

London Conference in Critical Thought 2014

Goldsmiths, University of London

27-28 June 2014

Call for Papers

The third annual London Conference in Critical Thought (LCCT) will offer a space for an interdisciplinary exchange of ideas for scholars who work with critical traditions and concerns. It aims to provide opportunities for those who frequently find themselves at the margins of their department or discipline to engage with other scholars who share theoretical approaches and interests.

Central to the vision of the conference is an inter-institutional, non-hierarchical, and accessible event that makes a particular effort to embrace emergent thought and the participation of emerging academics, fostering new avenues for critically-oriented scholarship and collaboration.

The conference is divided into thematic streams, each coordinated by different researchers and with separate calls for papers, included in this document. We welcome paper proposals that respond to the particular streams below. In addition, papers may be proposed as part of a general stream, i.e. with no specific stream in mind. Spanning a range of broad themes, these streams provide the impetus for new points of dialogue.

- Aesthetic Refusals: Oppositional Citizenship and Public Culture
- Conceptions and Practices of Critical Pedagogy
- Critical Approaches to Care Relationships
- (Dis)orders of Migration
- Dissenting Methods: Engaging Legacies of the Past, Defining Critical Futures
- 'entitled'
- 'everyday political'
- How Does One Think Difference?
- Legal Critique: Positions, Negotiations and Strategies
- Moving Through the Intersection? Interrogating Categories and Postintersectional Politics
- Philosophy and Critical Thought Inside and Outside The University
- Pragmatism and Critical Traditions
- Sounding the Counterfactual: Hyperstition and Audial Futurities
- Strategies of Silence
- Street Level: Towards a Critical Discourse on Urban Aesthetics
- Subjects in Space(s): Navigating Multiplicity
- The Critical Brain
- The Human After Anthropocentrism? Life. Matter. Being.
- Time Discipline
- What is the Question of Critique?

Please send paper/presentation proposals with the relevant stream indicated in the subject line to paper-subs@londoncritical.org. Submissions should be no more than 250 words and should be received by the **10th March 2014**.

Participation is free (though registration will be required).

Further details on the ethos and organisational structure of the LCCT can be found at londoncritical.org.

Contact us at inquiries@londoncritical.org.

londoncritical.org / twitter: @LondonCritical

Aesthetic Refusals: Oppositional Citizenship and Public Culture

Stream organiser: Anna Hickey-Moody

Dick Hebdige's 1979 *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* became famous for offering tools for thinking about the vernacular practice of aesthetic Refusal [sic] through style. Hebdige explains this process of Refusal through characterizing it as a "deviation [that] may seem slight indeed – the cultivation of a quiff, the acquisition of a scooter, or a record or a certain type of suit. But it ends in the construction of a style, in a gesture of defiance or contempt, in a smile or a sneer. It signals a Refusal". He continues, to say, "this Refusal is worth making ... these gestures have a meaning, ... the smiles and sneers have some subversive value" (1979:2). Over thirty years later echoes of Hebdige's Refusal resound in Lauren Berlant's concept of oppositional citizenship, constructed in her 2008 book *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*. Berlant says: "... Juxtapositional citizenship ... reveals individuals en masse hoarding a sense of belonging *against* what politics as usual seems to offer – a space of aversive intensities, increased risk, shame, vulnerability, exploitation, and, paradoxically, irrelevance" (2008: 150). Papers in this stream disagree that political desire that is failed by politics must lead to irrelevance.

Bringing these two positions together and applying them to everyday life, politics and art practice, this stream calls for papers that examine the utility of material cultures. Bringing a focus on aesthetics and signifying through style to practices of belonging *against* dominant political discourses, this call invites contributions that examine forms of juxtapositional citizenship articulated through style. Style can be read as lifestyle, styles of (art/political) practice, media publics and mediated publics, ways of belonging to public and private countercultures or oppositional publics, or aesthetic practices that are articulations of little public spheres. Publics are read as always/already multiple and papers are invited to speak to a concept of little publics in order to capture the political agency of minority that is inherent in this multiplicity. Through asking "what makes such a public 'counter' or 'oppositional'?" (2002: 85), Warner shows us that the nature of political "opposition" is difficult to define. For example, little publics can be both oppositional and can acquiesce to dominant political and ethico-aesthetic norms. E.g both in and out of school, the Arts often try to create dominant cultural positions on and of youth, and those belonging to these positions can be read as popular young publics. Often arts programs can attempt to do this by involving marginalized young people and utilizing arts practices that are of interest to such youth, or exploring themes that are topical in the lives of marginalized youth. However, youth arts practices are also often politically conservative. There are major distinctions between the natures of the publics formed and addressed through different kinds of youth arts. This is but one example of the politics of style in making a public culture.

Exploring this and other examples, this stream invites papers that examine: practices of belonging *against* dominant political discourses expressed through street art and graffiti as a Refusal. Public/private space/time foldings in drug cultures, dress as Refusal, sex in public, specters of liberalism as incitement to perform sociability 'otherwise', archives of counterpublics and traumatic mediations, mediated publics, censorship.

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-subs@londoncritical.org with 'Aesthetic Refusals' in the subject line.

Conceptions and Practices of Critical Pedagogy

Stream organiser: Jones Irwin on behalf of the Critical Pedagogy Research Group, UK

Developing from 1960s critiques of traditional or 'banking' education (in Paulo Freire's terms), Critical Pedagogy has through the last forty years evolved myriad responses to the political and educational dilemmas framed in Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*.

Each of these texts articulated a vehement indictment of Western and 'first world'/colonial systems and delineated a radical practical alternative: as Fanon put it, 'the human being is also a No'. This articulation of resistance was to inspire several generations of critique and radical movements, from neo-Marxism to feminism to Situationism to neo-anarchism, each of these in turn also looking back to an earlier heritage of thinkers such as Marx, Engels, Bakunin, Lenin, Gramsci etc. More importantly, this period was to see significant developments of Leftist theory and practice across the globe, for example in the people's movements in Latin or South America (in Freire's Brazil or Chile), in Africa and in Europe. In many instances, the pendulum swung from intimations of radical change to a conservative backlash and extreme reaction (for example, in Pinochet's Chile), while in Europe, the Left became increasingly fragmented across a spectrum from radical to moderate. Here, Maoism in France or the Autonomist movement in Italy would be just two instances.

In the last ten years, one can argue that the Left has seen a kind of reunification of sorts, with the so-called critique of neoliberalism in politics and education bringing back together some of the elements of the radical and moderate Left, as a response to an increasingly desperate economic and social plight for many people in society. If this is somewhat evident in party politics across Europe, Latin and South America (for example in the case of the Worker's Party in Brazil) or further afield, it is perhaps even more evident in educational theory and practice. The neo-liberal revisioning of the university and the school system, from Sweden to Britain to the USA to Ireland, has led to a coming together of many different kinds of alternative and resistance practices and praxis, whether in the university, in schools, in communities or local politics.

In developing the legacy of Marx, Freire and Fanon, this stream foregrounds Critical Pedagogy as a very helpful theoretical-practical perspective to engage some of these new practices and theories in action. As a strongly committed perspective to social and political critique, Critical Pedagogy has developed through thinkers such as McLaren, Giroux, hooks, Kincheloe, most especially, while also engaging with some elements of postmodernism. This stream welcomes panel and or paper/performance proposals on any of the above or related topics and is especially interested in approaches which avoid typical academic presentation.

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-sub@londoncritical.org with 'Critical Pedagogy' in the subject line.

Critical Approaches to Care Relationships

Stream organiser: Emily Taylor

Critical scholarship has contributed to conceptualisations of care that take us beyond the dichotomies between care-giver and care-receiver, the simplistic notions of care as burden, and the individualised approaches to the wellbeing and quality of life of carers and cared-for that are seen in mainstream discourse. Rather, critical thought has engaged with the relational and embodied nature of care and understandings of care relationships as part of a good life. This stream seeks to build upon critical approaches to care that address the diversity of human experience.

Interdisciplinary discussion is anticipated and contributions are invited from a range of perspectives including those from within philosophy, critical medical humanities, science and technology studies, critical gerontology, geography and sociology. Contributions could address care relationships in particular stages of the life course such as later life or youth, or in relation to disability or long-term conditions including dementia, or in regard to mobilities including in local spaces and in migration across borders. International and cross-cultural perspectives are encouraged. Both individual papers and panels of three to four papers are welcome and could address but are not limited to the following topics:

- Existential ethics, feminist ethics of care and the meanings of care
- Manifestations of power in networks of carers, for example in the relations between 'paid' carers and 'informal' family and friends carers
- Care work ('paid', 'informal' or however conceptualised) as a site for the performance of identities including gender identities
- Intersectionality in the diversity of the care work sector and the ways inequalities are reproduced
- The shaping of care relationships through technological development, including surveillance and digital technologies and the regulation of stages of the life course such as later life
- The interests served by uses of the terms 'wellbeing' and 'quality of life' and the nature of care meaningful to those people who are encountering decline and death
- Methodologies for researching care that have a relational ontology

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-sub@londoncritical.org with 'Care Relationships' in the subject line.

(Dis)orders of Migration

Stream organisers: Cecilia Rubiolo & Silvia Scordo

The tension between the desire of individuals and groups to move freely and the governmental attempts to order and control such movements in order to transform the “force of the freedom of mobility into competitively organised upward social mobility” is an emblematic figure of the establishment of capitalism and the constitution of the modern (colonial) sovereign state. With the globalization of capitalist economy – the intensification of mobility of both capital and labour, the emergence of multiple complex transnational, networked, material and immaterial practices and spaces – migration is an essential field of study to critically reflect upon the question of power within the current neoliberal order.

Moreover, from our perspective, the “reproduction of capital passes through processes of urbanization”, which have recently gone global, so that “global city formation and state re-scaling are dialectically intertwined moments of a single dynamic of global capitalist restructuring”. It is mostly within the urban space that the recombination of different forms of exploitation and labour subsumption – the “long originary accumulation” – becomes visible. Therefore, it is within the urban space that different scales of mobility regulation and control (national, supra-national, sub-national) are often re-territorialized to render migrants' lives productive, on the one hand, and that movements and struggles through which migrants challenge the border are enacted on an everyday basis.

This stream welcomes papers which engage critically with processes of migration movements and control in concrete social situations, drawing upon concepts of Foucaultian-inspired “governmentality” and/or of “border (or migration) regimes”. Critical of frameworks in which the mechanisms of migration control and migrants' agency are understood through the dichotomous divide of dominance/resistance, we encourage analysis of mobility regulation and migrant subjectivities in terms of asymmetric power relations at play across proliferating borders.

Ethnographic inquiries in contemporary urban contexts, genealogical analysis of specific historical events and auto/biographical approaches critical of methodological nationalism will be particularly appreciated.

Contributions may address (but are not limited to) the following issues:

- techniques/technologies of ordering and classification of migrant populations, as a means of differential inclusion into – and exclusion from – a given political community (concepts: second-class citizenship, clandestinity, informality/irregularity, race/gender/class intersectionality, racialization/ethnicization, orientalism/balkanism, etc.)
- practices of self-government of migration through space and time and their more or less emancipatory potentials (concepts: autonomy of migration, subjection/subjectivation, embodiment, structural/symbolic/everyday violence, religious incorporation, etc.)
- the “camp form” as the establishment of “definitely temporary zones” and other forms of spatial ordering in the urban scape and their strategic use as a device of management, classification, control of migrant bodies “in excess” (concepts: deportability, securization, humanitarization, re-nomadization, segregation/gentrification, etc.)

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-subs@londoncritical.org with ‘Disorders of Migration’ in the subject line.

Dissenting Methods: Engaging Legacies of the Past, Defining Critical Futures

Stream organisers: Naomi Millner, Julian Brigstocke, Sam Kirwan and Lara Montesinos Coleman with [The Authority Research Network](#).

What does it mean to be engaged in critical research, today?

This stream explores the contemporary challenges and limits of critical scholarship by examining the methods we use to engage with, apprehend, and respond to the material struggles of today's world. We seek both to historicise and to materialise critique, locating a practice *always already* involved in entanglements of power, experience, or capital, whilst also drawing out the connections with critical praxis more broadly defined. We will focus upon the stakes of critique, asking what forms of collaboration and experimentation might prove effective in confronting political, environmental and economic issues of our time. Such collaborations include not only interpersonal and transnational alliances but also engagements with the political agency of objects, technologies, laws, more-than-human actors, and past and future generations.

There are long histories of defining critique in relation to praxis, and critical theories from Marxism to post-structuralism have attempted to site the production of critical knowledge against a backdrop of colonial, gendered, and race-inflected power relations. From the 1960s, participatory approaches to methodology have also sought to bridge divides between “activist” forms of knowledge, communities of practice, and academic scholarship. But have we escaped the ivory towers of a complex jargon distanced from everyday understandings and concerns? Should we? What place is there for scholarship within the political, environmental and economic struggles that will define human and more-than-human futures?

Engaging legacies of the past, defining critical futures.

At the heart of this issue is the experience and performance of temporality. Economic and environmental legacies threaten to colonise the future as well as the present. Moreover, emergent critical theory can sometimes forget the longer trajectories of struggle and invention which have shaped contemporary public institutions, as well its own critical concepts. We are interested in drawing together reflections on critical research as it relates to its own pasts, the place of the scholar in confronting precarious futures, intergenerational exchanges and disconnections, “knowledge-by-experience” through space and time, and the importance of thinking politics for specific historical moments.

We invite papers engaging within **contemporary material struggles** which emphasise **critical methodologies, scholarship and dissent**, and/or **the place of academia** with a particular emphasis on **connecting legacies of the past with critical futures**. Contributions may be primarily theoretical or empirical but should relate to attempts to devise methodologies and theories that are adequate to the struggles they confront.

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-subs@londoncritical.org with ‘Dissenting Methods’ in the subject line.

'entitled'

Stream Organiser: Victoria Ridler

'The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying "This is mine". . . was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes might not any one have saved mankind, by pulling up stakes, or filling up the ditch. . .' Rousseau, 1755

'For to live in a political realm with[out] . . . authority . . . means to be confronted anew . . . by the elementary problems of human living together.' Arendt, 1954

The idea of a 'culture of entitlement' has recently been used by the British Prime Minister to criticize those who rely upon welfare benefits. His apparent ignorance of the forms of 'entitlement' which structures the position of social and economic privilege was aptly called out by the Archbishop of Canterbury who suggested that it was, in fact, the behavior of bankers that exemplified such a 'culture'. While both of these positions present a 'culture of entitlement' as if it were a self-evident slur, a general notion of entitlement continues to saturate and structure political discourse. From claims about the correct system for the distribution of wealth to who is entitled to speak or be heard, we frame many of our political expressions in a language of entitlement often with little reflection on what is being imported in its use. *This call for papers seeks to examine and critically engage with the work that entitlement does (and undoes) in our contemporary political thought.*

A premise of this call is that entitlement presupposes a legitimizing order, a *nomos* to which one impliedly refers when entitlement is invoked. It is also a premise of this call that its invocation not only presupposes a legitimizing order, but, in its iteration, also lends legitimacy to the orders it presupposes. This call, of course, welcomes a challenge to these premises.

Possible areas to explore and critically engage with the work that entitlement does/undoes in contemporary political discourse might include:

- The relationship between leftist/anarchist politics and struggles for (legal) rights;
- Ways of envisioning 'being with' (in an 'inoperative' idea of community, for example);
- Posthuman or materialist thought and the relation between the human/non-human world;
- Gestures towards: the law of the law; a law to come; rights of resistance; the radical potential of human rights; natural law; *et cetera* in contemporary critical legal thought;
- Challenging (or checking) privilege.

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-subs@londoncritical.org with 'entitled' in the subject line.

'everyday political'

Stream organiser: Edwina Attlee

everyday / each day in continued succession / a weekday, a day other than Sunday / worn or used on ordinary days / unremarkable, ordinary, commonplace, mediocre

political / of, belonging to or concerned with the form, organization, and administration of a state, public life and affairs as involving authority and government / shrewd, judicious, expedient / having an organised form of government or society / supporting particular ideas, principles or commitments

The everyday resists thought and defies theorization, everyday life is doing not thinking, everyday life is elsewhere, it is what is left over, it is where we do not look, it is when we do not think. The study of everyday life attends to this distracted subject, looks for it in empty rooms, reads it in traces, gestures, moments. Does the everyday resist or is it happy to be led by the hand back to the examination table? Freud saw it as a zone of mistakes, a place where the subject is not sufficiently repressed), a zone for the (occasionally) incorrect, a zone of outbursts of unconscious desires. Are we to conclude that the study of everyday life is just dream analysis?

Can we argue instead that it is innately political and profoundly important? In the very least because these practices, these traces, gestures and moments, these rhythms and these psychopathologies all lend support and give shape to particular ideas, principles or commitments. The fear is that everyday life lends unconscious support to these things, that it is a zone of unthought supplication. Is the study of everyday life merely an attempt to wake up a sleeping subject? Or is there potential subversion already at work in the unthought, in the outburst, in the dream?

Questioning the politics of the everyday (and of the study of everyday life) draws attention to the tensions between the administered and the unadministered, between the organising structures of day and night, state and subject, government, company and individual. In his lecture series 'Where is Everyday Life?' Mark Cousins used the everyday as a category with which to draw attention to the way 'a life' has come to be thought of as an object of consumption, simultaneous product and possession; "a life is an individual phenomenon which crosses with a collective one". Drawing together the everyday and the political makes uneasy bedfellows of the internal and the external lives we lead and asks what it means to live them out.

This stream seeks submissions which engage directly with these questions and concerns. Its obvious surrogates were Louis Althusser, Guy Debord, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel de Certeau, Henri Lefebvre, Roland Barthes, Sigmund Freud and Michel Foucault. We welcome responses that deal with these and other writers directly and indirectly. Potential areas for consideration might include:

The architecture of/for everyday life

Everyday life in the hospital

Everyday life and the prison

Everyday as the neutral

Everynight life; sleep (where, when, with who?)

The everyday and the nightshift

Patronising everyday life

Worshipping everyday life

Everyday life and the archive

Reading the diary, the obituary, the language of administration

Reading movement, reading the stationary

Reading everyday technologies

Reading rest

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-sub@londoncritical.org with 'everyday political' in the subject line.

How Does One Think Difference?

Stream organisers: Henry Somers-Hall & Nathan Widder

Many of the most radical interventions in philosophy since Kant involve the recognition that the classical categories of thought are inadequate for an enquiry into the nature of the world. The presupposition that the world can be understood as composed of centres of identities determined by properties ultimately makes explaining the notions of genesis, transformation, and totality impossible. Whether criticising the 'fixed, objective Self' that makes dialectical transition impossible (Hegel), the ontotheological categorisation of the ground of beings as itself a being (Heidegger), or the transcendental illusion of understanding all organisation in terms of extensive categories (Bergson), it is the same methodological structures of classical metaphysics that are sought out, critiqued, and surpassed. Nonetheless, while the diagnosis of the failures of traditional modes of philosophising is shared, modern continental philosophy offers a proliferation of alternative models of thinking and philosophising. The aim of this stream will be to explore the ways in which a move from thinking in terms of identity to one in terms of difference is expressed in the thought of modern continental philosophers, and particularly to explore the conflicts, affinities and intersections between these different attempts to surpass thinking in terms of identities. Priority will be given to papers exploring the theoretical aspects of the question of difference, and that critically bring different paradigms and topics into relationship with each other. Potential topics papers could address include but are not limited to the following:

- Foucault's rejection of the juridico-discursive paradigm
- Rhizomatic and Arborescent thought
- Différance as the spacing and deferring that constitutes our metaphysical categories
- Hegel's critique of *Verstand*
- Merleau-Ponty's perspectival logic of perception
- Heidegger on grounding
- Adorno's thesis of non-identity
- Bergson's logic of multiplicities
- The image of thought/transcendental illusion in Deleuze's philosophy of difference

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-subs@londoncritical.org with 'How Does One Think Difference?' in the subject line.

Legal Critique: Positions, Negotiations and Strategies

Stream organisers: Daniel Matthews & Dimitrios Kivotidis

The radical critique of law has always had something of a strained relationship with both the academy and legal practice. Since shifts in legal training in the late 19th century, the majority of law schools have become training colleges for the profession with little or no interest in law's place within a wider matrix of political, economic, literary and theoretical concerns. With its focus on doctrine and procedure, legal education – in the main – has done its best to live up to Kafka's gloomy assessment that "reading law books is like eating sawdust." That said, the twentieth century has witnessed an increasingly diverse set of strategies deployed in legal critique, from the psychoanalytic to the Marxian, the aesthetic to the Derridian. Valuable work has been carried out under the banner of the American Critical Legal Studies movement and within the inoperative community that makes up the annual Critical Legal Conference in Europe. Moreover, scholars working in a number of disciplines – anthropology, literature, politics, cultural studies – continue to tackle problems of justice, punishment, representation and fairness, all central concerns for legal institutions and systems.

Creative and critical work in and around the law has provided the inspiration for much needed pedagogical experimentation as well as political and legal activism. Legal critique, however, remains something of a niche concern within the academy, seen to many as a closed shop of high theorising and utopian political imaginings. This stream invites scholars working in any discipline to reflect on the state of legal critique today and the positions, negotiations and strategies required to contend with contemporary socio-political exigencies. How should critical legal scholarship navigate its engagement with the radical politics that has always fuelled its fire? To what extent should critical legal scholars be concerned to position their work in relation to practitioners and cognate disciplines in the humanities and social sciences? What strategies for intervention and resistance might legal scholars offer in a time of crisis? How can critical scholarship open extant sites and communities to a broader set of intellectual concerns and traditions?

Papers might consider the following:

- The relation between legal critique and radical politics
- Pedagogical strategies for fostering a critical approach to the law
- The usually vexed, and often antagonistic, relation between critical legal scholars and legal practitioners
- The traditions of legal critique, their successes and shortcomings
- New strategies, initiatives and approaches to law and critique
- The role of theory in critical legal scholarship and the relation between critical legal studies and the wider academy

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper subs@londoncritical.org with 'Legal Critique' in the subject line.

Moving Through the Intersection? Interrogating Categories and Postintersectional Politics

Stream organisers: Feminist Postgraduate Forum

'...the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us'
Audre Lorde (1984).

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) introduced the term 'intersectionality' as a means to interrogate the treatment of race and gender as 'mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis.' Crenshaw argued that a single-axis framework systematically erases the experiences of domination that appear across multiple categories of lived experience. Due to their depth and pervasiveness within social and material worlds, categories continue to matter. Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix (2004) illustrate how a historically-rooted and forward-looking consideration of intersectionality raises many pressing questions for feminist practice. More recently, Heidi Safia Mirza (2013) draws upon the notion of embodied intersectionality to understand how the embodiment of power and disempowerment comes to be written through and within the raced, classed and sexed body.

However, critiques of intersectionality by feminist and queer theorists such as Jennifer Nash (2011) and Jasbir Puar (2005, 2011), position intersectionality as inseparably tied to the production and conservation of existing identity categories. Investment in particularity for Nash is evident 'in using black women's experience to problematize the rigid distinction between race and gender while maintaining a fundamental faith in both categories as meaningful, legible, and coherent.' In presupposing intersections as knowable, nameable and separable, Puar argues intersectionality has become a 'tool of diversity management' that conspires with the state to encase difference and control messiness.

The more recent turn towards affective politics within feminist theory is considered by some to have productive potential for transcending issues of multicultural liberalism, diversity, and visibility within critiques of intersectionality. Feminist scholars concerned with performative understandings of bodies as unstable assemblages use matter to contest that which cannot be captured within the intersectional subject.

This stream's aim is to consider challenges and tensions that arise from the ongoing need to attend to and account for categories, and the emergence of a postintersectional politics. Papers are invited to explore an interrogation of intersectionality and the mapping of the postintersectional landscape. Papers may consider, but are not limited to, these questions:

- How might research across disciplines engage with these issues, and as scholars, how can we place and discuss our own work within a politics of intersectionality?
- How do categories continue to matter to the work of feminist critique and practice?
- What may be opened up or closed down through considering ideas of assemblage rather than intersectionality?
- What are the interconnected relations between affect, assemblage, and intersectionality?
- How might affective politics transcend difficulties associated with intersectionality?
- Do certain categories get silenced or retreat from the lens of intersectional analysis?
- How do posthuman theories interrogate forms of social control that produce bodies and the coherent, knowable boundaries of the intersectional subject?

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-sub@londoncritical.org with 'Moving Through the Intersection' in the subject line.

Philosophy and Critical Thought Inside and Outside The University

Stream organisers: [Again] collective.

Steve Howard & Maria Dada www.againagainagainagain.com

There is a growing discourse that is raising pressing questions about the place of philosophy (and the critical humanities in general) within the current English university system. In the context of the tuition fees' increase and the increasing marketisation of higher education, is the university still the place in which philosophy and critical thought should primarily be located? Can engaged and rigorous work flourish outside the university: perhaps even to a greater extent than inside it? How is the distinction between the inside and outside of the university unsettled by the concept of para-academia, alternative education initiatives and even the influence of government and the corporate sector on the university? What are the implications of these changing conditions for theoretical and critical work?

We are interested in fostering spaces for critical thinking in extra-university settings, and aim to link up existing initiatives and bolster theoretical understanding of these spaces through this stream.

We would particularly encourage papers from non- or para-academic initiatives or individuals. Contributors may wish to address either or both the theoretical and practical issues facing alternative education initiatives and the current university system (the theoretical and practical issues being closely intertwined, of course).

Papers submitted to this stream could engage with topics including (but not limited to):

1. Theoretical issues:

- utility and the value and purpose of the humanities
- the concept of para-academia
- spaces, physical and conceptual, inside/outside the institution
- material conditions of a vibrant intellectual culture
- popularised 'impact' vs. rigorous thought
- the undercommons
- approaches to the university: reformation, resistance, revolution or other?
- accessibility, elites and barriers: financial and/or intellectual access
- recognition (for teachers or students)

2. Practical issues:

- finances: within academia or for extra-university initiatives
- freedom of thought, government and corporate influence on research
- building a community
- collaborative work
- access to texts and libraries
- open access publishing

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-subs@londoncritical.org with 'Inside and Outside the University' in the subject line.

Pragmatism and Critical Traditions

Stream organisers: Michael Bacon & Clayton Chin

Pragmatism has a turbulent intellectual history. Lauded by some as an engaged, non-metaphysical form of political thinking, it has been rejected by others as naïve instrumentalism that breeds only complacent acquiescence to the status quo. However, as a voice within nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first century Anglo-American social and intellectual life, pragmatism persists and effects new returns and interventions into political and social thought. Part of the recent surge of interest in pragmatism surrounds its relationship to other critical traditions, and it is to the possibilities that such interdisciplinarity affords that our proposed stream turns.

Recent work in pragmatism (e.g. Colin Koopman, Barry Allen, C.G. Prado, Paul Fairfield, and Melvin Rogers, amongst others) has engaged with prominent members of other critical traditions, highlighting both the overlap in fundamental concerns and the distinctive contribution of pragmatism to critical thought. Here, for example, the reconstructive and meliorative resources of pragmatism have been emphasized in contrast to the capacities for critique in genealogy and critical theory. Further, by building on such analyses, there has been a turn to the development of specifically pragmatist critical methodologies. Such approaches emphasise the distinctive value of the pragmatist lens for thinking politics critically. For example, the pragmatist rejection of ontology in favour of situated analyses of specific social practices and contexts is seen significantly to diverge from critical traditions in political thought which rely on ontological frames for analysis. The argument here and elsewhere is that its distinctive approach sets pragmatism apart as a critical tradition.

Our stream invites papers exploring such critical utility through dialogue with disciplinary practices and resources outside the tradition of pragmatism. Topics include, but are not limited to:

- The connections between pragmatism and critical traditions of thought, such as genealogy, critical theory, deconstruction, Marxism, and radical democracy (amongst others).
- Pragmatism's relationship to the 'ontological turn' in political theory.
- Pragmatism and feminist critique.
- The ways pragmatism as a tradition of thought is influenced by contingent historical contexts.
- The relationship between pragmatism and capitalism.
- Pragmatism as a resource for critical political engagement.
- Pragmatism as a democratic mode of thinking.
- Pragmatism and empirical social science.

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-subs@londoncritical.org with 'Pragmatism' in the subject line.

Sounding the Counterfactual: Hyperstition and Audial Futurities

Stream organisers: David Cecchetto, Marc Couroux, Eldritch Priest (theoculture.net)

That sound and affect are fatally entangled should be obvious, for they share a primordial relation to a zone of indetermination between unconscious bodily impingements and their selective, conscious actualization. This is further suggested by the way sound's im-mediacy and hearing's continuous intake figure audition as an amenability to influenza of various forms that nudge virtual potentials towards predetermined outcomes. For contemporary cybercapitalist power, sound's affective/infective nature plays a key role in ratifying its need to preserve homeostasis through a negative feedback that holds matter and information as equal realities. According to Anahid Kassabian, in a world of ubiquitous, networked technologies, music and sound are crucial vectors across which distributed-informatic subjectivities are constituted, a position advanced by the third wave of cybernetics wherein machinic, mediatic, and prosthetic ecologies have become indissociable from biological processes. Indeed, within this human/non-human commingling control operates virtually, nested within affective states that "unfold the past into the present" and inflect "the way the present acts on the past to unravel a new future."

Hyperstition, a term coined by the Ccru (Cybernetic Culture Research Unit) and most often attributed to its chief ideologue Nick Land, is a useful point of intervention within a system that suppresses contingency, futurity. According to Land, "hyperstitions by their very existence as ideas function causally to bring about their own reality...transmuting fictions into truths." Such a formulation is exemplified by finance capitalism's investment in fictional entities such as futures and derivatives to compose an abstract but no less real dimension of profit. However, the manner in which the power of the virtual has been exploited by inhumanist capital to bring about the reality of a speculative profit—as in branding's sorcerous implantation of false memories and future desires, which rewire the very notion of lived experience—points to the promise of hyperstition as producing counterfactual lines of actualization that compel the world to unaffordable futures.

How might sound (noise = rumore (It.) = rumor), the virological, immanent medium par excellence—acoustic space as networked space—be productively leveraged for its capacities to induce, bend, and channel affective potential? How might the effective powers of fiction be sonically enacted? How might spatial redistributions of mobile electronic sound galvanize emergent social and political structures?

Papers that grapple with these questions are welcomed, especially (but not exclusively) pertaining to the following areas of investigation:

- Sonic, technological, vibrational intervention: tactics / strategies.
- Science-fiction scenarios productively intermingling sound and futurity.
- The relation of sound to virality and emergence: how the molar might be engendered by the molecular.
- Technological prosthetics: how an alien phenomenology might be sonically leveraged.
- Sound and neurological processes: psychoacoustic neuromarketing (audio branding), priming, etc.
- New forms of listening (distracted, marginal, algorithmic, molecular, paradromic, pareidolic, machinic, infrasonic, telepresent) fostered by distributed, networked technologies.
- Techno-magical operations: confluences between occult procedures and bleeding-edge technologies.
- Rhythmanalytical modalities in algorithmic, computational cultures.
- Sonic accelerationism: auditory catalysts to induce alternative modernities and new socio-political formations (swarming, crowdsourcing, local-global transversals, viral processes).

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-sub@londoncritical.org with 'Sounding the Counterfactual' in the subject line.

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Strategies of Silence

Stream organiser: Thomas Gould

The moment the word 'silence' is spoken, silence is lost. The famous closing proposition of the *Tractatus* ('whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent') articulates a binarism that has endured in various strands of critical and literary theory; George Steiner's collection of essays *Literature and Silence* and Susan Sontag's 'The Aesthetics of Silence', among other examples, heed Wittgenstein's injunction by submitting silence to a rigorously negative definition. Silence, in this tradition of critical thought, is a mere placeholder for *non-language, non-signification, non-art: that which cannot be spoken of*.

But the last words of the *Tractatus* are by no means the last words on the subject. For writers such as Maurice Blanchot and Mallarmé, as is the case for John Cage's famous 'silent' composition 4'33", the work of art constitutes a space where silence *becomes* form, privileging the contingent and the aleatory over content. Meanwhile, John Cage's declaration—after stepping into an anechoic chamber and hearing the sounds of his own body—that there is 'no such thing as silence' leads us to the theoretically loaded motif of silence as a recourse to self-enclosure. The thinking of silence as an ontological exposure to 'one's-self', as opposed to a condition of privation, constitutes an important step in both Heidegger's path through *Being and Time* and, more recently, Jean-Luc Nancy's short work *À l'écoute*. Elsewhere, silence is not thought of as the beyond of some subjective limit *à la* Wittgenstein but the space into which one might be, or is, outcast. Foucault suggests that silence constitutes the absent space of censorship that necessarily attends any discourse, whereas some strands of feminist theory conceive of woman's placeless place as an extra-linguistic, extra-discursive space of silence. To be silent is thus to *be silenced*.

But might silence itself be deployed to subvert this silencing? This stream invites participants to consider the rhetorical and theoretical roles of silence in various, interdisciplinary critical discourses, and asks whether it is possible to recuperate silence, as a concept, into some form of strategic thought: against *Logos*, against linguistic or discursive subjectivation, against identitarianism, against censorship.

Papers submitted to this stream might consider:

- Aesthetics of silence/silence in performance
- Silence and Eastern philosophy/feminism/linguistics, etc.
- Censorship and self-censorship
- Silence as space/silence as time
- Silence and the idea of the voice
- The right to silence

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-subs@londoncritical.org with 'Strategies of Silence' in the subject line.

Street Level: Towards a Critical Discourse on Urban Aesthetics

Stream organisers: Ruth Mason, Sam Barton, and Tim Ivison

This stream of papers will provide a forum for critical investigations of the aesthetic experience in urban research. We are interested in 'aesthetics' not just in terms of the circumscribed categories of monumental architecture, 'the creative class', or public art, but as a vital component of city life and politics at street level. We contend that a sharp critical engagement with the visual and material culture of the city is essential. We invite papers that look beyond the preoccupation with Kantian beauty and investigate the institutional, ideological and economic power of aesthetic practices and phenomena in the city.

This is a cross-disciplinary panel, the three collaborators coming together more through debate than agreement and desiring the same from our participants. The aim is not necessarily to build towards a consensus on the aesthetic regimes of the city but to have a productive debate that may produce practical considerations across empirical, theoretical, political, and artistic approaches to urban space. Below we highlight three areas of particular interest.

Aesthetics and Politics at Street Level

For residents of cities, change – whether positive or negative – is registered through the senses. We suggest that a multi-sensory aesthetics should be at the centre of critical engagement with the city, not a peripheral alternative to capital P 'Political' approaches. At street level the city is a heaving mess of fleshiness, dirt, stone and concrete. We challenge the divide between the everyday (de Certeau etc...) and macro-economic scales that have dominated urban studies (Harvey, Smith etc...). Perhaps as Benjamin read the politics of modernity through the material minutiae of the Paris arcades, an urban aesthetics considered at a human scale may illuminate urban social conditions with a flash.

- Keywords: *gentrification, multicultural, urban everyday, public spaces, community activism, urban change, Benjamin & the arcades.*

Aesthetics and the Everyday Life of the City's Past

Even when material traces of the city remain, the nature of an individual's engagement with what survives can be lost with the passing of time. Amongst these traces and fragments, can the consideration of urban aesthetics contribute to an understanding of how the city was historically experienced? Some historians (Demosh, Dennis, Nead, etc.) advocate such explorations; however, the notable absence of discussion about the meaningful purpose of aesthetics in many historical accounts of the urban, suggests a broader unspoken hostility. Is this the result of a lack of historical material, or a critical decision based on the inability of aesthetics to illuminate the everyday life of the past?

- Keywords: *historical experience; material culture; domestic, industrial or religious space; suburbanisation; industrialisation.*

Beyond Aesthetic Resistance

Since at least the late 1960s, artists and other creative professionals have been voluntary or enlisted catalysts in the project of urbanism: as aesthetic strategists, neighbourhood activists, and beautifiers of corporate plazas and public parks. More recently, they have been identified with the asymmetrical and ambivalent processes of urban pioneering, gentrification, added-value street art, and community-based relational aesthetics. Here we would like to invite critical investigations of these processes, focusing on the transactions of cultural and financial capital between art and urban development both in the UK and abroad. The panel will not focus on novel deployments of art as aesthetic resistance but rather on political forms of organising and critique within and against the neoliberal city.

- Keywords: *self-organised, culture-led regeneration, gentrification, mega-development, productivity aesthetics, creative capital.*

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-sub@londoncritical.org with 'Street Level' in the subject line. You may also choose to cite specifically one of these three areas of interest.

Subjects in Space(s): Navigating Multiplicity

Stream organisers: Toby Bennett & Jonathan Stafford

In Ancient Athens Socrates would wander the agora and interact with its inhabitants in the pursuit of virtue. Today, while we tend to detach academic from everyday life, we still seek knowledge by navigating through space – however, the terrain has grown immeasurably, extending through the virtual and abstract, into the material and embodied. In order to traverse such spaces, we are required to occupy and perform certain subject positions and exclude others; or otherwise to seek reconciliation between seemingly incompatible modes of life. This stream invites contributors to investigate their own theoretical and disciplinary orthodoxies in response to these developments.

Following Siegfried Kracauer's 'turn to the surface', Celia Lury, Luciana Parisi and Tiziana Terranova recently diagnosed a process of rationalisation that seeks to instil a logic of dynamic equivalence, effecting new continuities between multiple distinct spaces. The 'becoming topological of culture' they describe gives rise to a number of fundamental questions about the way in which we engage with the humanities. How do various spaces and discursive domains interact with their subjects? What topological transformations are possible and what happens to individuals in the process? What techniques can we adopt to help us in our navigation?

Examples of this discursive and spatial multiplicity might include (but are not limited to):

- Inhabited space (the office, the bourgeois interior, the city...)
- Geopolitical space (nations, lands, territories...)
- Discursive space (spoken, written, visual...)
- Imaginary space (Lacan, Castoriadis, Anderson...)
- Digital space (cloud storage, hypertext navigation, virtual worlds...)
- Sonic space (headphones, church bells, soundsystems...)
- Legal space (courts, jurisdiction, contractual relations...)
- Neuroanatomical space (functional localisation, synaptic gaps, cerebral sulci...)
- Psychic space (surfaces, knots, rhizomes...)
- Economic space (markets, equilibrium, exchange infrastructures...)

Today's university negotiates such spatial difference by encouraging 'interdisciplinarity'; all too often, however, this takes the form of an unhappy synthesis which is then fetishised by marketing rhetoric, or reified into impact, outreach, and knowledge-transfer partnerships. More useful, perhaps, are those terminologies and methodologies that seek to map these spaces, explore their borders, overlaps and interactions, reveal the political framework that propels their (re)production, and ask what kinds of agency might emerge as a result. Examples include: Appadurai's imaginary '-scapes'; Bhaskar's four-planar social being; Latour's actor-network assemblages; and Stiegler's general organology of transindividuation; alongside other instances of intersectionality and relational geography.

This panel recognises that ontologies of becoming through space may in part reflect neoliberal agendas of unfettered mobility in an age of networked flows; papers which articulate responses to this problematic might consider specific concrete examples or explore abstract principles. Presentations of empirical research are welcomed, where participants are looking to open out the boundaries of their work to form new spaces and create opportunities for dialogue.

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-subs@londoncritical.org with 'Subjects in Space' in the subject line.

The Critical Brain

Stream organisers: Ben Turner & Chris Henry

Critical Theorists, philosophers and political theorists have begun to explore the connections between new sciences of the brain and the practice of critical thought. This has led to diverse possibilities for new ways of thinking critically. More fundamentally, these are providing new tools for understanding and challenging the changing operation(s) of capitalism.

Catherine Malabou's work on neuroplasticity has shown the role of synaptic flexibility in constructing the self, and posed the serious question of how we can separate this from the incessant demand for adaption to neo-liberal imperatives. Maurizio Lazzarato has shown that the production of value now relies on 'Immaterial Labour', service and entertainment products, which Yann Moulier Boutang has shown to be linked to the increasingly cognitive basis of the production of capitalist value. Bernard Stiegler emphasises the role of 'neuro-power' in harnessing synaptogenesis, arguing that capitalism now revolves around an attention economy that exploits the threefold relationship between the brain, the social, and technologies, which he calls 'organology'. The fruits of these theoretical perspectives have led to new ways to resist capitalism and practice politics. Franco 'Bifo' Berardi has suggested that the cultivation of the poetic singularities of communication can resist the stratification of brains by the imperatives of finance. William Connolly has suggested that conjunctions between philosophies of layered memory and neuroscience reveal the role of perception in synaptogenesis, to ground a political ethics of cinema through this materialist conception of the brain. This connection of the brain to cinema was suggested by Deleuze and has been developed by Patricia Pisters, who emphasises a 'neuro-image' of thought to be found in the cinematic image.

On the other hand, neuroscience has been adopting philosophical approaches in order to show how the brain is constructed by its environment. Antonio Damasio has shown links between the thought of Spinoza and the breakdown of the mind/body dualism. The 4EA approach to cognitive science (embodied, embedded, extended, enactive, affective) has incorporated phenomenology to show that the brain is formed by its situatedness, and is an extended organ. John Protevi has also suggested that the work of Deleuze could prove useful for thinking the embedded brain.

We welcome papers that address the relation between the brain and critical thought, with the above thinkers only providing a suggestion of where this issue has been addressed. Possible topics for this engagement could include:

- The attention economy, cognitive capitalism and the brain.
- What cognitive marketing technologies mean for anti-capitalism.
- Addressing the ideological biases of neuroscience.
- How neuro-power develops traditional and Foucauldian notions of power.
- The position of art and artistic practice in new philosophies of the brain.
- 'New materialisms' and the brain.
- The relationship between psycho-analysis and cognitive science.

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to paper-sub@londoncritical.org with 'The Critical Brain' in the subject line.

The Human After Anthropocentrism? Life. Matter. Being.

Stream organisers: Eva Aldea & Danielle Sands

The rejection of anthropocentrism has become a theoretical commonplace, a prerequisite for new approaches to non-human animal life, for political ecologies and for new materialisms. However, both the understanding and the implications of this rejection differ widely between discourses, and it is unclear whether terms such as post-humanism and anthropocentrism share a common referent. Despite a seemingly common goal to think outside the human, disciplines such as critical animal studies, ecological and environmental thought, and object-oriented ontology appear unable or unwilling to engage in dialogue.

This stream has two interconnected aims: to invite the exchange of ideas and to encourage a rethinking of the human after anthropocentrism without a return to anthropocentrism. On the one hand, we want to investigate if these separate anti-anthropocentric discourses are actually contradictory or, in fact, congruent, and to explore what fruitful questions may arise from an exchange between them. On the other, we ask how these approaches towards life, matter and being illuminate the human and its philosophical, ethical and political engagements.

We are interested in, for example: the nature and significance of animal ethics in an object-oriented world; the post-human encounter with a human other; the possibility of a phenomenology of plants; the relationships between living agents and material actants; the continued usefulness of the concepts of system and assemblage. We would like to stimulate questions such as: what would Carol Adams say to Graham Harman? Is there any dialogue to be had between Arne Naess and Jane Bennett? And what answers would Jacques Derrida offer Bruno Latour?

We invite papers which touch upon the human in (non)relation to animal, plant, thing. These may engage with the following:

- Animal ethics/theory/studies
- Animality
- Animacy
- Plants as persons
- Ecology and ecosophy
- Environmental studies
- Speculative realism
- Agency/subjectivity
- Collectivity/interobjectivity
- Alien phenomenology
- Ethics of the non-human
- Non-being
- Vital materialism
- Systems and assemblages
- Thing-power
- Plasticity



Animal-vegetable-mineral man.

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Time Discipline

Stream organiser: Chrysi Papaioannou

'Time discipline' is a term encountered in a number of anthropological, historical and sociological studies whose aim is to examine the disciplinary effect of regulated time on lived experience. Such studies have critiqued the conception and practice of time as a unit of measure by analysing, for instance, the relationship between the invention of the Gregorian calendar and World Standard Time, and the establishment of world trade and a global economic system (J. Le Goff, 1980; S. Kern, 1983); the imposition of clock-time and calendar-time on agricultural societies leading to the making of a 'capitalist time-consciousness' (E.P. Thompson, 1967; N. Thrift, 1981; J. Fabian, 1983); or the internalisation of measurable, objective time through "the silent normative force of temporal norms, which come in the form of deadlines, schedules and temporal limits" (H. Rosa, 2010: 41).

Conceived in the spirit of such a critique, this stream invites papers that build on and expand the parameters of this critical tradition. The thematic areas below are suggested as potential starting points of enquiry:

- Ageing and historical ages ('young', 'mature' period; 'early', 'late' development; biological evolution and evolutionary conceptions of history)
- Historicisms and historical materialisms (revolutionary time; messianic time)
- Mapping time (calendars; public schedules; cartographies; urban planning)
- Queer/feminist politics of time (reproduction; transitioning)
- Storytelling; time in textual, sound and visual narratives
- Time-management and critical management studies
- Work-discipline and labour-time; the time of financial capitalism (acceleration, deregulation, credit, debt)
- World Standard Time, world history, philosophies and/or critiques of universal history
- Before/Beyond the temporal logic of modernity

Complementing the above fields of enquiry, the stream also invites papers that turn the critique of time-discipline 'inwards' – towards a self-reflexive critique of the temporalities of our respective academic disciplines, whether in the human, social or natural sciences.

What are the temporal assumptions embedded in, and produced by, different disciplines? How do different epistemologies 'discipline' time, and how might they undermine 'time-discipline'? To what extent – if at all – can we say that disciplines are constituted by their respective ways of studying and employing time? How have changing conceptions, practices and experiences of lived time affected and been affected by disciplinary temporalities? And how do our practices of critical thought today produce new temporalities within, across, and outside academic disciplines?

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What is the Question of Critique?

Stream organisers: Andrea Rossi, Diana Stypinska, and Chris Witter

This stream revolves around the question of how – in what way and in what contexts – critique’s status, potential and techniques are to be interrogated today. To ask this question means first raising the question of critique, questioning the normative frameworks and assumptions that inform contemporary critical practices. It implies scepticism towards the moral imperatives that invariably follow from attempts to authoritatively secure the problem of what critique ought to be and do. Raising these questions, however, does not necessarily entail embracing some form or another of radical relativism. Contingency may well represent the conditions of possibility of the critical task in the present. Critique, perhaps, can only be preserved by an unremitting work of self-elaboration – one which, hopefully, would not recoil into intellectual narcissism, but would locate critical openings fostered by the present.

The aim of the stream is not to define the nature of critique in general – as an abstraction or a universal – but to explore its contemporary emergence and possible points of application. We thus intend to provide a forum for open-ended investigation of this problem from all sides – whether that be the possibilities and limits of social movements, the role of intellectuals, a questioning of academia as an institution capable of producing critique, or some as yet unanticipated object of enquiry.

For this reason, we invite speakers to produce, not papers, but frameworks through which to convene participatory discussions involving all attendees (i.e. the ‘audience’). The role of the panellist will be to delineate a domain of problems, spheres of intervention and objects of inquiry on the basis of which to set out and chair collective discussions (ideally in the form of interconnected workshops running throughout one day).

Possible areas of discussion include:

- What are the most pressing questions of critique today? What is critique demanding of us in the present?
- What terrains of struggle and/or critique exist or are coming into being today?
- What is the relation between the critic and the critique they advocate?
- How are the forms of critique determined by contingent historical and social contexts?
- Is the very act of questioning a form of political engagement?
- Can aesthetics be a site of critical resistance? Is aesthetic energy exhausted in its questioning of the present?
- What are the possibilities and limits of critique with regards to popular culture?
- Is academia still a site of critique/still capable of producing critique? What is the role of critical intellectuals in the 21st century?
- What is the relation of critique to everyday life?
- What is to be done? (Can we actually expect critique to answer this question?)

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