

How International, Transnational, and Global History Conquered the World

-- A Conference in Honor of Adam McKeown --

November 30-December 1, 2018

Columbia University

Co-Sponsored by Weatherhead East Asian Institute, ISERP, Columbia's History Department and the Heyman Center

During his all-too short career, Adam McKeown had a major impact on the study of Asia, and helped to reorient "area studies" scholarship to explore cross-regional connections in a more global context. He also changed the way scholars understand migration, especially how legal and regulatory regimes affect -- and are affected by -- the movement of millions of individual people. And he had a lasting influence on how we research and teach international and global history more generally, such as by creating innovative new masters and Ph.D. programs, while at the same time connecting historical scholarship with multiple disciplines, especially sociology and international law. His decision to leave the academy in 2012, when his influence was just beginning to help bring about institutional change, compels us to consider how pressures for professionalization can discourage scholars from undertaking bold and important work.

We are therefore proposing a conference that would convene at Columbia in September 2018 to focus on three intersecting areas: how we understand Asia in the world, what history can tell us about the future of global migration, and how the academy can encourage path-breaking scholarship. The conference would be a rare opportunity to bring together scholars who share these concerns, which have never been more timely. A hallmark of all McKeown's work was its undeniable ambition. This conference will therefore challenge participants to "think big."

Friday Morning: Global Asia

McKeown challenged an academy that has structured the world in terms of "Area Studies," at least since the Cold War. His pioneering research brought together diverse geographies and historiographical traditions, and served as a testimony to his dedication to thinking about Asia within a global context. He advocated a scholarship that transcended national boundaries, while remaining faithful to linguistic complexities and cultural particularities. McKeown's revisionist framework helped a new generation of scholars expand their nationally bounded limits, and search for meaningful comparisons and unconventional links between supposedly disconnected world regions. This session will bring together scholars who work on Asia within a global context. It will offer a platform to discuss the historiographical value of "Global Asia," and will probe how thinking globally may change conventional understandings of national histories. What can the *long durée* tell us about historical change and the transmission of matter, disease, and thought? How do peripheral interactions between empires and nations, circulation of scientific and technological apparatuses, and social, cultural, and political dynamics translate from one context to another? What do we gain and what might we lose in adopting these approaches?

Friday Afternoon: Global Migration

While McKeown focused on the Chinese diaspora, his work on migration concerned mobility in all its dimensions, including migration routes, rituals of border control, the meaning of passports and visas, labor mobility and regulation, as well as the function of international law within domestic and international arenas. McKeown showed how migration and mobility control shaped global norms concerning national borders, democratic governance, liberalism, and sovereignty. The geographical scope of his analysis extended from China to Hawaii and Peru, and from the U.S to Southeast Asia, India, and South Africa. McKeown's work on passports, borders, and migration control influenced scholars well beyond Asia and has helped to create new arenas of study. This session will focus on global mobility controls and social networks and diasporas. It will consider the relationship between mass migration, free labor and domestic and international mobility controls. Where does the study of migration go now? And while McKeown was famously reluctant to offer policy prescriptions, are scholars duty-bound to address the gathering movement *against* global migration?

Saturday Morning: Coloring Outside the Lines -- How the Global, International, and Trans-Regional Conquered a Reluctant Discipline

Though he chafed at the idea that he was an institution builder, McKeown's most important legacy may be to have helped build institutional support for scholars who -- like him -- struggled with the way academics divide up the world. To be sure, this was a broad movement that built over a generation, but McKeown was at the forefront. And he played a pivotal role in creating a masters degree program, a Ph.D. track, and a book series in international and global history, and all this at a time when there were few if any models for supporting this kind of work. He was also influential in the World History Association and in a variety of collaborative forums that have promoted the rise of non-area-studies scholarship, such as the Journal of World History and the Journal of Global History. Thanks in no small measure to his leadership and example, world history has matured from a teaching field to the cutting edge of the historical discipline. But could this cut both ways, and should we be wary of how academic fashions and institution-building might channel and constrain new inquiries?

Saturday Afternoon Roundtables: Working Across Academic Disciplines and Conventions

McKeown died a century after Weber gave his lecture on "Science as a Vocation." It emphasized specialization, professionalization, methodological rationalization, and measurable progress as hallmarks of modern science. McKeown resisted these impulses, and encouraged his students to put passion for a project above all other considerations. He was able to connect with people working on radically different topics, unwieldy geographies, and across multiple disciplines. How can the academy encourage risk-taking and resist careerism?

Schedule

Friday, November 30, 2018

Session I: Global Asia

9:00-9:30 Breakfast

9:30-9:45 Opening Remarks

Roundtable: McKeown's Impact on the Study of Asia 9:45-10:45

Moderator: Eugenia Lean (Columbia) eyl2006@columbia.edu

-John Chen (Columbia) jtc2148@columbia.edu

-Tansen Sen (NYU Shanghai) ts107@nyu.edu

-Eric Tagliacozzo (Cornell) et54@cornell.edu

10:45-11 Coffee Break

Panel of Research Papers: New Directions in the Study of Global Asia 11:00-1:00

-Bin Yang (University of Macau) binyang@umac.mo

-Sheetal Chhabria (Connecticut College) schhabri@conncoll.edu

-Martin Fromm (Worcester State) mfromm@worcester.edu

-Kyoungjin Bae (Kenyon College) kyoungjinbae@gmail.com

Discussant: Arne Westad arne_westad@hks.harvard.edu

1:00-2:00 Lunch

Session II: Global Migration

Roundtable: McKeown and the Study of Migration 2:00-3:00

- David Cook-Martin (Sociology, Grinnell) cookd@grinnell.edu

- Rebecca Kobrin (Columbia) rk2351@columbia.edu

- Jose Moya jmoya@barnard.edu

3:00-3:15 Coffee Break

Panel of Research Papers: Migration Studies, Where Do We Go Now? 3:15-5:15

-Aimee Genell (University of West Georgia) agenell@westga.edu

-Andre Kobayashi Deckrow (Columbia) akd2120@columbia.edu

-John Straussberger (Florida Gulf Coast University) jstraussberger@fgcu.edu

Discussant: Mae Ngai mn53@columbia.edu

6:00 Dinner

Saturday, December 1, 2018

Session III: Coloring Outside the Lines: How the Global, International, and Trans-Regional Conquered a Reluctant Discipline

9:00-9:45 Breakfast

Roundtable: McKeown as Institution Builder 9:45-10:45

Moderator: Matt Connelly (Columbia)

-Patrick Manning (Pittsburgh) pmanning@pitt.edu

-Arne Westad (Harvard) arne_westad@hks.harvard.edu

-Heather Streets-Salter (Northeastern) h.streetsalter@northeastern.edu

10:45-11 Coffee Break

Panel of Research Papers: So What IS Global, International, and Transnational History -- And What Could it Be? 11:00-1:00

-Sam White (Ohio State University) white.2426@osu.edu

-Chris Low (Iowa State) low@iastate.edu

-Jack Neubauer (Columbia University) jmn2151@columbia.edu

Discussant: Richard Bulliet (Columbia) rwb3@columbia.edu

Lunchtime Discussion: Informal Reflections on McKeown as a Student, Teacher, and Colleague 1:00-2:00

Guy Alitto (Chicago) galitto@uchicago.edu

Line Lillevik (Columbia) ll2529@columbia.edu

Session IV: Working Across Academic Disciplines and Conventions

Organizer: Ira Katznelson iik1@columbia.edu

Roundtable: A Historian's Place Among the Disciplines 2:00-3:00

Moderator: Ira Katznelson (Poli Science and History, Columbia) iik1@columbia.edu

- John Torpey (Sociology and History, CUNY) jtorpey@gc.cuny.edu

- Lauren Benton (Law and History, Vanderbilt) lauren.benton@vanderbilt.edu

- Sam Moyn (History, Yale) samuel.moyn@yale.edu

3:00-3:15 Coffee Break

Panel of Research Papers: In Search of Interdisciplinarity in Global History 3:15-5:15

- Andrew Liu (Villanova) andrew.liu@villanova.edu

- Owen Miller (Bilkent) owenmiller81@gmail.com
- Meha Priyadarshini (University of Edinburgh) meha.priyadarshini@gmail.com
- Ulug Kuzuoglu (Columbia University) uk2123@columbia.edu

Discussant: Caterina Pizzigoni (Columbia University) cp2313@columbia.edu

6:00 Dinner