

CFP: Mental Health in Early America

Society of Early Americanists Biennial Conference 2023

Co-Organizers: Stacey Dearing (Siena College) and Em Gates (Georgia State University)

Mental health has been a thus-far under-explored aspect of early American studies that is ripe for critical attention. Recent and forthcoming works in the health humanities have produced robust and valuable scholarship on somatic health and healthcare, while scholarship on mental health has often focused on the mid-to-late nineteenth century. Scholars of the nineteenth century have brought needed attention to the asylum reform movement, sexist approaches to women's health conditions such as "hysteria," as well as to the unresolved generational trauma among Native American Nations caused by displacement, forced assimilation, and genocide. This panel seeks to consider mental health prior to the nineteenth century, including the unique epistemologies, mental health conditions, and treatments present in the early American world.

This panel will join shifting conversations in the health humanities by considering questions of mental health pre-1830. We will use a capacious definition of mental health as we explore questions including: How can scholars ethically study mental health? How do epistemologies of mental health and mental health treatment differ prior to the 19th-century? What methodologies are best to grapple with this complex topic?

Possible presentation topics for this panel include, but are not limited to:

- Epistemologies of mental health from diverse perspectives, including Latina/o/x, Native American, African, and Alaska Native communities
- Mental health care training/practice pre-1830
- Historical Trauma and/or Unresolved Grief (HTUG) among Native American and Indigenous Communities and approaches to trauma informed care
- Classification of mental illnesses and their symptomology
- Melancholia, Depression, and/or Suicidology
- The value and/or ethics of diagnosing the past
- Difficulties arising from the available historical record
- Patient-practitioner relationships and/or power dynamics of treatment
- Stress-induced illnesses
- The intersections between somatic and mental health
- Interdisciplinary methodologies for studying mental health (psychology, psychiatry, gender studies, disability studies, etc.)

We seek panelists from any stage in their academic career, including independent scholars, as well as diverse disciplines and approaches. Please submit a title and short (one paragraph) abstract of your presentation to both sdearing@siena.edu and egates7@gsu.edu, along with a short CV by **midnight on October 21st**.