

Conference Digest

Vol. 2 No. 6 | Tuesday, February 5, 2008

Greetings once again to all.

There are many happy developments to report in this latest listserv digest for *Madness, Citizenship and Social Justice: A Human Rights Conference*, an event hosted by the Simon Fraser University Institute for the Humanities and scheduled for the SFU downtown Harbour Centre campus on *June 12th-15th* of this year.

1. First and foremost is my friendly reminder that the *February 15th deadline for submissions* is fast approaching (indeed, as of today it is a mere ten days distant). So if you have not already done so, please do mobilize to *submit* your *papers, panels, workshops, cultural and other contributions* to the conference program, via email to menzies@sfu.ca or MadConference08@shaw.ca. I hasten to add that the quality and scope of the contributions to this point in time -- not to mention the level of energy and excitement shown by everyone involved -- have been truly inspiring.

2. The content is now finalized for the *on-line pre-registration page*. Factoring in preparation time, the page will be up and running at some point during the *week of February 11th*. We will circulate an alert when the page is activated and accepting registrations. The *early registration rates* of \$75 regular, \$25 students/seniors/disabled/unwaged (including all conference sessions, conference materials and refreshment breaks) will apply *until Friday, May 2nd*. *Full fees* (\$100 regular, \$40 students/seniors/disabled/unwaged) will apply *as of May 3rd*, with on-line registration continuing to Wednesday, June 4th, and on-site registration available during the conference. Currently-registered *SFU students* receive *free* general admission. *Tickets* for our Thursday *Night of Mad Culture* and Saturday *Evening with Frederick Wiseman* (see items 5 and 6 below) will also be available for *on-line purchase*, each at \$15 regular, and \$5 students/seniors/disabled/unwaged (on-site and at-the-door rates for each evening event will be \$20 and \$10, respectively).

3. I am delighted to announce the recruitment of Barbara Smith and Kathy McKay as *conference assistants*. We could not be more fortunate to have these two highly engaged and energetic collaborators involved in the planning process. Along with Institute for the Humanities programmer Trish Graham and myself, Barbara and Kathy will be concentrating on *local arrangements, programming, liaising with the Harbour Centre on-site services, and general facilitation* in advance of and during the event.

4. For the information of out-of-town delegates, Trish is currently in the process of sorting out *block bookings* at the *three selected conference-sponsored hotels*. We will provide availability and rates information as soon as it becomes available.

5. As I alluded to under item 2 above, one of the most exciting developments of the past few weeks has been the coming together of our *Night of Mad Culture*, scheduled for the opening evening of the conference (Thursday, June 12th). Please be sure to *reserve a ticket* for this very special occasion when you register on-line. Performers will include David Granirer and the popular *Stand Up For Mental Health* comedy players <http://www.standupformentalhealth.com/>, and Toronto's *Friendly Spike Theatre Band*. Friendly Spike will be presenting *Tied Together: A Mad Peoples History Play*, a performance framed within the activism of Ruth Ruth and Mel Starkman, and premised on the personification of three women pictured in *Remembrance of Patients Past, Patient Life at The Toronto Hospital for the Insane*, by Canadian



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historian and conference speaker Geoffrey Reaume. Ruth Ruth will be recruiting *five Vancouver cast members* to complement the five Friendly Spike actors who will be attending from Toronto. If you would like to participate in this fun and liberating experience (stage experience is not necessary, and rehearsal will require only about two hours of your time on June 12th), you may **contact Ruth Ruth** at friendlyspike@globalserve.net.

6. Also as mentioned above, our *Evening with Frederick Wiseman* will be taking place on **Saturday, June 14th**, commencing at 7:00 pm. Frederick Wiseman, one of the world's most prolific and influential documentarians and directors, will be giving a public talk and screening drawing from his remarkable body of work and addressing issues related to the conference themes of human rights, citizenship and social justice. As with the *Night of Mad Culture*, please ensure that you **purchase a ticket** when you register. More details on this important event will be forthcoming in due course.

7. To coincide with Frederick Wiseman's much-anticipated visit, we intend to screen his unforgettable 1967 documentary *Titicut Follies* <http://www.zipporah.com/films/22> on the **evening of Friday, June 13th**. Please do note this date on your calendars. We will distribute information on the line-up, location, ticket purchases and prices as soon as the plans coalesce. As a feature of the regular conference program, we are in the process, too, of organizing a workshop/panel on the legacy of this milestone film.

8. In addition to plenary, panel sessions and the above-mentioned special events, we have been receiving a number of superlative proposals for *film screenings, workshops, and other creative contributions* to be integrated into the conference program. Preparations for additional collaborative cultural events are also underway. More news on these fronts will follow as the convening work continues.

9. We expect to have the *preliminary program* available for on-line viewing by **early to mid-March**. The very final version of the program will get posted just prior to the conference, with hard copies distributed in delegate packages on site. The lion's share of *panels, workshops and other sessions* will take place on Friday and Saturday (and, contingent on the ultimate number of submissions, perhaps Sunday morning), with session running times of **90 or 105 minutes** each. We are asking paper presenters to prepare **20-minute talks**. Most panels will likely comprise **three papers each** (although in some cases we might reserve the prerogative of expanding to four papers), with sufficient time budgeted for general discussion and audience participation. Workshops, film screenings, cultural presentations and other events will, of course, assume different formats as required. We will supply **a-v equipment and technical support**. If you are intending to use PowerPoint software, you should plan to **bring your file(s) on a cd/dvd and/or flash drive/usb key**.

10. As the panel and other events continue to gel, we will be assigning chairs/facilitators to each session. **Please do consider volunteering to chair** an event. You may do so by emailing a brief note to this effect, to menzies@sfu.ca or MadConference08@shaw.ca. We will most gratefully welcome your generous offerings on this front!

11. Stay tuned for website updates and listserv announcements as we consolidate the program, finalize the facilities set-up, and commence to accelerate the publicity activities through to the conference dates in June.

12. Finally, to echo my customary plea, we will be much obliged for any and all efforts to spread news about the conference -- virtually, telephonically, and otherwise -- as you deem appropriate.

More anon.

In the meantime, thanks once again, and very best wishes,

Bob