



Centre for Gulf Studies

30th EXETER GULF CONFERENCE

Beyond Oil, Sheikhs and Security:
Plotting New Trajectories in Gulf Studies

2-3 July 2018

Call for Papers

This year we celebrate the 30th Gulf Conference at the University of Exeter. Taking this as an occasion to reflect on the state of our field, the aim of this Conference is to explore the identity and viability of the very notion of Gulf Studies.

Our knowledge of the Gulf region has been produced through a range of political and academic discourses and has served to promulgate a number of prevalent theoretical metonyms, such as rentierism, tribe/state relations, sectarianism, soft power and security-orientated paradigms. Due to the difficulty of fully disentangling research on the Gulf from economic and geopolitical interests, these discourses have contributed to the reinforcement of international and local hierarchies of knowledge and power. In recent years, however, Gulf Studies has undergone a number of substantial changes. While this theoretical metonymy still exists, the cultivation of the Gulf as a distinct academic field has been fuelled by rising disciplinary eclecticism, cross-fertilisation, and the diversification of knowledge production. We invite participants from across the social sciences and humanities to critically reflect on the current state of the field, asking such questions as:

- How has the Gulf been discursively constructed as an area of study? To what extent has theoretical metonymy discouraged conceptual innovation?
- Has Gulf Studies been adequately integrated into the broader humanities, social sciences and related disciplines?
- To what extent does challenging and deconstructing 'Gulf exceptionalism' run the risk of forfeiting the Gulf as a unique object of study? What may be unique to the region that makes it a distinct and worthy unit of study or that justifies its continued theoretical metonymy?

- What issues exist regarding access to 'the field' and does this privilege or limit certain voices over others?
- In what ways does the abundance of financial capital in the region interact with the marketisation of academia in terms of funding? How does it impact the production of academic knowledge in and of the Gulf or retrench particular academic tropes and research foci?
- Is Gulf Studies positioned to meet the post-Arab Uprisings environment? Is the field ready to embrace change and social justice and contribute towards more inclusive societies?

Possible topics for papers include:

- Historiography of Gulf Studies
- Disciplinary diversification
- Coercion and complicity
- Academia and policy
- Illegality, red-lines and constraints
- Marketisation of scholarship
- Funding and control
- Role of think tanks
- 'Self-censorship'
- Publishing and distribution
- Ethics, responsibility and knowledge-production
- Fieldwork and access
- Gender
- Public Relations and propaganda

How to apply

Interested parties are asked to submit paper proposals (abstracts of 250-300 words), as well as a full CV including affiliation and contact details, before 15 April 2018 to:

gulfconference@exeter.ac.uk.

Candidates whose abstracts are accepted will be notified by 1st May.

Practical Information

All presenters whose papers are accepted for the Conference will have their accommodation arranged and paid for by the organisers, as well as all lunches and the Conference dinner. Unfortunately we are unable to cover travel expenses to and from Exeter.