

Call for Proposals

A definition of *cipher* (see <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/cipher>) is:

- One having no influence or value; a nonentity
- A cryptographic system in which units of plain text are arbitrarily transposed or substituted according to a predetermined code; or the key to such a system.

In hip-hop, the cipher is a locale where artists of various backgrounds, commitments, and training come together in a linguistic battle of wit and passion, where “aporetic flow” erupts into competing norms and continuous ad hominem assault. To “cipher” is to decipher the motivations, positionalities, concerns, and roadblocks that make up the discursive power arrangements of a community. It is to “play” a linguistic game of one-upmanship through deconstruction of your opponent and to embody and speak into existence the “possibility of the impossible” task of what might be of critical, productive discourse — scholarship. [Click here](#) for an example of a cipher in the hip-hop context.

Thinking of the session as an academic cipher of various disciplinary examinations of the hip-hop cipher (i.e., “playing” with the two definitions of “cipher”), specific paper topics and research questions might include but are not limited to:

- The role of specialized, constructed lexicons and vocabularies in the production and maintenance of communities of discourse, including their sizes, shapes, concerns, and interests
- The cipher’s “sacred” status in hip-hop culture and the privileging of discourse within the academic cipher as necessitating a rethinking over how we treat the impact of languages and vocabularies used to study hip-hop
- The “art” of ciphering as technology of the self. What new models and methods of critical engagement can be gleaned from the hip-hop cipher? How might interpreting the hip-hop cipher model the relationship between experience qua experience and experience as object of intellectual interest?
- Or alternatively, are there examples of cipher amongst hip-hop locales that call into question the characterization of cipher as “masculine” and oriented around confrontation? If so, what might various positions on cipher (e.g. cipher as battle, cipher as empathic community) contribute to critical approaches to hip hop?
- For a possible cosponsored session with the [Religion and the Social Sciences Section](#) , the meaning of methods — social scientific approaches to religion, theology, and hip-hop. The

burgeoning field of religion, theology, and hip-hop has worked hard to expand the object(s) of inquiry beyond a sole focus on rap music. While this expansion has provided form, content, and structure for the making of religion and hip-hop scholarship, less attention has been given to the methodological tools necessary to provide a rigorous account of the ways in which these endeavors are taken up in hip-hop material culture. We seek papers from leading scholars working with various methodologies from fields such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, and cultural studies for the study of religion, theology, and hip-hop culture

- For a possible cosponsored session with the [Study of Islam Section](#) , Islam and hip-hop

Mission

This Group's purpose is to provide a space for interdisciplinary, sustained, scholarly reflection and intellectual advancements at the intersections of religion and hip-hop culture. We believe the Group will assist religious and theological studies to take more seriously hip-hop culture — while expanding the conversation of hip-hop culture beyond a thin analysis of rap music. To these ends, this Group is marked by an effort to offer critical reflection on the multiplicity of the cultural practices of hip-hop culture. We also see something of value in advancing the field of religious studies through attention to how hip-hop might inform these various disciplines and methods. Understood in this way, scholarly attention to hip-hop will not transform it into a passive object of the scholar's gaze — rather, through our attention to hip-hop, it also speaks back to the work of the AAR, offering tools by which to advance theory and method in the field.

Anonymity of Review Process

Proposer names are **visible** to Chairs but **anonymous** to Steering Committee members.

Questions?

Christopher Driscoll
Rice University

This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it

Monica Miller

Lewis and Clark College

This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it

Method of Submission

Submit to PAPERS