

## **Association for Institutional Thought (AFIT) 2018 Call for Papers**

The 39th Annual Meeting of AFIT is scheduled to take place on April 4-7, 2018 in **San Antonio, Texas**, at the *Hyatt Regency San Antonio Riverwalk* in conjunction with the 60th Annual WSSA Conference

### **Conference theme**

#### **Institutional analysis for the evolving economy: Making sense of emergent forms and cultural evolution**

The Association for Institutional Thought (AFIT) invites you to submit papers and/or propose full sessions that examine the role of institutions in human society. Specifically, we encourage papers and sessions that (1) investigate how institutionalist and evolutionary approaches/concepts can help us comprehend the new emergent economic forms (e.g. sharing economy, sustainable development, cooperatives) and their potentials in spreading prosperity and improving financial security, and (2) appreciate the significance of our inherited instincts as well as the cultural/material environment in guiding purposeful human behavior and social/economic outcomes. Such approaches and concepts could inform innovative institutional reforms, whether led by private associations or governments, that mitigate some of the challenges that the 21st century economy will be throwing in our way. We also welcome papers that are theoretical in their orientation; deal with serious methodological issues; and address the teaching of economics.

The major transition in human evolutionary history over the past 10,000 years that has brought about a tremendous population growth and an end to the subsistence economy has left *Sapiens* in an uncharted territory: the need for extensive and sustained cooperation with the non-kin for provisioning of their primary biological needs. Our capacity for sophisticated institutions, including a complex group culture, for coordination has helped us partly overcome our biological limitations such as our deep suspicion of strangers. Over time, we, humans, have evolved into effective *collaborators* under appropriate institutional settings whose function was once performed by personal trust.

Markets should also be seen in this light. Interestingly, even though the “market” is one of the most frequently invoked concepts in the economic literature, its place in the evolution of human societies (as an institution) has not attracted as much scholarly attention as it deserves. The

tendency in the mainstream has been to treat it as a universal or ever-present institution that somehow occurs naturally. It is true that trade/exchange has always existed as a tool for *community building* but only with the advance of the widespread market systems have markets become unique central mechanisms for *economic/political integration*–

We are most likely headed toward an economic future that, under current institutions, is unlikely to repeat the productivity gains of the 50s or the 60s. Therefore, institutional innovation, local or global, must be at the center of 21st century economy if we are to achieve broad-based prosperity. Public intellectuals must adopt a multidimensional and a non-dogmatic perspective for their inputs to be useful in this process. First, markets, if properly organized, have the potential to promote well-being and security. However, they have no hierarchical superiority with respect to other institutions. Secondly, social/cultural norms, along with our social intelligence as species, are needed to enhance coordination and cooperation in places where markets are proving to be inadequate. In some instances, the collective action (often via governments) is best suited to bring about economic and social progress. Lastly, technological advances will generate complex outcomes, including making certain skills obsolete, increasing income and wealth inequalities, destroying critical natural environments, and potentially increasing or decreasing coordination and access through the open source revolution or the increased concentration of ownership of knowledge, respectively. The overall impact of the many likely social and economic changes on the standard of living, especially of the least advantaged, will depend on the institutional framework we humans intentionally or inevitably nurture.

We encourage submissions that tackle the following complex and challenging issues:

- Sharing economy and flexible work arrangements: more precariousness or new opportunities?
- Automation, technological unemployment, and income inequality: how to best distribute the “fruits” of innovation?
- Unequal access to justice (e.g. arbitration laws) and the recent Supreme Court decisions
- Consumption, identity, and class
- Racial and gender inequalities
- Global warming and environmental justice in the light of recent natural disasters
- Financialization and predatory practices (e.g. Wells Fargo debacle etc.)
- Cultural evolution and the Millennials: economic constraints and evolving mindsets.

There are many more relevant and compelling issues beyond the list above. All proposals for papers and sessions reflecting the traditional and analytical perspectives represented by the Association for Institutional Thought will be given serious consideration, although preference will be given to proposals that address the conference theme.

The conference is also receptive to proposals for panels that review and discuss books recently published, especially by AFIT members. We also welcome papers/sessions dealing with *pedagogy*: particularly those that offer innovative approaches to teaching politically sensitive/controversial issues (e.g. racial inequality) and those that offer to incorporate institutionalism into economics curriculum effectively.

As always, AFIT encourages proposals from undergraduate and graduate students, and AFIT sponsors prizes for outstanding student papers.

The format of the 2017 conference panels does not include discussants; at AFIT sessions we seek more general discussion on the papers presented. However, if you organize a panel, and you find it necessary to designate discussants, you are welcome to do so. Proposals for complete sessions are strongly encouraged. All papers and proposals for the AFIT sessions must be submitted via the WSSA website: <http://www.wssaweb.com/index.html>. Please keep abstracts to 200 words or less. Participants should update their membership in AFIT, if they are not already members.

***The submission deadline is: November 10, 2017.***

For more information about AFIT, you are invited to visit our website at:

[www.associationforinstitutionalthought.org](http://www.associationforinstitutionalthought.org).

If you have general queries regarding the conference, please contact the conference organizer and Vice President of AFIT, Rojhat B Avsar at

[ravsar@colum.edu](mailto:ravsar@colum.edu).