Conference endeavours to cultivate a forum for diverse engagement from graduate students and scholars with a broad range of backgrounds and approaches. This year we are seeking submissions across the humanities and social sciences that deal critically and theoretically with problems related to the university and national identity in a Canadian context.

Submission Instructions:

Submissions will undergo anonymous review. Please submit proposals as a .docx or .pdf file to cstc-conference@uwo.ca. Accepted candidates will be notified by email. Please submit:

1. A cover page that includes: the title of your proposed presentation, your name, affiliation(s), email address, a brief (150-200 word) bio, and 3-5 keywords for your presentation
2. A separate document that includes: the title of your presentation and an abstract of 150- 200 words describing the intentions of your presentation.

Thank you to all who apply!



Conference Committee

2026 Annual Theory Conference

cstc-conference@uwo.ca

The Centre for the Study of Theory & Criticism

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We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabek (Ab-nish-in-abeek), Haudenosaunee (Ho-den-no-show-nee), Linaapéewak (Len-ahpay- wuk) and Chonnonton (Chun-onke-ton) Nations, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society.