

## Second Empire Politics: Imbrolios, Scandals, Betrayals, Scams

Chair: Maurice Samuels, Yale University

The advent of the postcolonial paradigm brought a welcome shift even in nineteenth-century studies away from formalist readings and toward a broader engagement with culture's political dimensions. But this renewed attention to culture's social significance has too often focused on Politics with a capital P, on the broad lines of culture's political unconscious or on identity politics, at the expense of more local, more everyday concerns. This interdisciplinary panel seeks to explore culture's imbrication in politics with a small p, in the tumultuous but now largely forgotten events that filled the increasingly copious newspaper columns in this age of scandal and sensation. How, we want to ask, do novels, poems, and paintings comment on, but also act upon, the events that made up the news of the day? How can we theorize the relation between art and what so many have considered its opposite, the tabloid tempests of a scandalmongering century? Panelists from both the literature and art historical disciplines will explore these questions through contextualized readings of significant moments in the encounter between art and politics during (and after) the Second Empire. Special attention will be paid to the question of racial politics and to the Second Empire's imperial dilemmas.

1. Maurice Samuels, Yale University  
Zola and the Scandal of Race
2. Howard Lay, History of Art, University of Michigan  
Manet's Empire"
3. Emily Apter, French and Comparative Literature, New York University  
'Le Politique/La Politique:' Imperial Back-Stories in *Son Excellence Eugène Rougon*