

The Eighteenth-Century: Who Cares?

The Indiana Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies announces its fourteenth annual Bloomington Workshop (May 13-15, 2015).

Caught between the universalizing vocabularies of rights, ethical obligations, or natural impulses and the competing self-interests of the market, between the collective and the individual, many of our contemporary debates about care—who deserves it, who gives it, who gets it—can be traced to late-eighteenth-century arguments. But what was care *in* the long eighteenth century? Was it a praxis, a feeling, an activity, an ethos, a relationship? Was it motivated by religious sentiment, reproduced by convention, or written into contracts? Was it voluntary or coerced? How did it relate to attention? At the end of our period, these issues were hardly resolved; William Blake wrote both that it was “part of our duty to God to take due care of his gifts” and that anything “explicit to the idiot is not worth my care.”

By taking “Care” as the theme for our 2015 Workshop, we invite a conversation moving between practices and concepts, between little theorized daily activities (attending to the ill and the newborn, watering a garden, feeding the cat) and more abstracted, formalized debates. As the French Revolution’s nationalization of poor relief shows, being willing to accept responsibility and capable of providing were often two very different things. How did experiences of caring (or, of attempting to do so) feed into shifting literary engagements, political commitments, and/or notions of love? We know that eighteenth-century readers cared deeply *about* Emile, Pamela, Clarissa, etc.—but could they care *for* them?

Papers might answer and/or address any of the following questions and themes:

- ❖ What figures, groups, and institutions cared in the eighteenth century? For whom or what did they care?
- ❖ What people, places, things, or conditions fell outside the circle of care?
- ❖ What access do we have to past practices of everyday care?
- ❖ If care was a feeling or attitude, how was it recognized and what were its traces?
- ❖ Can we parse varieties of care as differences of genre? Or genres as different modes of attention and forms of care?
- ❖ What was the relation between caring and serving? How did care figure in the labors of domestic servants and the enslaved?
- ❖ What legal formalities (adoption, apprenticeship and indenture contracts, etc.) structured care? How was care legislated or juridically produced?
- ❖ To what extent was care as an ethical and/or religious imperative compatible (or in tension) with care as material providing?
- ❖ Was care public, private, religious, domestic, intimate?
- ❖ What values were assigned to care, and to care’s givers and takers?

The Eighteenth Century: Who Cares? (call for papers)

During the Workshop, we will discuss 4-6 pre-circulated papers each day and have an occasional lecture. Expanded abstracts of papers will be published in the Center's *The Workshop*, along with discussion transcripts.

The application deadline is January 12, 2015. Please send a paper proposal (1-2 pages) and current brief CV (3 pages, max) to Dr. Barbara Truesdell, Weatherly Hall North, room 122, Bloomington, IN 47405; 812-855-2856, voltaire@indiana.edu. We will acknowledge all submissions within a fortnight: if you do not receive an acknowledgment by Jan. 26, 2015, please contact Barbara Truesdell or the Center's Director, Professor Rebecca L. Spang (rlspang@indiana.edu).

Papers will be selected by an interdisciplinary committee. We cover most expenses for visiting scholars chosen to present their work: accommodations, travel (up to a certain limit), and most meals. For further information please see www.indiana.edu/~voltaire