Identifying Value(s) in Literature, Culture, and Society
20 ─ 21 June 2019

In November 2018, US Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis defended the deployment of thousands of troops along the Mexican border as an "obviously moral and ethical mission". In doing so, he aligned the enforcement of sovereignty through rigorous policing of borders as a specifically moral value. However, the criticism of the Trump administration's border policy for violating US and family values provides a contradictory interpretation of what constitutes moral values. Despite the implication that values constitute a set of universally agreed principles, the controversy over the US-Mexican border is only one example that value is anything but ubiquitous. Common Ground invites scholars to Queen's University Belfast in June 2019 to explore **what we value, who we value, and why we value them**. We seek to pull apart the concept of value to expose the multifaceted ideologies and rationalities from which competing values are derived. At the most basic level, the nationalist rhetoric deployed by Mattis and by Brexiteers poses the question of **who has value to a nation**. And often the individual's value is predicated upon the economic concern of how they can add value to the nation. As such, nationalist rhetoric reveals the tension between the two most prominent understandings of "value" that dominate political and ethical discourse—morality and economics.

We are delighted to confirm **Dr Kevin Power** of Trinity College Dublin and **Professor Margaret Topping** of Queen's University Belfast as keynote speakers.

We seek proposals for twenty-minute papers from postgraduate and early career scholars across a diverse range of disciplines in the humanities to explore the negotiation between different conceptualisations of value and values in literature, culture, and society from the Medieval period to present day, including **moral, economic, mathematical, linguistic, environmental, literary, and aesthetic values**. We would especially like to encourage papers from MA students. Potential topics include but are not limited to:

- What are the identifying values of a society and how are these conveyed, questioned, or challenged through literature and/or culture?
- How does economic value influence questions of literary and artistic value?

- The tension between economic value and environmental values.
- Are values spontaneously generated by people in society or are values created and regulated by the state?
- To what extent is the public value of the Humanities under threat? How do we measure literary value, artistic value, value of popular culture, etc?
- The value and impact of religious thought and/or religion-derived morality in literary works and an increasingly secular society.
- The negotiation of the conflict between artistic value and moral values: reading the work of authors whose behaviour is unacceptable.
- The value of natural/artificial landscapes and boundaries as the result of a chain of social, historical and natural processes.
- Family values and pedagogical values.
- Post-truth and the value, exploitation, or weaponisation of "truth".
- The value and exploitation of emotions.
- To what extent is the individual defined by the values of others, or defined by that which others value?
- The valuation of gender/sexuality/queerness.
- What value is given to identity and how does this change across historical time periods?
- To what extent does literature shape moral, social, and individual values.
- The value of politeness/manners/political correctness.
- Value of progress ─ how do we measure "progress" whether social, political or economic?

Please submit all proposals to commonground2019@outlook.com by **31 March 2019**.

Submissions should include:
- 250-word abstract
- Brief bio
- Contact details (email address)

We aim to respond to all submissions by 12 April.

Please advise us of any technical or accessibility requirements at the time of submission.

Common Ground 2019 Committee

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