

The Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies at Indiana University announces its twenty-third annual Bloomington Spring Workshop (May 15-17, 2025)

Eighteenth-Century Afterlives

Eighteenth century? –that’s ancient history! Bring on tomorrow! Or, if you must dwell on the past, tell me about the Cold War, the end of the Cold War, and the creation of a post-neoliberal crypto-colonial financialized racialized techno world order.

And yet: The eighteenth century lives on.

The eighteenth century endures as a cultural reference point, a foundation myth, and (most crucially for our purposes) a vibrant field of interdisciplinary study. Not all myths are bad. People (especially American academics in the twenty-first century) may need myths by which to live, even as they recognize their distortions and omissions and even as they strive to build a better, less mythical, reality today.

Why study the eighteenth century? One answer surely lies in its resonance in contemporary culture, from Youtube channels devoted to eighteenth-century cooking, to appropriations of Jane Austen’s novels to various forms of originalism and “Founder chic.” Across the political spectrum, the long eighteenth century has a certain allure—either from its perceived distance (otherness), proximity (identity), or paradoxically, some combination of both. Others, however, might well insist that the eighteenth century’s most important legacies are those ignored, even repressed, by mass culture: human-driven climate change, “scientific” racism and sexism, imperialism of various forms. And still others might argue that ideas, modes of expression, or genres developed and then abandoned in the long eighteenth century are ripe for revival in our own moment of political, social, and industrial-artistic upheaval.

We look forward to reading your abstracts and ideas. A non-exhaustive list of potentially relevant topics might include:

- Silent revolutions, “tipping points,” or turning points set in the eighteenth century
- 18C politics and our own assumptions about a Left-Right (radical-conservative) political spectrum
- Automata and AI
- Conspiracy thinking, then and now
- Eighteenth-century racial thinking and abolitionism in the era of Black Lives Matter and renascent eugenicism
- “rights talk” in the eighteenth century and now
- Periodizing the Anthropocene
- Austeniana and the “Janite” phenomenon
- *Hamilton*, *Bridgerton*, *Outlander*, and other pop cultural phenomena
- Strategic presentism or strategic anachronism

During the Workshop, we will discuss pre-circulated texts (due in mid-April) and perhaps have an occasional lecture or visit to a library, museum, or archive. We are especially open to co- and multi-authored contributions, including those that work across hitherto conventional boundaries of genre, discipline, and media. We hope that participants will be present for the entire event but anticipate making provision for some online participation as well.

The application deadline is Friday, January 31, 2025. Please send a paper proposal (1-2 pages) and current brief CV (3 pages, max) to Dr. Barbara Truesdell, Administrator, Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies. Please e-mail to voltaire@iu.edu

We will acknowledge all submissions within a fortnight. If you do not receive an acknowledgment by February 9, 2025, please e-mail voltaire@iu.edu or the Center's Director, Jesse Molesworth (jmoleswo@iu.edu).

Papers presented at the Workshop will be selected by an interdisciplinary committee. We reimburse most expenses for visiting scholars: accommodations, travel (up to a certain limit), and most meals. Expanded abstracts and/or entire papers may be published in the Center's online open-access journal *[The Workshop](#)*, along with discussion transcripts or summaries.