

## ***GPACS Colloquium Series***

**Presents**

### **Laura Mitchell**

Associate Professor, UCI Dept. of History

### ***“ACROSS THE LINES: SCIENCE IN TIMES OF WAR AND PEACE”***

A corpus of recent studies of early-modern science documents the connection between burgeoning knowledge production and the expansion of overseas empires. This work follows imperial geographies, exploring the circulation of practitioners, specimens, and ideas within French, Dutch, Spanish, or British imperial circuits. My work looks both within and across the confines of empire to examine how scientific communication managed to thrive, in spite of anti-colonial resistance, imperial rivalries, and uncertain maritime traffic in the eighteenth century. This paper uses unpublished correspondence of Col. Robert Jacob Gordon, the last Dutch East India Company military commander at the Cape of Good Hope, to evaluate the content and chart the geographic extent of his scientific communication. Gordon was an avid naturalist who used his post as a launching pad for several significant expeditions in southern Africa. I seek not to re-evaluate Gordon's scientific contributions, which are well documented, but rather to reconstruct his network of correspondents in the Netherlands, England, Scotland, France, and the Austro-Hungarian empire. I use Gordon's wide-ranging interests to ask whether an "Empire of Letters" actively sought to claim new ground and establish clear lines of authority, intentionally seeking to traverse political allegiances or subvert political sovereignty.

**Thursday, October 20, 2016**

**12:30 – 1:30pm**

**SST 777**

**(light lunch served)**