

The 'knowers' of international studies: Radical intersectionality and collective imagining from the margins

Wednesday, 5 June 2024 15:00 (1h 30m)

Cynthia Enloe reminds us that “no individual or social group finds themselves on the ‘margins’ of any web of relationships...without some other individual or group having accumulated enough power to create the ‘centre’ somewhere else” (2004). International Relations is no different: there are central approaches with significant disciplinary power and marginalised approaches that get disregarded. There are, however, approaches and attention to spaces and people made marginal by dominant IR that have flourished despite (or because) of this disregard. Many of the empirical, theoretical, conceptual, and methodological questions asked in these incredibly rich but often marginalised approaches are not just academic, but existential for those who are made marginal, devalued, dismissed, excluded.

Too often identities and people who are ‘marginal’ are also siloed, to be dealt with and disciplined in isolation. Queer theorist Cathy Cohen encourages us to perpetually interrogate all relations to power and to encourage us to ceaselessly reflect on the boundary-making and hierarchy-generating work our scholarship does precisely because it has political effects. As a discipline, IR for a long time studied a period — and still studies institutions founded in this period — dominated by a narrative of “never again”. One might say there was an implicit hopeful politics at play, particularly in peace research.

Taking aim as disciplinary hierarchies but moving forward with an explicit hopefulness, this panel refuses practices of division and isolation and instead asks what might IR be from the margins? Reframing this engagement as a radical intersectionality, this roundtable brings together scholars working with communities and issues rendered marginalised by disciplinary norms. We invite participants to be unruly and undisciplined in their contributions to a conversation about power and ‘who gets to know’ in the discipline, that directly addresses the BISA theme of ‘whose international studies?’.

The panel brings together scholars working at intersections of gender, youth, decolonial, queer, disability, migrant rights and issues to discuss how we can nurture solidarity in resistance to the competition that disciplinary norms foster, and collectively imagine beyond silos what an inclusive future of IR might look like.

Track Classification: Gendering International Relations Working Group