

# **Erich Fromm Society of North America**

## **Thinking with Erich Fromm Today**

*Inaugural Conference*

***Gonzaga University***

*September 14-15, 2024*

### **Call for Abstracts**

We are delighted to announce the Erich Fromm Society of North America's inaugural Conference. This two-day conference will be hosted at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. The conference will follow a hybrid format, with both virtual and in-person presentations.

Fromm was an original and interdisciplinary thinker who drew on many influences, including psychology, philosophy, sociology, theology, and his own clinical experience as a psychoanalyst. While a sophisticated social theorist, he wrote in an accessible voice to the lay public, formulating responses to pressing social and political problems as a cultural critic and public intellectual. Like his erstwhile colleagues at the Frankfurt School, he emigrated from Germany to the United States in the 1930s with a concern for elucidating and addressing the root causes of fascism. Over the course of his long career, he vigorously opposed war, nuclear arms, capitalism, imperialism, and racism. Fusing the ideas of Marx and Freud, he demonstrated that individual psychology is bound up with social patterns and processes in his concept of social character. His approach was humanistic, existential, psychoanalytic, and sociological. Through his writings and his activism Fromm sought a pathway to a less alienated society conducive to human flourishing, which he called socialist humanism. How can Fromm's ideas help us respond to current social and political problems and crises? The theme for this inaugural conference will be "Thinking with Erich Fromm Today". We invite a wide range of perspectives on Fromm's relevance to today, welcoming theological, psychoanalytic, philosophical, sociological, anthropological, activist, and other approaches. Possible topics include, but are not limited to the following areas:

**1) Critical theory:** Does Fromm's approach to critical theory stand out and differ from that of his former Frankfurt School colleagues? Are the differences between Fromm and the Frankfurt School reconcilable?

**2) Psychoanalysis and psychotherapy:** What are Fromm's contributions to the study of personality theory and clinical method and practice? How do Fromm's ideas relate to other traditions, such as relational psychoanalysis and humanistic and existential psychotherapy? What can Fromm teach us about the purpose of psychotherapy?

**3) Authority:** What is the role of rational, irrational, and anonymous authority in Fromm's thought? How do these various modes of authority interact with other types of authority in society (i.e., the family, religion, government, the workplace, consumerism, science)?

**4) Neofascism and prejudice:** How can Fromm's ideas be used to make sense of and combat contemporary fascist movements and ideologies, the authoritarian character, authoritarian leadership, and group psychology?

**5) Religion:** How does Fromm's thought illuminate the areas of utopian hope, prophetic messianism, and interreligious dialogue?

**6) 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism:** What is Fromm's relationship to Marxism? What is the relevance of his ideas to contemporary socialist thought?

**7) Human nature:** What is Fromm's conception of human nature and existential needs? How does it inform his radical humanism?

**8) Critical pedagogy:** What can Fromm teach us about engaging education in an emancipatory way? Can it help shed light on and augment Paulo Freire's work?

**9) Fromm's method:** What does Fromm's approach contribute for contemporary sociological methods?

Suggested additional themes:

**Neoliberal capitalism and social inequality**

**Academic disciplines**

**Humanistic ethics**

**Activism**

**Feminism and gender theory**

**Social media**

**Social character**

**Environmentalism**

**Mindfulness**

Submission Guidelines

Abstracts should be no longer than 350 words. Both individual abstracts and panel proposals (for panels of up to 4 people) will be considered. Panel proposals should include an abstract for each participant. Abstracts should include the author's name and institutional affiliation (where

applicable). All submissions addressing the broad conference theme, “Thinking with Erich Fromm Today,” will be considered. Abstracts should be submitted as either a word or PDF file.

Deadline for abstract submissions: March 15, 2024

Acceptance decisions will be made by: May 1, 2024

Please submit abstracts to the organizing committee with the subject line “2024 Fromm Conference Abstract Submission” at: erichfrommna@proton.me. Please direct all questions and correspondence to the same email address.

Participants should expect to present for 20 minutes. Presentations will be followed by a discussion period. Participants will be provided with further information about registration, travel, and accommodations along with or shortly after the notification of acceptance.

- **The conference committee encourages papers on panels relevant to clinical practice.** If you are submitting a clinical presentation, and are interested in having your course qualify for American Psychological Association (APA) credits (which can be used towards licensure in many states for most psychotherapy fields), please include the following details: A statement to the effect that “This paper/panel would be appropriate for clinical training,”
- and then include **3 or more contemporary (last 5 years) citations** relevant to your paper. The citations should ideally be from a journal relevant to clinical practice (broadly conceived), or from a mental health related book.