The 2017 Charles F. Fraker Conference at the University of Michigan will take as its point of departure the contested nature of the image, a point that is critical to the dialogue between our keynote speakers, Michael Taussig and W. J. T. Mitchell. Images can sear, blur, fade, or proliferate. Images can be captured, scanned, altered, or reproduced. The image is a subject and an object; there is a categorical instability to the image that belies the hard dimensions of the frame. We are interested in images, the way they inform us about the past and the present, and also the way they affect our notions of reality and personhood. With the significant development of image-making technology, is it still possible to accept the truth claims of any given image? How can we still approach their historical, socio-political indexicalities and authorial intentions without skepticism?

Where do we locate images in the narration of history? How do we interpret history through images? How do we look at images as manifestation of historical phenomena? What agency is allowed in the space between the author of an image and the reception of the image? Does the image itself have an agency? How does image production impact the agency of subjects that are represented? In what ways can we overcome the distancing effects that are generated by the cloning of images? When viewing an image, does the spectator put oneself in the same position as the image’s author? Does the reproduction of the image blur these positions, and what is at stake in this disruption?

Papers may explore, directly or obliquely, images that represent, challenge, or distort notions of:

- literature
- photography
- still images
- cinema
- illustration
- maps
- technology
- reproducibility
- framing
- media & mediation
- production & consumption
- visual culture
- looking & seeing
- gaze
- perception
- invisibility
- objectification & subjectification
- authorship & spectatorship
- history & historicity
- memory
- politics
- nation state & empire
- friendship, enemies & betrayal
- resistance
The Charles F. Fraker Conference is hosted by the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Michigan. We welcome abstracts up to 250 words for papers in any Romance language or English engaging cross-disciplinary questions of the image. We encourage scholarly investigations in the form of academic papers, but also alternative forms of inquiry such as hybrid prose, poetry, performance, photography, or film. Works may deal with Romance literary or cultural studies as well as other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Please include a brief bio with submissions.

Please send your abstract and brief bio to frakerconference@umich.edu by December 10th of 2016.