

BEYOND HUMAN

Unruly Senses of Being, Knowing, and Feeling Existence

2026 UCSD Literature
Graduate Conference

May 15-16
La Jolla, CA



CALL FOR PAPERS

UCSD LITERATURE DEPARTMENT GRADUATE STUDENT CONFERENCE

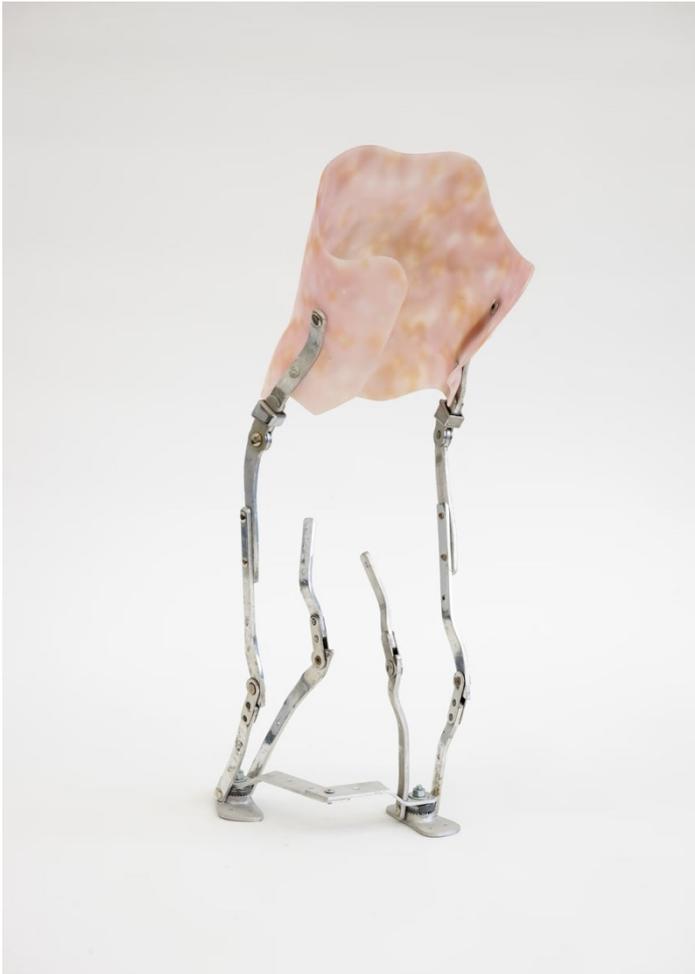
"Our contemporary moment is so replete with assumptions that freedom is made universal through liberal political enfranchisement and the globalization of capitalism that it has become difficult to write or imagine alternative knowledges, to act on behalf of alternative projects of communities. Within this context, it is necessary to act within but to think beyond our received humanist tradition and, all the while, imagine a much more complicated set of stories about the emergence of the now, in which what is foreclosed as unknowable is forever saturating the 'what-can-be-known.' We are left with the project of visualizing, mourning, and thinking "other humanities" within the received genealogy of 'the human.'"

— Lisa Lowe, "The Intimacies of Four Continents"

"First of all, indigenous peoples have never forgotten that nonhumans are agential beings engaged in social relations that profoundly shape human lives. In addition, for many indigenous peoples, their nonhuman others may not be understood in even critical western frameworks as living."

— Kim TallBear, "An Indigenous Reflection on Working Beyond the Human/Not Human"

The differentiation between who is thought to be human and non-human has been a longstanding debate within the humanities and sciences. Indeed, the idea of the human continues to be a genuine problem, despite the efforts and contributions of scholars and writers through theories of Blackness, animism, decoloniality, indigeneity, disability, cybernetics, environmentalism and beyond. These efforts show, however, how the category of "the human" itself has been thoroughly demarcated by race, sex, class, and ability. The new humanisms proposed by the academy—the post, anti, and



Berenice Olmedo, Eugenia (2021)

HKAFO (Hip, knee, ankle, foot, orthosis), KAFO polypropylene corset, and Denis Browne splint.

possible? Sylvia Wynter's proposal of "homo narrans," which identifies a post-biocentric idea of humanity, arguing that humans are fundamentally storytelling creatures (a trait which AI attempts, but can never fully realize), offers a potential intervention. **Beyond human** welcomes researchers, theorists, and artistic practitioners who are engaged in interweaving creative elements of storytelling in a variety of genres and modes of expression. We encourage conference participants to propose creative workshops, performances, gallery installations, as well as presentations on literary scholarship and/or theoretical thought. Interactive and interdisciplinary workshops and formats are also encouraged.

critical—are a response to the continued violence of liberal humanism that we know has come to inform our dominant conceptions of Man. And while these calls for new humanisms have been critiqued for simply reinscribing the same epistemic system that produced our notions of the human, **Beyond human** calls on creative practices which might offer “an unruly sense of being/knowing/feeling existence, one that necessarily disrupts the foundations of the current hegemonic mode of ‘the human’”.

As our humanity becomes more and more sutured to Artificial Intelligence and its related technologies, **Beyond human** critically invites reflections on what it means to be human, as well as theories beyond the anti-, post-, and in-. Through multimodal approaches, many scholars, writers, and artists have demonstrated that being human is more than the Western liberal conception of Man, but is a multifaceted and interspecies experience. And while it is seemingly more and more difficult to differentiate between what is artificial and what is real, it is necessary to ask: what in or out of “humanity” makes us distinctively us? What other humanisms might be

UCSD invites graduate students, researchers, artists, writers, policy makers and activists to share their work on the theme of ***Beyond human***. We welcome submissions that interpret, examine, and analyze the theme broadly. Possible topics of discussion can include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Linear/non-linear story structures and human positionality within texts and across the globe
- Transcultural and comparative approaches to the experience of being (in)human
- Planetary relationships (What does it mean to be of the earth?)
- Deep Time (interconnectedness prior to modernity + practicing an ethical analysis of global literature, stories that are similar across different cultures and peoples etc.)
- Distinctions between body and flesh
- The Anthropocene, anthropocentrism, and their critiques
- Opacity
- Eco poetics
- Biopolitics / Necropolitics
- Afrofuturism / Indigenous futurism / Chicanofuturism / Asianfuturism etc.
- Extinction (of human and non-human entities, and the intertwined lives)
- Environmental racism (how the culpability of the modern climate/AI crisis is not equal for all)
- Human/AI distinction (when AI is “creating” art, humans are forced to engage in unequal labor)
- Subcultures which explore the limits of humanity (furry fandom, cosplay, VR realities, etc.)
- Power differentials of race, religion, etc. and how they play into our narratives of some *Homo sapiens* being human, while rejecting others.

We welcome submissions from fields including Creative Writing; Critical Theory; Cultural Studies; Comparative Literature, Subaltern Studies, Ethnic or Area Studies; Film, Theatre, and Visual Arts Studies; History; Linguistics; Anthropology; Philosophy; Religious Studies; Sociology; Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies; and other fields rooted in humanities-based inquiry.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Proposal abstracts for papers, creative works/exhibitions, and round tables should be no longer than 350 words.

- Please include a title and concise description of what you wish to present, as well as the name, affiliation, e-mail address, and brief bio (2-3 sentences).
- Our conference will be held in-person at UCSD Literature Department for panels and roundtable discussions with some room for zoom presentations if needed.
- Submit abstracts **by March 9th, 2026** here: <https://forms.fillout.com/t/mt16PQWVZMus>
- For more information please visit: <https://literature.ucsd.edu/news-events/grad-conference.html>. Or email ucsd.lgscevents@gmail.com