

March 5, 2022

Colleagues,

We hope you're keeping well. We are writing today in greater detail about one of the innovations for AAIS 2022 announced last Fall.

We are excited to inaugurate the **Executive Council Conference Series** entitled "Broadening Perspectives, Intersections, Italies". This series of panels sponsored by the Executive Council seeks to highlight expanded canonical parameters of recent research happening across myriad inter-related subfields, including Mediterranean studies, diaspora studies, Black Italy and more.

This message gives context for the conference series and summarizes the Association's efforts to advance the action items as laid out in the [2021 DEI Report](#).

We are grateful to colleagues **Michela Ardizzoni** (Univ of Colorado- Boulder), **Shelleen Greene** (Univ of California-Los Angeles), and **Angelica Pesarini** (Univ of Toronto), who will curate the inaugural series featuring at least three and possibly four panels during the online conference (May 13-15).

Please read on for the curators' bios and the context in which the conference series fits.

Series Curators' Bios

[Michela Ardizzoni](#) is associate professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She received a Ph.D. in Media Studies from Indiana University-Bloomington and an MA in American Studies from the University of Iowa. Her research focuses on global media, and media activism, marginality, and feminism. Her study of Italian television, *North/South, East/West: Mapping Italianness on Television*, was published in 2007. She is the co-editor of *Beyond Monopoly: Globalization and Contemporary Italian Media* (2010) and *Mediterranean Encounters in the City* (2015). Her most recent book, *Matrix Activism: Global Practices of Resistance* (2017), examines contemporary forms of media activism in Italy, North Africa, Senegal, and the US.

[Shelleen Greene's](#) research interests include Italian cinema, Black European studies and digital feminist studies. Her book, *Equivocal Subjects: Constructions of Racial and National Identity in the Italian Cinema* (Continuum/Bloomsbury Press, 2012) examines the representation of mixed-race subjects of Italian and African descent in the Italian cinema, arguing that the changing cultural representations of mixed-race identity reveal shifts in the country's conceptual paradigms of race and nation. Her work has also been published in *From Terrone to Extracomunitario: New Manifestations of Racism in Contemporary Italian Cinema: Shifting Demographics and Changing Images in a Multi-Cultural Globalized Society* (Troubador Press, 2010) and *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[Dr Angelica Pesarini](#) is Assistant Professor in Race and Cultural Studies / Race and Diaspora and Italian Studies at the University of Toronto and works on the intersections of race, gender, citizenship and identity in Italy. She earned her Ph.D. in 2015 from the University of Leeds with a dissertation on "Colour Strategies: Negotiations of Black Mixed Race Women's Identities in

Colonial and Post-Colonial Italy”, and has taught courses in Gender, Race and Sexuality at Lancaster University and courses in Race and Immigration in Italy at New York University’s Florence Campus.

Context for the Executive Council Conference Series

The conference series is part of a set of initiatives that emerged from the Association’s [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Survey conducted in Spring 2021](#).

The action items include those listed at the end of the Report:

1. Increase the “pipeline” of demographic diversity in IS/AAIS.
2. Build partnerships with other disciplines and their organizations.
3. Dismantle perceived cliquishness in the Association.
4. Diversify the conference program in content *and* structure.
5. Create moments of community in addition to the conference.
6. Draft a Professional Code of Conduct for AAIS and related events.
7. Design curricula in Italian Studies that are inclusive, diverse and equitable.
8. Encourage the formation of a graduate student caucus.

The Conference Series for AAIS 2022, and beyond, is part of this set of initiatives.

The Association has begun work on the above list of action items.

In 2020-21, in addition to conducting the DEI survey, the Executive Council assisted members in their efforts, and in accordance with association [bylaws](#) (Bylaws, Article IX), to found a [Critical Race Studies Caucus](#) (CRSC). The Caucus recently ratified a name change and is now known as the Critical Race, Diasporas, and Migrations Caucus. CRDMC members, alongside the Queer Studies Caucus and the Women’s Studies Caucus, are at work on a series of measures intended to vivify the discussion of DEI initiatives between annual meetings of the association, as well as to deepen the collective understanding of the issues we face as a discipline.

The online platform for AAIS 2021 afforded the opportunity to **convene officers from counterpart Italian Studies organizations located outside of Italy (in Europe generally, South and Central America, Canada, and the UK) to assess other strategies for the diversification of research, pedagogy, and membership**. What resulted from this convening was the commitment to continue working inter-institutionally and -associationally and to collaborate on measures intended to bring these issues into discussion at the national level, and in those ministries in Italy where such matters are germane (there are, for example, no fewer than four ministries within the Italian government tasked with Italian Culture outside of Italy).

The online format of **AAIS 2021 also allowed for a convening of editors of more than a dozen journals in the field of Italian Studies for a roundtable discussion which inquired into editorial policies concerning publication and equity** (please see [Roundtable 1 of the 2021 conference program](#)).

One of the recommendations the Association received on its path to cultivating greater diversity within the curriculum, within the field of Italian Studies and among IS faculty, practitioners, and membership, was to designate a series of guaranteed panels and/or activities at the annual

conference that might address the intersecting issues of race and Italian Studies and which would be specifically sponsored by the Executive Council: the Executive Council Conference Series, intended to shine a light on cross-disciplinary and intersectional frameworks for analysis and practice as well as help build bridges to other disciplines and associations less homogenous than IS and AAIS.

As we go forward, it is clear that initiatives like the Executive Council Conference Series cannot alone successfully build the sort of heterogeneous community of scholar-teachers that members have indicated is called for. There is no “silver bullet” that will slay the Association’s historically homogenous membership. Yet working along multiple fronts, thinking “archipelagically,” and acting in “tentacular” modes might help us find ways to reach toward the expanded and more inclusive parameters of IS that membership has called for.

In addition to the AAIS 2022 conference series and the planned iterations at future conferences, we mention here a number of other initiatives that, together, are meant to help the Association move forward. These include

1. February 25, 2022: “[Building Belonging in Italian Studies](#),” online event co-sponsored with the AATI
2. AAIS + AATI 2022 conferences: “Walking the Walk,” guaranteed panels at both annual conferences, guest-curated by Carla Cornette (Colorado College) and which we will outline in greater detail in a coming message
3. Further, you are invited to consider joining one of the Association’s Caucuses and/or supporting them by way of donation:
 - a. Critical Race, Diasporas, and Migrations Caucus
 - b. Queer Studies
 - c. Women’s Studies

Finally, the action items will be a point on the agenda for the 2022 Business Meeting, to be held online Friday, May 20, between the two halves of the Conference. An invitation will follow.

If there is no “silver bullet” nor is there one body that can effect all the change that members have called for and that is required. Everyone has a role to play within the Association, their own institution, and within IS. As concerns the first, if you have the interest and availability, the EC welcomes your input and energy.

“Broadening Perspectives, Intersections, Italies” is just one of the innovations for AAIS 2022. We will be writing again with greater details about

- conference workshops
- the “inviati speciali” corps and the application process
- applications for the graduate student travel awards

Ringraziandovi della lettura. We try not to bombard you with messages, which is why we are very grateful to you for reading the messages that we send out.

Respectfully,
The AAIS EC