

2027: Gawâ: Problems and Prospects of the Global Working Class

Call for Proposals

22 – 25 July 2027: Quezon City, Philippines

22 July 2027: Opening and Online/Onsite | 23-24 July: Onsite |

25 July 2027: Closing and Exposure Trips



Diaspora by Antipas Delotavo. 96in x 216in, oil on canvas, 2007. Reproduced with permission from the Delotavo estate, *Handumanon ni Biboy* (Antipas Delotavo).

Onsite and Online - Conference Dates

The Working-Class Studies Association (WCSA) calls for proposals for its annual conference which will be held primarily in-person at the Ateneo de Manila University (Philippines), from 22–25 July 2027, with an online presentation component happening on the first day of the conference, 22 July 2027.

Conference Theme

Gawâ (*Work*) is a term in Filipino which calls attention to the complexity of laboring hands. In the Philippines and in the diaspora, the work of laboring hands ranges from those of millions of farmers, factory workers, service industry workers, migrant workers, cultural workers, and many others, who are all subject to precarious and untenable conditions. The WCSA 2027 conference, hosted by the Ateneo de Manila University, thus engages with the theme of Gawâ which generatively and capaciously also refers broadly but not limited to: (a) the ways in which body and intellect are used to fulfill aims; (b) a finished work or act resulting from labor from a person, organization, sector, or class; and (c) the use of strength to overcome resistance and impediments. In other words, the conference seeks to unpack the manifold and intersecting dimensions of work and labor as they are manifested—historically and in the present day—in academic, cultural, professional, industrial, agricultural, formal and informal contexts, be it in contested and complementary national and transnational spaces.

This conference is timely in an age of interrelated problems such as the increasing global wealth disparity, rise of right-wing authoritarianism and fascism, and the climate crisis exacerbated by extractions for artificial intelligence infrastructures and by existing neocolonial relations, where

labor becomes a central and crucial concern. The location of the conference is likewise fitting insofar as it brings Global South problems up close. Given these conditions, and guided by the hope of building and sustaining affinities and solidarities between and across multiple sectors, the WCSA 2027 conference invites proposals for individual papers, panels, and workshops from scholars, scholar-activists, and cultural workers.

Proposals for individual paper presentations, panels, workshops, performances or exhibitions can address any—but not be confined to—these topics:

- Working-Class Movements in the Global South and the Global North
- Labor in Multinational/Transnational Corporations
- Agricultural and Industrial Labor
- Precarious and Freelance Work in the Gig Economy
- Precarious Labor in the Informal Economy
- Migrant Work, Farmwork, and Labor Export
- Hospitality, Service, Food and Tourism Industry Work
- Domestic Work and Care Work
- Gender, Sexuality, and Bodily Labor
- Work in the Transportation Sector
- Union Organizing and Labor History
- Scholarly, Literary, and Cultural Production from Working-Class Perspectives
- Challenges on Being a Scholar-Activist
- Labor and Artificial Intelligence

WCSA – About the Organization

The WCSA is an international, interdisciplinary organization. We invite presentations from a wide range of perspectives, disciplinary backgrounds, and experiences, hoping to build on WCSA's tradition of hosting conferences where academics, activists, artists, educators, thinkers, organizers, and practitioners meet.

Rationale for Conference Venue

The 2027 Working-Class Studies Association (WCSA) Conference will be held at the Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City, Philippines. Founded by the Jesuits in 1859, Ateneo's history is deeply intertwined with the Philippines' transition and transformation from Spanish colonial rule, through American occupation, and toward independence. While its institutional history includes a strongly Western and anti-communist orientation in the early twentieth century, it also established a labor school that sought to put Catholic social teachings into practice (Chua 356–60). Despite its image as an elite university—evoked for instance in the 1975 film *Manila in the Claws of Light*—the Ateneo has also been a site of activism and political engagement. During the Marcos dictatorship, the university underwent rapid Filipinization which replaced American administrators with Filipino Jesuits, established the Department of Filipino, and expanded progressive instructions in Filipino, Philippine literatures, and popular cultures. Influenced by the activist call to go “Down the Hill,” members of the Ateneo community participated in the resistance to the dictatorship, with some ultimately becoming martyrs. Today, the Ateneo remains a leading Philippine university with a distinctive Filipino, Catholic, and Jesuit identity, and a vibrant tradition of social involvement.

The Ateneo is situated in Quezon City, Philippines, the planned capital city established by President Manuel L. Quezon in 1939. Conceived around ideals of “social justice” and a city envisioned as a potential paradise for the working man (Pante 94–95), Quezon City has since developed into the largest city in the country’s National Capital Region. It is home to major universities—including the Ateneo de Manila, the University of the Philippines Diliman, and Miriam College—as well as significant parks, wildlife sanctuaries, monuments, and heritage sites.

The Ateneo thus offers a particularly fitting setting for the first WCSA Conference in the Global South. The university combines accessible travel from the international airport, facilities and accommodation suited to international participants, and an institutional history that resonates strongly with the conference’s concerns with labor, class, social movements, and political struggle. Hosting the conference in Quezon City also provides an opportunity for international scholars to engage with the Philippines’ distinctive histories of working-class politics, colonialism, authoritarianism, and social transformation.

How to Apply

Please submit proposals by **1 December 2026** via **this form**. Applicants will be notified of results by late January 2027. All presenters must become WCSA members to register and present at the conference. Please limit proposals to no more than two per person. Proposals must include:

- Name, affiliation, and contact details for all participants
- Title of proposed presentation, panel, workshop, performance, or exhibit. Panel proposals must include a confirmation of willingness to participate from all proposed members.
- Abstract of approximately 250 words
- Indication of intention to present in-person or as part of the Zoom track

For inquiries, kindly email Vincenz Serrano and Jeffrey Cabusao, WCSA 2027 conference committee co-chairs, at **wcsaconference2027@gmail.com**.

Citations

Chua, Jonathan. “Before “Down from the Hill”: Notes on an Educational Institution’s Record of Social Involvement.” *Perspectives in the Arts and Humanities Asia*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2020.

Pante, Michael. “Quezon’s City: Corruption and Contradiction in Manila’s Prewar Suburbia, 1935–1941.” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 48, no. 1, 2017, pp. 91–112. *Jstor*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26348570>.