critique

Critique, Post-Critique and the Present Conjuncture

Wednesday May 25, 2022

9am-6pm

2022 International Communication Association (ICA) pre-conference

Université Paris Nanterre & online

Pre-conference abstracts and speaker biographies

Pre-conference abstracts (in order of presentation)

9.05 to 10.30 Opening plenary: Critique, post-Critique and the Present Conjuncture

François Cusset, Université Paris Nanterre, – 'Critical swap: from social to techno - and left to right?'

Dissociated from social justice and collective progress (themselves sacrificed by the social-democratic Left in favor of market forces), the tradition of critical reason has turned into a rhetorical gimmick reappropriated today by the reactionary Right. What has been the role of our new communication technologies in such an ordeal – and thus, in rapidly disactivating critical powers over the last decades?

Alan Finlayson, University of East Anglia – 'This is Not a Critique: Politics in the Age of Ideological Entrepreneurship'

On digital platforms a distinct form of reactionary politics has gathered, intensifying and focusing its political arguments. Composed of diverse strands of political ideology it is unified by opposition to any and all forms of politics concerned with claims for equality. Key avatars of this politics are 'ideological entrepreneurs', individuals untethered from modern political institutions and engaged in the business of manufacturing criticism not only of this or that form of politics but of modern politics as such. While highly politically consequential these political forms are peculiar insofar as their goal is not primarily political consciousness raising and organising but the growth of an audience and the intensification of its parasocial attachment. Because they are not seeking to attain political legitimacy or win office, standard forms of counter-critique, which measure the distance of reactionary political claims from what is imagined to be universal and legitimate, are misdirected. In addition to such normative critique those who would defend politics must learn how to do it better, in ways which understand the digital political conjuncture and the opportunities it contains. The force and meaning of political critique is found only in its effects

Lilie Chouliaraki, London School of Economics and Political Science – short response to keynotes

10.30 to 10.45 Coffee break

10.45 to 12.15 Parallel panel session 1: Panel 1.1: Critique, theory, ideology and description

Robert Porter, University of Ulster – 'Universities and critique in an age of science'

In this paper, I will address three related issues. First, I will speak to the problem of universities, a problem not of 'marketization' and 'neo-liberal recuperation' (increasingly meaningless terms in contemporary discussions or critiques of the university), but of 'critique'. The problem is that there is too much critique, where critique denotes mere criticism, the to and fro of popular academic opinion, pseudo-intellectualism and socio-political instrumentalism which is nothing more than very thinly veiled careerism. Second, I will speak to the problem of scientism in the university setting, where scientism has become

both the condition of possibility of critique within the university as well as the normative end game for the so called 'critical academic'. Finally, I will briefly gesture toward what I call 'descriptive naturalism', an everyday practice of describing the world in all its absurdity, of believing in the world in all its immediate and discombobulating strangeness.

Jorge I. Valdovinos, University of Sydney – 'Reflections on the shifting boundaries between ideology and critique'

In our times, the stereotype of an enlightened critic that is somehow able to see through the veil of ideology in order to grasp "reality" has seemed to lose all past traces of legitimacy (Anker and Felski, (2017). In a so called "post-critique" age, approaches seeking to denounce false consciousness would seem to have become redundant (Best and Marcus, 2009)—what could we possibly gain from voices seeking to shake us from our stupor, letting us know that we are "being duped"? As the very notion of "ideology" seems to have become outdated and ineffectual—for many, we are now living in a post-ideological age— many scholars have sought to find productive alternatives to the limitations of a critical tradition grounded on a "hermeneutics of suspicion". Productive and enriching as they may seem, such explorations also run the risk of reverting into "functionalist theories of legitimacy" (Rehmann, 2013), being absorbed by the global capitalist system and put to work as sources for its own renewal (Bockman, 2012). At a moment in which far-right discourses have managed to emulate many features once associated with critical thinking, it is imperative that we turn our attention to those moral claims, axiological formulations, cultural preconceptions, discursive devices, and rules of inference that facilitate the arrival of "critical thinking" into spaces that are in fact dominated by liberal ideologies. The challenges critique faces today call for a re-examination of the meaning, significance, and purpose of the critical gesture (Fassin and Harcourt, 2019)—and yet, here lies the most dangerous ambiguity of them all. If it is true that in order to survive, "critique must involve its self-critique" (p. 3), then what would happen when discourses legitimating contemporary ideology begin to emulate this self-reflexive gesture? How could we draw (or redraw) a productive line between ideology and critique? By conquering our desire for authenticity through the performance of neutrality—a carefully orchestrated "self-critique" that appeals to emotion and affect, bypassing the level of rational arguments, opinions, and demands—contemporary discourses force us to reconsider both the genealogy and future iterations of these notions.

Joe Hughes, University of Melbourne – 'Conspiracies of Theory'

One of the things that unites the postcritical canon, from Sedgwick and Latour's founding essays to Sharon Marcus and Stephen Best's "surface reading" to Rita Felski's recent work, is the equation of "critique" with conspiracy theory. All you need to do, the argument goes, is flick on the news or spend an evening doomscrolling and you'll see racism, homophobia, ecological devastation, etc., radiant in the unending catastrophe of our times. If those structures are so readily visible, who needs a theory to reconstitute them behind the scenes as a hidden truth? The implication seems to be that there is both a given reality visible to all that requires no reflection, no interpretation, and no construction and, conversely, that any explicit reflection on determining structures starts to look slightly crazy, unfounded, a false projection of hidden conspirators. The aim of this paper is, partly, to take this situation seriously: to spell out what's at stake in postrcritque's self-recognition in conspiracy theory

and to work through the implied structure of critical conspiracies. Following this thread, though, will allow me to articulate a set of problems related to the function of criticism today and to raise a series of questions around the composition of the postcritical class and the standpoints from which theory can be built now.

Katy Highet, University College London – 'The ethics and politics of critique, action and social justice'

The relationship between critique, action and social justice is self-evident yet also fraught, and has taken on various forms throughout shifting historical and political economic conditions (Heller and McElhinny, 2017). Within critical socio-/applied linguistics there have been multiple examples of 'action' inspired by critical research – Gumperz's Cross-talk being one example – many of which have since been problematised. Today, many critical scholars are rightly sceptical of 'action', particularly as such concepts are often conflated with 'impact' and co-opted by the neoliberal university (Joseph-Salisbury and Connelly, 2021). As Cook argues, in such conditions, 'impact' and 'critique' appear ultimately irreconcilable (2012). Rather than abandoning 'action' as incompatible with critique, however, this tension can generate a critical re-thinking of the ways in which we can mobilise critique for the purposes of social justice (Kraft and Flubacher, 2020). In this paper, I outline an ongoing project that seeks to respond to this frustration by attempting to translate critical research into forms of 'action' undergirded by criticality. Drawing on a collaborative project with an English-teaching NGO for marginalised students in Delhi, I explore the ethical and political tensions that have emerged throughout the project, as well as our attempts to grapple with them. In doing so, I seek to raise questions about how we can reimagine the relationship between critique and 'action' as one that is *generative* (Urla, 2018) – that is, a critique that can be productively put in service of social justice while remaining critical of the contradictions and tensions inherent to such a pursuit.

Guobin Yang, University of Pennsylvania – 'Writing about the COVID Pandemic: Between the Limits of Critique and the Limits of Life'

Recent work on the limits of critique (Felski 2015, Anker & Felski 2017) is part of an intellectual trend that spans the humanities and social sciences (Jackson 2013; Latour 2005; Lim 2019; Love 2010; Marcus, Love & Best 2016; Scott 2017; Yang 2019). Despite its internal differences, this trend represents an intellectual ethos reaching back to Simmel (Beer 2019; Simmel 2010) and Bakhtin (1984; 1993, p.9), among others, and running through the works of Thompson (1995) and Ranciere (1991). In spirit, this line of thinking does not reject theory or critique per se. Rather, it opposes two closely related tendencies: the tendency to denigrate and preclude other ways of knowing and styles of scholarly representation, and the tendency to erase the vitality of life in its objects of study in its pursuit of "fatal theoreticism" (Bakhtin 1993, p. 27) and "explanation-as-accusation." (Felski 2017, p.23) The challenge is how to practice alternative styles of writing that can capture the flux and flows of life without losing "a sense of theory" (Bakhtin 1984, p. 294). To do so, post-critical scholarly writing might benefit from a deeper awareness of the limits of life (Simmel 2010). An awareness of the limits of life, and not just of the limits of critique, can better inform and ground "an affective stance" (Felski

2015, p. 18) toward our objects of study. I discuss how I experimented with taking an affective stance in my writing about the COVID pandemic (Yang 2022).

10.45 to 12.15 Parallel panel session 1: Panel 1.2: Critique, media, and digital culture

Tim Highfield, University of Sheffield – 'Critique and the digital present'

Who does digital culture serve, and to what end? The importance of critique for understanding and interpreting digital culture has never been more apparent than in the current climate. Misinformation and conspiracy theories are prevalent on popular platforms, whether spreading unsupported or maliciously untrue claims about the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccinations, the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, or the threat posed by critical race theory to US education systems.

Such developments highlight the weaponisation of digital culture, where the affordances, aesthetics, and architecture of TikTok, Twitter, and Instagram have enabled bad actors to flourish. Rather than a fault of digital systems, however, these situations demonstrate that these platforms are actually working as designed (Phillips and Milner, 2020). Critical exploration of digital culture then necessitates taking into account the broader contexts of power, culture, and politics that shape – and may be shaped by – what happens online.

However, doing critique of and with the digital comes up against two competing temporalities. On the one hand, offering critique on digital platforms means engaging with the dynamics of immediacy and competition for attention that rewards the fast response, the surface level hot take. On the other hand, digital culture critique through traditional academic venues comes at a comparatively glacial pace that can mean the loss of relevance and accuracy in the time taken between submission and publication. The challenge facing critique of digital culture is bridging these temporalities while interrogating in depth the power and politics informing the digital.

John Budarick, University of Adelaide – 'A critique of crisis among the crisis of critique: Journalism and pluralism'

Despite an overuse of 'crisis' as a metaphor in modern society and journalism (Breese, 2015; Holton, 1987), the concept proves useful in better understanding responses to social change. While periods of crisis involve critiques of social alteration, they also include the defence of existing systems and structures (Alexander, 2015). A series of so-called crises have beset journalism over many years, but have as yet failed to translate into sustained macro-level critique. Rather, they have been understood from an "immanent perspective" (Holton, 1987: 504), wherein both crisis and resolution are conceived from within existing systems and structures in the field of professional journalism. In this paper I use the notion of crisis to critique western journalism's relationship to social differentiation and political pluralism. The attribution of 'crisis' to particular changes and events reflects both journalism's perceived position in society, and its willingness and ability to accept particular forms of social and political difference. I argue that a different approach to the political norms and expectations of professional journalism complicates understandings of crisis as well as forms of critique.

Scott Wark, University of Warwick and Thomas Sutherland, University of Lincoln – 'Theorising Media Critically: Thinking After Contemporaneity'

Media research often feels behind the times. More than most other disciplines, media studies is driven by the injunction to be contemporary: to not only keep pace with the cultures it studies, but to adopt their tools and methods. In this context, critical media theory is often characterized as lagging woefully behind the objects it studies.

In this paper, we offer a defense of patient, unabashedly-theoretical media scholarship. The idea that theory can't keep pace with a rapidly-changing media environment uncritically reproduces an ideological imperative produced by media themselves. What critique needs, we suggest, is a much more sophisticated engagement with the epistemological conditions in which it is produced.

There are affordances contained within the traditional hardware of critical humanities which might actually allow us to gain critical distance from both our seemingly all- enveloping media environment and this overbearing concept of 'contemporaneity' itself. The question we, media scholars, must ask ourselves is: must we think at the speed of media change? Or is there critical purchase and scholarly value to be gained in asking, more precisely, how we might think media if we reject its tacitly contemporary and, above all, totalizing fictions? The value of critical, theoretical knowledge lies, we argue, precisely in its non-contemporaneity.

Marlen van den Ecker, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena and Mandy Tröger, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München – 'On the Concept of Critique of the Network for Critical Communication Research (Germany)'

In 2017, the Network for Critical Communication Research (Netzwerk Kritische Kommuni-kationswissenschaft) was founded as a response to theoretical and research-based gaps in German-language communication research. The aim of the network is to meet current (financial, ecological, political and social) crises by reintroducing the concept of "critique" to the field from which it is largely absent. We understand critique to be an attitude as well as a means of research. Critical communication studies, in our understanding, must therefore also be a critique of (and response to) processes of knowledge production and practices in the field itself.

Our concept of critique is linked to broad but fractured critical traditions and a range of critical theory perspectives. The aim of this paper is not to discuss the historical background and developments of these traditions. Rather, we present our understanding of critique by means of five theses, namely: (1) Critique is based on the recognition that research is socially grounded and is historical in its core. (2) Critique is not theoretically abstract, but practice-oriented, thus materialistic and emancipatory in essence. (3) Critique is normative. (4) The goal of critique is the deliverance from suffering. (5) Critique is a necessary component of transformative research, which aims at making a decisive contribution to a democratic (not market-forced) transformation in media and communications. This paper addresses the theoretical derivation of these theses and its epistemological assumptions.

Advocating for a radical pluralism of identities, perspectives, and opinions toward the goal of collective emancipation, our concept of critique distances itself from reductionisms, dogmatisms, and opens up complexity through self-reflexive research that is also self-critical. It serves the socio-ecological transformation, which can only be understood intersectionally. This critique is emancipatory because it aims at the free development of human beings under the condition of their universal plurality.

Göran Svensson, Uppsala University – 'A new era for critique: Towards a criticality turn in studies of media, communication and journalism in the social sciences and the humanities'

Contrary to the idea of post-critique, this presentation argues that a new era of criticality is present and still emerging in studies of media, communication and journalism - and more generally in the social sciences and the humanities. Critical practices and analytics are regaining steam and expanding their productive limits – both in academia and in everyday life.

The presentation want to move the study and use of critique in academic work from prescribed and closed forms to multiple and open forms, focusing on the variability of critical expressions, here called criticalities. The shortcomings of critical approaches are presented and discussed through the well-known lenses of Bruno Latour (2004) and Rita Felski (2015), but the presentation draw the conclusion that a compositionist approach (Latour 2010) or new vocabularies, affects and moods (Anker and Felski 2017) can fruitfully be seen within a conceptualisation of critique as variability and spectrum of criticality. The presentation is an invitation to consider the relevance of criticality also for the post-critical movement.

The notion of critical institutionalism is finally presented (Svensson 2015). Institutions and critique are closely connected (Boltanski 2011) and the role of critique in and for institutional change of media, communication and journalism is touched upon. A call for more studies of how they relate is made, especially in the present situation of impending controversy at many levels of mediated social interaction – from the geopolitical level to the everyday use of social media platforms.

12.15 to 13.15 Lunch break

13.15 to 14.45 Parallel panel session 2: Panel 2.1: Critique, post-critique, and political aesthetics

Jacob Johanssen, St. Mary's University – 'With and Without the Paranoid-Schizoid? Online Critique Between Affirmation and Negation'

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick coined the term "paranoid reading" (2003), which drew on the notion of the paranoid-schizoid position by the psychoanalyst Melanie Klein, to critically reflect on notions of "critique". Rita Felski (2015) has further developed thinking in this direction. Taking the apparent dissatisfaction of some thinkers with critique as a starting point, I would like to offer a psychoanalytic exploration of how critique articulates itself on social media today. Debate and forms of critique are often described as polarised, divisive or housed in "echo

chambers" or "filter bubbles". By default, such forms of splitting are amplified by the technological functioning of social media themselves which split users along a paranoid-schizoid dynamic for purposes of surveillance, advertising and profit maximization.

Many commentators have expressed a desire for more empathy or a different tone when it comes to online debates. We cannot move beyond the paranoid-schizoid dynamics of online cultures, but should find better ways of acknowledging them. Rather than try to subvert such dynamics or to find solutions for them, I want to offer a psychoanalytic exploration of them and ask if their inherent flaws may lead to a new understanding of debate and critique which can be situated along the Kleinian oscillation between the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. For Klein (1988), the more reparative and benign mode of relating to others through the depressive position is part of human life, as is the more aggressive paranoid- schizoid position. Psychoanalysis can offer us an understanding of critique that acknowledges both positions as contained within it.

Nick Holm, Massey University – 'The beauty of critique'

Current concerns regarding the ostensible misappropriation and misapplication of critique by those associated with far-right groups tend to emphasize the intellectual and rational aspects of critical practice. This is not especially surprising. Critique has customarily been framed in largely cognitive-epistemic terms: a way to correct faulty knowledge or a failed apprehension of the world.

However, such accounts do not exhaust or fully explain the nature nor the appeal of critique, which is premised on more than the presentation of a convincing intellectual case. Critique is also importantly an aesthetic and sensual form: one that's success depends on the formal presentation, as well as the content, of its critical message. Critique is not simply right or wrong. It is also potentially beautiful, cool, elegant or uproarious. Critique is as much about the emotional registers of fear and exhilaration, as it is about competing knowledge claims.

In this presentation, I will argue that to understand the current rightward turn of critique we need to more fully account for the aesthetic form of critique and will provide suggestions as to how this might done. This will involve a consideration of how artistic and popular culture forms, from the avant-garde to punk rock, have historically been tied up with critique. This will then inform an exploration of how contemporary popular forms, such as those aligned with the 2022 'convoy' protests, make critique something that is felt as much as it is thought.

Irina Kalinka, Brown University – 'Reading in Dark Times'

How to read in dark times? In a world that is so obviously "damaged and dangerous," in which it has become commonplace to concede that leftist critique has "run out of steam," what remains of the promise of a critical reading practice that has placed so much faith in the supposedly transformative project of exposing the hegemonic, the normative, the oppressive? As we read and write among the debris of our revolutionary aspirations, many within the academy have grown increasingly "unsure of the self authorising thesis that has given political motive to decades of scholarly work: that knowing is the means for knowing what to do."

The seminal essay "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You" by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has been cited by numerous critics of critique as part of an intellectual genealogy on which they build new projects like "thin description" or "surface reading." What often gets lost about Sedgwick's intervention, however, I argue in this project, is her deep commitment to "making oppositional strategy." There is nothing allegedly innocent or merely pleasurable about her reparative reading practice – it is a consciously political project.

Reading this way is an exercise in radical reassembly, treating the text as a construction site or playground where one can discover new possibilities for sustenance vis à vis systems of oppression. While coming from a place of "love," instead of mastery of one's object of study, it is still an instrumentalizing approach that prioritizes the need for radical transformation: It is a reading practice that seeks to circumvent the obvious, instead tracing how a text is always already awash with all sorts of unruly potentials. It is a political strategy for sustenance and survival in dark times.

Jonjo Brady, University of Ulster, – 'What if the problem is that there is Too Much Critique?'

Anyone plugged into the colourful trajectories of post-68 inspired French radical theory will probably follow the argument that the intensity and frequency of opinion, criticism and critique has only increased overtime, rather than becoming censored and stifled by a now fully emerged neoliberal dispositif. Thinking alongside Badiou's distrust of opinion's over communicability, Meillassoux's suggestion of the rise in fideism – the "belief that belief is all there is" –, Berardi's claim that the acceleration of capitalist experience – the endless swirling miasma of sign and signification – renders "critique ... banal and ridiculous" and many other similar sentiments, it might seem understandable for those on the frontlines of political and philosophical commentary to begin to feel dejected, worn out and resigned to the inevitability of critique's critical edge wearing thin.

How to tell "good" critique from "bad" critique, meaningful encounter from opinionated tokenism, or a genuine investment in political emancipation from the cartoonish contrivances of a recuperated emancipatory gesture refolded as empty pastiche? This paper begins with the assumption that we can no longer make any such distinctions. What if all "speech and communication have been corrupted"? What if, by design, the sheer speed and magnitude of opinion, criticism and critique addles our human finitudes to a point where we are only able to respond by only adding in more – by concocting simple, relatable, understandable opinions and criticisms that ground us only in the present, and then only ever perpetuate the present repeatedly. And what if those who find the present intolerable, those wearied frontliners perhaps. What if they were just resigned enough, just tired enough, and therefore just quiet for long enough to actually find something worthy to say?

Robert T. Tally Jr, Texas State University – 'The Virtue of Critique'

In "What is Critique?," Michel Foucault notes that "there is something in critique which is akin to virtue," while also averring that "the critical attitude" ought to be understood "as virtue in general." Contrary to the image painted by its opponents today, critique is a thoroughly joyous activity, one that is often inspired by a deeply felt love for the work and for the fields

in which such work takes place. Critical activity also involves an active engagement with the world, and not at all an indolent or smug practice by one who sits back and makes judgmental pronouncements from afar, as some stereotypes would have it. The rejection of critique by literary critics favoring "postcritical approaches," such as surface reading, ordinary language, or mere description, mirrors and ultimately empowers the burgeoning and anticritical ideology pervading the public sphere today (as seen in the attacks on "critical race theory" by conservative voices in the United States, for instance). In this presentation, I will discuss the virtue of critique, calling for a timely project of a "ruthless critique of all that exists," as a young Marx put it, which can simultaneously offer a powerful negation of the status quo and open up the possibilities of imagining radically different worlds and lives, which has always been the vocation of creative writing and literary representation. Critique thus joins with poiesis and aesthetics in helping us both to understand our world and to transform it into an "other" world, one worth living in.

13.15 to 14.45 Parallel panel session 2: Panel 2.2 Critique, race and reactionary politics

Michał Krzyżanowski, Uppsala University – 'Discursive Shifts, Recontextualisation, and the Multi-Level Critique of Discourse: Challenging Normalisation of Exclusion and the Hegemony of Far Right Populist Imagination'

The paper argues that, in the context of increasing complexity and accelerating dynamism as well as entanglement of the far right populist and neoliberal discourses (Krzyżanowski 2016; 2019; 2020 a,b; Krzyżanowski et al 2021; Moffitt 2016; Phelan 2019; Wodak & Krzyżanowski 2017), there exists a need to rethink how critique is conceived of as well as operationalised in the critical discourse and wider social research. Departing from its understanding within Critical Discourse Studies (CDS; Krzyżanowski 2010, Reisigl 2018) – wherein critique is traditionally seen as attached to the assumed linearity of the critical-analytic research process – the paper proposes relating it instead to the multilevel and complex character of contemporary public discourse as a critical-analytical research object. The paper specifically highlights the centrality of such CDS notions such as discursive shifts (Krzyżanowski 2018a, 2020b) and recontextualization (Bernstein 1990, Krzyżanowski 2016) and proposes their deeper, critique-driven integration which (a) allows relating micro- and mezzo-level discourse dynamics to the wider facets of macro-level, global and transnational discursive change (Fairclough 1992) as well as (b) enables capturing the ongoing dynamics within and across various discourse levels. In order to highlight the viability as well as applicability of discursive shifts and their recontextualization-based logic, the paper highlights how the former and the latter support deconstruction of discourses carrying various facets/elements of social practices used to strategically accelerate social-wide normalisation of the wider far-right populist imagination. Specifically, the paper examines the discursive shifts carried by far-right mediated and political discourses about immigration and therein especially the recurrent construction of moral panics (Cohen 1972; Krzyżanowski 2020b; Krzyżanowski & Ledin 2017) used to pre-legitimise (Krzyżanowski 2014) the spread and normalisation of the far right politics of exclusion.

Aurelien Mondon, University of Bath – 'Populist hype, far right studies and the unbearable whiteness of being'

Far right studies has not waited for the election of Donald Trump to become a booming field of research. Yet, for a field that is notorious for its lively definitional debates and a general willingness to evolve and reinvent itself terminologically, it has appeared reticent to engage with systemic racism and its very positioning in political structures.

Building on a study of recent publications in the field, this paper highlights a tendency to prime and hype euphemising terms and concepts such as 'populism' and avoid those which engage with systemic and structural forms of oppression such as racism or whiteness. This article thus aims to offer a critique regarding the absence of whiteness and racism in far right studies and argue that it is a symbol of the ongoing presence of colourblind approaches and a lack of reckoning with the scale and pervasion of systemic racism in contemporary societies.

Ferruh Yilmaz, Tulane University – 'The Ambiguity of Populist Logic'

This presentation will use the movie, They Live from 1988 and the interpretations of it as a way of approaching the question of critique.

My main question is that even though the critique of the system made in the movie may look very progressive, what happens when populist far right thinks the movie reflects their arguments precisely? Is it a simple question of polysemy?

I think not. The right and left logics are pretty similar when it comes to conspiracy theories about the global elites that rule the world even if the labels change (global [Jewish] elite vs. global capitalist elite). Both far (fascist) right and part of the left read John Carpenter's They Live as an allegory of what they have been saying all along. In the film, a global elite co-opted by aliens control finance and the media. They rule through ideological propaganda in advertisements and TV programs.

The far right conspiracy site The Vigilant Citizen, for example, argues that the elite in the movie is the Illuminati. Others point to the "Jewish control of finance and media." Alex Jones of Infowars (Islamophobe and anti-Semite) cannot stop praising the film. On the other side, Slavoj Zizek thinks that the film points at "the extreme violence of liberation" and says, "You must be forced to be free. Freedom hurts." The director himself objects to the conspiracist interpretations and says that the movie is about yuppies and unrestrained capitalism.

This is a quote from a review: "The message that is communicated here: Mass media is the elite's favorite tool to indoctrinate the masses and to keep them in servitude." So, how to read it?

If the message of the movie They Live is a critique of finance capitalism and its total control of the media that can easily be owned by the far right, then there must be something about the populist logic that characterizes insurgent movements regardless of their political orientation. This presentation will focus on the ambiguity of populist logic that relies on an antagonism between "the people" and "the elite."

Phoebe Braithwaite, Harvard University. – 'Unsafe Spaces and the Generosity of Major Differences'

Wars. So many wars, wrote Bruno Latour in 2004. Eighteen years on, an ambience of confected belligerence has only intensified, making not so much a hermeneutics but a praxis of suspicion seem if not desirable then sensible. So-called 'safe spaces', the online right argues, produce "professional victims" who are "crippled" by fear (Rogan & Peterson, 2016). Snowflakery has a chilling effect on freedom of speech, many right-wing political scientists and public intellectuals agree. Sections of the anti-racist left, meanwhile, decry this culture in surprisingly similar terms: writing in his introduction to Stuart Hall's Selected Writings on Race and Difference (Duke 2021), Paul Gilroy selects a section of Hall's writings which "read very much against the grain of current discussion, sounding like a reckless refusal of the signature sensitivities of the anxious "snowflake" generation." Hall's recommendations to anti-racist educators of the 1980s do not, Gilroy insists, "translate into some misplaced liberal endorsement of an inviolable, yet utterly banal, right to be ofensive" but are rooted in the recognition that "the struggle against racism demands a high degree of discipline from its political advocates who must not only reject the disabling simplifications of Manichaeanism and moralism but also learn to create and manage unsafe spaces in which the "combustible material" of "commonsense" and working class racism is allowed to surface and breathe." My paper investigates the differences, discursive and otherwise, between these superficially comparable positions, understanding in greater detail the "receptive generosity" (Scott, 2018) that characterises the latter position.

Cat Tebaldi, University of Massachusetts Amherst – 'Thoughtcrime: Pseudo-critique in Turning Point USA's opposition to Critical Race Theory'

From Heterodox Academy's aim to the "anti-cancel culture" of the University of Austin, the far-right are appropriating the language of critique to characterize advocates of critical race theory as totalitarian "race marxists" "woke capitalists" or "social justice warriors" (Phelan 2019) out to police what Turning Point USA leader Charlie Kirk now calls "thoughtcrime". How can the right frame themselves as "speaking truth to power" while at the same time condemning Critical Race Theory and even banning books? How do their use of economic incentives to restrict libraries sit alongside their condemnations of woke capital?

Drawing on Finlayson's populist rhetorical ethos of the right (2021) and Agha's work on register (2005), the key themes, characteristics, and forms of personhood they "make up", this paper looks at the transgressive-populist register of anti-critical education discourses drawing on a corpus of 15,000 tweets about CRT collected in August 2021, as well as media from conservative campus group Turning Point USA.

It asks, first, what is the right wing "anti-critical discourse'': what linguistic styles characterize its transgressive-populist register, what forms of personhood, freedom or criticality it outlines?

It then asks what this discourse does: how does it mainstream the right, or contribute to the construction of an imagined white working class (Mondon & Winter 2019)? Does it indicate shared concerns about the neoliberal university or co-opt them?

14.45 to 15.00 coffee break

15.00 to 16.20 Parallel panel session 3: Panel 3.1 Critique and the neoliberal university

Natalie Fenton and Des Freedman, Goldsmiths, University of London – 'Social Justice for Sale: the appropriation and commodification of the language of critique'

Critique is in crisis. Spaces in the university, where critique once flourished under the banner of academic freedom, have been appropriated and hollowed out of meaning. External pressures from the failed project of privatisation of higher education in the UK, with the removal of block teaching grants from the state, replaced by a flawed, student finance system of loans - the vast majority of which are never able to be repaid - result in internal pressures from a marketized model of university management that sees critical thinking as branding content to influence market share, rather than relevance for (social) science. These policies and practices steer us towards a knowledge economy that is instrumental by design, and complicit with neoliberalism by purpose. This paper will reflect on the painful processes of these practices at Goldsmiths, University of London. An institution that seeks to sell student places on the basis of being "critical, creative and radical" but where the structures and restructuring of the academy and its pedagogy allow anything but. Where capital from banks has financialised teaching and administrative infrastructures. Where the rhetoric of "social justice" is used to serve the status quo rather than to challenge it. The paper will consider the consequences of these practices, if critique itself is claimed to be one of the factors of change in capitalism**.**

Simon Ridley, Université Paris Nanterre – 'The Alt-Right and the University: Degeneration of the Culture of Critical Discourse'

Attacks on universities, and specifically on the critical role of universities in society, came to a climax in 2017 when Donald Trump took power in the United States. Buoyed by the alt-right, conservative and extremist youth claimed to be "critical" while spreading hate speech and acts. Violent outcomes, such as riots at Berkeley, Charlottesville, and on other campuses, became regular occurrences, as the far-right clashed with more progressive movements.

Following the conflict with the use of multisite ethnography allowed me to argue that this new cultural phenomenon, the alt-right, cannot be understood detached from the institution that has fostered its growth: the university. Furthermore, the alt-right and the international attacks on universities as we know them today have not appeared out of a vacuum (Ridley, 2020).

From a theoretical aspect, I contend that they are the result of a degeneration of what American sociologist Alvin Gouldner once coined the "Culture of Critical Discourse" (1979). Using Gouldner's framework helps to understand the unspoken aspects of a global ideology that has silently been imposed through

Leon A. Salter, Massey University (with Aimee B. Simpson, Rituparna Roy, Luke D. Oldfield, and Apriel D. Jolliffe Simpson) – 'Beyond Critique and into Action: (Re)Organising academic work in Aotearoa New Zealand'

This paper argues that three decades of critique of the neoliberal university has achieved little in the way of substantive change. Indeed, the deep embeddedness of the neoliberal governing rationality (Brown, 2015) in New Zealand universities was both intensified and laid bare in by the sudden loss of international student revenue in March 2020 (Oldfield, Roy, Simpson, Jolliffe Simpson, & Salter, 2021). To save money, precarious academics (casual and fixed term staff) were immediately deemed surplus to requirements (Jones, 2021), as institutions took the crisis as an opportunity to reduce financial liabilities and protect profits (Fleming, 2021).

The Tertiary Education Union (TEU) retreated into protectionist mode, attempting to guard the jobs of permanent academics while accepting the fate of the precariat. It became apparent that precarious academics had no voice to challenge their surplus status, either in their universities or through their union. This led to the formation of the Tertiary Education Action Group Aotearoa (TEAGA), which, alongside the union and other tertiary organisations, has since instigated the first ever survey of precarious academic workers in New Zealand (Simpson et al., 2022).

Drawing on the qualitative data from the open text boxes of that survey, which allowed the workers to imagine alternative ways of organising universities, we explore how action research can be a viable, strategic way of (re)organising academic work (Gayá & Brydon-Miller, 2017), perhaps outside the university as we know it. While enabling a form of utopian critique, action research also aims to go beyond, by providing an opportunity to give voice to, and enact alternative futures with, marginalised communities such as the academic precariat.

Milly Williamson and Gholam Khiabany, Goldsmiths, University of London – 'Critique and Contesting the Vocabularies of the Marketized University'

This paper considers how the vocabularies of neoliberalism and the market (Massey 2013) operate in academic institutions to shape the context in which critical scholarship takes place – a context in which alternative possibilities of what education should or could be far outside of 'growth', 'choice' 'value for money' and preparation for work, are becoming increasing rarely envisioned (Faulkner 2011). Market vocabulary has become deeply embedded in UK higher education, so that it is now permeated with what Mark Fisher termed 'business ontology' (Fisher 2009). Simultaneously, academic institutions have appropriated some of the vocabulary of critique, draining it of meaning so that it can be consumed without challenging the business objectives that now structure higher education. The thoroughgoing renaming of institutional practices and their sanctioned vocabularies, in the context of the ongoing destruction of the university as a public good (Bailey and Freedman 2011), are tied to the new institutional practices in an effort to pressurise those who work in higher education to accept that there is no alternative. This paper argues that in this context critical scholarship must also be tied to practices of resistance – resistance to the vocabularies of the neoliberal university, and resistance to its practices. Critique ought to expand our understanding of the

possible while demonstrating that existing reality in academia and beyond can be contested in practice.

15.00 to 16.20 Parallel panel session 3: Panel 3.2 Critique, technology and ecological crisis

Sebastián Lehuedé, University of Cambridge – 'The Double Helix of Data Extraction: Radicalising Reflexivity in Critical Data Studies'

Data extraction has become ubiquitous. This situation has spurred a wave of research that, adopting decolonial, feminist, critical race and other social justice-oriented lenses, is formulating a profound critique of the complicity of data extraction with historical oppressive structures. However, in this paper I build upon Indigenous thinkers and activists Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and contend that critiques of data extraction might reproduce the same dynamics they seek to denounce. More specifically, I identify a 'double helix of data extraction' that can occur when critical research on this subject does not acknowledge the context of struggle underlying their empirical and theoretical sources, incorporating a second layer of data extraction. This double helix can deepen existing asymmetries, making individuals and groups subject to the appropriation of both value and the means of critique. I explore how this double helix can play out in practice by examining the power dynamics that emerged in my research on astronomy data in Chile, which privileged a decolonial lens and involved Indigenous communities living in the Atacama Desert. Looking ahead, I propose that a radical embracement of reflexivity constitutes a condition for conducting critical data studies, especially in the case of those adopting decolonial and other justice-oriented lenses. Although reflexivity cannot solve issues of extraction, it can expose the symbolic and material conditions underlying studies on data extraction and acknowledge their limitations for bringing about social justice.

Benedetta Brevini, University of Sydney – 'Critique and technology magic: reclaiming the environment.'

The belief that technology is the most powerful weapon that can lift global capitalist system out of its recurring crises and fix any social and inequality problem has been dominant in contemporary commentaries for some time (Brevini,2020). Development of new technologies, we are warned, will empower people out of radical inequalities, while naturalising market-based solutions to every issue of social, political and economic governance. Critique of this dominant discourse is often discarded as if it dramatically undermined unopposed Enlightenment values.

This paper proposes a critique of what I like to refer to as "technology magic" by exploring one particular consequence of this dominant technology discourse: the manufactured neglect of the environmental question.

In exploring public discourse shaping the popular imagination around possible tech futures, Goode (2018) observes that contemporary discourse is giving voice to "predominantly male science fiction authors and techno-centric scientists, futurists and entrepreneurs – and the field is all too easily presented as a kind of sublime spectacle of inevitability (…) (Goode 2018 204).

But, as Laura Forlano argues, "in order to understand the choices that we are facing, it is necessary to understand the ways in which technologies and futures are often linked—socially, politically, and commercially" (Forlano,2021).

The ideological functions of technology discourse have been solidly explored in literature, especially in the fields of history of technology, sociology and political economy of communication (Mosco, 2004; Barbrook and Cameron, 1996). However, this paper argues, we need a renewed critique of the politics of technology magic that, by reclaiming the often obscured materialities of technology, places a careful attention to the environmental costs of technology magic for our societies and the planet.

Nicholas Aranda, Kansas State University. – 'On Mapping the Vernacular of Crisis, Event, & Conjuncture'

Critique and criticism have long been heralded for their ability to map onto situations of crisis. Said differently, the function of critique and criticism is not only in their ability to name a crisis as such, but also to provide a conceptual framework for navigating a crisis, event, or conjuncture with a sense of fidelity towards the state of the situation. Though critics of critique have noted that academic insight should work towards the development of novel tools, given the appropriation of suspicion by conspiracy theorists and right-wing thinkers, what is required is not only a method of critique but a mode of composition—a way to assemble and re-assemble the social. Directions for criticism's theory and method remain opaque given the proliferation of vernacular and theoretical distinctions for understanding situations as crisis, event, or conjuncture.

This working paper attempts to map the vernacular of crisis, event, and conjuncture to provide insight into how criticism, critique, postcritique, and articulation might work to respond to variations in the state of the situation. The paper adopts four leading conceptual personae who have chiseled the modern framework for digesting situations of crisis. Gramsci, Badiou, Habermas, & Grossberg all offer competing and complementary frameworks for conducting diagnostic analysis. Each conceptual personae offers pedagogical guidance for criticism, critique, post-critique, and articulation. In mapping the distinctions between conceptual personae, the paper attempts to make more evident the stakes of pedagogy of criticism.

Eugenia Stamboliev, University of Vienna – 'As we all Know, Trust Matters': AI Ethics Between Ethical Norms and Political Differences

As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes a new moderator and actor in public and political realms, it presents new challenges for democratic structures beyond what normative concepts, like responsibility or trust, can address. For instance, AI influences the fragmentation of public discourses, blurs responsibilities within public and juridical systems, and compromises a seemingly autonomous and informed participation in online discourses. Considering these frameworks are heterogeneous political spaces surfacing inequalities and misbalances of power, the implementation of AI does not affect 'people' normatively. How should AI ethics balance between ethical norms and political (socioeconomical) differences?

Engaging with a critique on AI ethics (potentially as a post-critique), I will try to reconcile normative standards with political differences and specifics by questioning the stability and universality of concept like trust or responsibility. This implies to move beyond dichotomies like technology versus human by understanding that the norming of technological challenges reflects what we acknowledge as political differences. For instance, the assumption that 'trust matters' in technology overlooks that societal trust is not uniquely available nor distributed to who gets a say on the making and applying of AI. Or saying that 'assigning responsibility' to technology is important neglects that responsibility is, at the same time, denied by certain platform operators developing this very technology: Hence, the ethical norm does not include the actual problem of requiring a norm in the first place.

What this critique on AI ethics points to is two-fold; AI ethics shapes the meaning of concepts like trust or responsibility and this matters for design collaborations and policy making (AI Act); and is one reason why AI ethics should not become an extension of STS consequently. Also, if the normative approach remains unchallenged, then AI ethics might become an applicable ethics that undermines truly critical conversations on political and ethical shift through technologies like AI.

16.20 to 16.30 Short break

16.30 to 18.00 Final plenary discussion: Critical academy under attack

Chaired and introduced by Gavan Titley, Maynooth University

Interview panelists:

Sahana Udupa, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
Eric Fassin, Université Paris 8
Diana Mulinari, Lund University

Scholars working within heterogenous critical theory traditions are long familiar with encountering dismissive representations of their work, including from parts of the academy that disavow the politics of academic research and knowledge production. However, the political project of delegitimizing critical research and scholarship seems to be intensifying. Signifiers like "critical theory", "critical race theory" and "gender theory" have become useful political antagonists for an ideologically diverse cast of political, cultural and media actors, including self-styled academic dissidents with audiences well beyond the academy. In tandem, critical scholarship faces an increasingly inhospitable ecology within the neoliberal university, even while the latter simultaneously brands itself in the language of social justice.

This discussion panel examines these conjunctural dynamics, reflecting on the challenges faced by critical scholars and critical scholarship in a time of emboldened reactionary politics. It asks how these challenges might be intellectually and politically confronted in light of the pre-conference's reflections on the current condition of critique.

Short biographies of speakers

Nicholas Aranda: I am a graduate student studying rhetoric, culture, and criticism in the department of communication studies at Kansas State University. My research interests generally lie at the intersection of critical theory, feminist posthumanism, and rhetorical theory. My undergraduate education prioritized philosophical training in metaphysics and phenomenology; peace studies education in theories of conflict and justice; and, communication training in theories of rhetoric and culture. In my graduate education, I am working on developing a thesis concerning new materialism and rhetorical theory. As a queer mestiza scholar, I have developed the conviction that scholarship and moral consideration are apropos to the work of a collective, a community.

Jonjo Brady is a PhD candidate at Ulster University and University of Kent currently working on a thesis exploring the concept(s) and experience(s) of tiredness within contemporary capitalism. His main research interests lie in political theory, process philosophy, Continental philosophy, Queer/Crip theory, as well as the philosophy and politics of post-68 Italian and French thinkers. His forthcoming chapter, 'The Dramatic Script of Alternative Comedy', is set to be published in an edited collection entitled, 'Alternative Comedy Now and Then'.

Phoebe Braithwaite is a fifth year Ph.D. student in the Department of English at Harvard University. In her academic work she focuses on the legacies of the public intellectual Stuart Hall, tracing the influence he had on British intellectual life and the impact it had on him. Phoebe also writes for public venues such as The Baffler, The New Statesman, ArtReview, Frieze and Dissent, openDemocracy and Wired, and teaches literature at the adult education centre City Lit.

Benedetta Brevini, PhD is a journalist, media activist and Associate Professor of political economy of communication at the University of Sydney. She worked as journalist in Milan, New York and London for CNBC, RAI and the Guardian and held tenured positions at City University London and Brunel University London. She writes on The Guardian's Comment is Free and contributes to a number of publications including South China Morning Post, OpenDemocracy and the Conversation. She is the author of several books including Is AI good for the Planet (2021), Amazon, Understanding a Global Communication Giant (2020), Public Service Broadcasting online (2013) and editor of Beyond Wikileaks (2013), Carbon Capitalism and Communication: Confronting Climate Crisis (2017), Climate Change and the Media (2018).

John Budarick is a senior lecturer in the Department of Media at the University of Adelaide. His research focuses on journalism, race and social and political theory. He is particularly interested in the relationship between journalism and democracy as it relates to social diversity and the emergence of new political constellations. His work has appeared in journals such as Journalism; Media, Culture and Society; International Journal of Communication and Communication Theory. His book, Ethnic Media and Democracy, was published by Palgrave in 2019.

Lilie Chouliaraki is Professor of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics, where she also serves as the department's Doctoral Program Director. She is

the author of several books, including *The Spectatorship of Suffering and The Ironic Spectator*, *Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism*, *The Digital Border: Migration, Technology, Power*, and co-editor of *The Routledge Handbook of Humanitarian Communication.*

François Cusset is Professor of American Studies at the University of Paris-Ouest Nanterre, François is a writer and intellectual historian. A specialist in contemporary intellectual and political history, he is the author of *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States*, *The Inverted Gaze: Queering the French Literary Classics in America* and *How the World Swung to the Right: Fifty Years of Counterrevolutions*

Éric Fassin is a professor of sociology in the Political Science Department and co-chair of the Gender Studies Department at Paris 8 University. He taught in the United States from 1987 to 1994 at Brandeis University and New York University, and at the École normale supérieure in Paris from 1994 to 2012. He is a founding member of the new Laboratoire d'études de genre et de sexualité – Research Center on Gender and Sexuality Studies (LEGS, CNRS / Paris 8 / Paris 10). His work focuses on contemporary sexual and racial politics, including immigration issues, in France, in Europe, and in the United States – often in a comparative perspective. He is frequently involved in French public debates on issues his work addresses – from "gay marriage" and gender parity, to the politics and policies of immigration and race, as well as the evolution of the left. He has regularly written articles in English for publications such as *French Politics, Culture & Society, French Historical Studies, Public Culture, differences,* and *Contemporary French Civilization.*

Natalie Fenton is Professor of Media and Communications and Co-Director of the Centre for the Study of Global Media and Democracy at Goldsmiths, University of London and a founding member of the Media Reform Coalition. Her books include New Media: Old News: Journalism and Democracy in the Digital Age (Sage, 2010); Misunderstanding the Internet with James Curran and Des Freedman (Routledge, 2016); Digital, Political, Radical (2016, Polity); Media, Democracy and Social Change: Re-imagining Political Communications with Des Freedman, Gholam Khiabany and Aeron Davis (Sage, 2020) and The Media Manifesto with Des Freedman and Justin Schlosberg and Lina Dencik (Polity, 2020).

Alan Finlayson is Professor of Political & Social Theory at the University of East Anglia. From 2018–21 he was Principal Investigator on the research project 'Political Ideology, Rhetoric and Aesthetics in the Twenty-First Century: The Case of the "Alt-Right"', funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council. From 2020–22 he is Co-Investigator on the research project 'Our Subversive Voice? The History and Politics of English Protest Music', also funded by the AHRC

Des Freedman is co-Head of the Department of Media, Communications and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London. He is the author of titles including The Politics of Media Policy (2008), Contradictions of Media Power (2014), Misunderstanding the Internet (with James Curran and Natalie Fenton, 2016) and Media, Democracy and Social Change (with Aeron Davis, Natalie Fenton and Gholam Khiabany, 2021). He was the project lead of the

Puttnam Inquiry into the Future of Public Service Television, the UK Media Influence Matrix project and is a founding member of the Media Reform Coalition.

Katy Highet is currently an Economic and Social Research Council Postdoctoral Fellow at UCL Institute of Education. She earned her PhD in Sociolinguistics from UCL in 2021, during which time she was also awarded the Braj B. Kachru award for the best student paper by the International Association of World Englishes. Her work to date includes publications in Journal of Sociolinguistics, South Asian Cultural Studies, and Routledge edited volumes. Her research interests lie in the intersection of language, education, political economy, inequality and critique.

Tim Highfield is Lecturer in Digital Media and Society at the University of Sheffield. His research examines critical cultural implications of social and digital media within everyday life, focusing in particular on digital cultures and practices with regards to visual, temporal, and political perspectives. He is the author of Social Media and Everyday Politics (Polity, 2016) and co-author of Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures (with Tama Leaver and Crystal Abidin; Polity, 2020). His current book project is Digital Time, under contract with NYU Press.

Nicholas Holm is a senior lecturer in Media Studies at Massey University, New Zealand. He writes on political aesthetics and popular culture. His most recent publications include articles on bureaucratic boredom in New Formations (2020), the politics of fun in Cultural Studies (2021) and the ambiguity of online humour in New Media and Society (2021). His most recent monograph is Humour as Politics (Palgrave 2017).

Joe Hughes is a Senior Lecturer in English and Theatre Studies at the University of Melbourne. He was written widely on the postwar French thought and the history of the novel.

Jacob Johanssen is Senior Lecturer in Communications, St. Mary's University (London, UK). His most recent books are Fantasy, Online Misogyny and the Manosphere: Male Bodies of Dis/Inhibition (Routledge, 2022) and with Bonni Rambatan Event Horizon: Sexuality, Politics, Online Culture, and the Limits of Capitalism (Zer0 Books, 2021). Jacob is a Founder Scholar of the British Psychoanalytic Council (BPC). His research interests include psychoanalysis and digital media, media and sexuality, psychosocial studies and critical theory.

Apriel D. Jolliffe Simpson is a Teaching Fellow at Te Puna Haumaru, the New Zealand Institute of Security and Crime Science, Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato, the University of Waikato. Her research interests include the fields of Forensic Psychology, Crime Science, and Critical Higher Education.

Irina Kalinka holds a B.A. in Politics & Human Rights from Bard College, N.Y., and an M.A. in English Literatures from Humboldt University, Berlin. Currently, Irina is writing her dissertation on the political imaginary of "User Democracy" in the department of Modern Culture and Media at Brown University. Here, she is asking what it would mean to imagine politics, including its practices and infrastructures of assembly and discourse, as a technological problem to be managed and solved in the name of smooth operability, better design choices, user-friendliness, and optimization under a framework of neoliberal reason 3.0 - and how to resist such reductionist conceptions of collective world-making.

Gholam Khiabany teaches in the Department of Media Communication and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London. He is a member of the council of management of the Institute of Race Relations, and Editorial Working Committee of Race and Class. His publications include Iranian Media, The Paradox of Modernity (Routledge 2010), Blogistan (with A. Sreberny, I. B Tauris 2010), Media Democracy and Social Change (with A. Davis, N. Fenton, D. Freedman Sage 2020), and two edited collections: Liberalism in Neoliberal Times: Dimensions, Contradictions, Limits (Goldsmiths Press 2017) and After Charlie Hebdo: Terror, Racism and Free Speech (Zed 2017)

Michał Krzyżanowski holds the Chair in Media and Communication Studies at Uppsala University, Sweden, where he is currently Deputy Head at the School/Department of Informatics and Media as well as Director of Research at the Uppsala University Centre for Multidisciplinary Studies on Racism (CEMFOR). He is one of the leading international scholars working on critical discourse studies of normalisation of politics of exclusion in the context of communication, media and social change, with special focus on European anti-immigration rhetoric, racism, social inequality and other challenges to democracy in the context of global rise of right-wing populism and neoliberalism.

Sebastián Lehuedé is a Postdoctoral Scholar at the Centre of Governance and Human Rights at the University of Cambridge. His research focuses on the governance of digital technologies, which he approaches from a global social justice perspective inspired by decolonial thinking. Sebastián's current project investigates the geopolitics of digital rights, exploring how activists working in this field make sure that their work responds to the needs and visions of the local context. Sebastián is also working on a manuscript that examines data for development initiatives from the perspective of autonomía circulating among social movements and Indigenous communities in Latin America.

Diana Mulinari is Professor of Gender Studies at the University of Lund, Sweden. Among her latest publications are "Hegemonic Feminism Revisited: On the Promises of Intersectionality in Times of the Precarisation of Life" (with P. de los Reyes, published in *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 2020) and the book *Essential writings on Intersectionality, Labour and Ecofeminism* (with F. Khayaat F. and N. Räthzel, 2020).

Aurelien Mondon is a Senior Lecturer in politics at the University of Bath. His research focuses predominantly on the impact of racism and populism on liberal democracies and the mainstreaming of far-right politics through elite discourse. His first book, The Mainstreaming of the Extreme Right in France and Australia: A Populist Hegemony?, was published in 2013, and he recently co-edited After Charlie Hebdo: Terror, Racism and Free Speech published with Zed. His latest book Reactionary Democracy: How Racism and the Populist Far Right Became Mainstream, co-written with Aaron Winter, was published with Verso in May 2020.

Luke D. Oldfield is a Doctoral Scholar at the School of Social Sciences, Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland. He was a Senior Research Assistant on the 2020 iteration of the New Zealand Election Study. Luke's research interests are interdisciplinary, contributing to the fields of Political Science, Criminology, Sociology and Critical Higher Education.

Robert Porter is Director of The Centre For Communication, Cultural and Media Studies at Ulster University and a *world leading thought leader* in his own mind.

Simon Ridley holds a PhD in sociology from the University Paris Nanterre. His work is focused on the various uses of free speech in the context of campus culture wars. He has penned *L'alt-right: de Berkeley à Christchurch (*Le Bord de l'eau, 2020), the first book in French to discuss the rise of the new global far right. His work on academic freedom, the alt-right, activism, comparative methods, diversity, freedom of speech, as well as other issues has been published and he has regularly been interviewed in the media. His current work seeks to assess the transformation of the culture of critical discourse in order to help shape an epistemological framework to the new global far right.

Rituparna Roy is a Research Fellow at the Public Policy Institute, and Te Punaha Matatini: A New Zealand Centre of Research Excellence, at Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland. Her research interests include the Sociology of Migration, Postcolonialism, Critical Higher Education, and Social Research Methods.

Leon A. Salter is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the School of Communication, Journalism and Marketing, Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa, Massey University. His research interests include the Labour Movement, Digital Technology, Democracy, and the Gig Economy.

Aimee B. Simpson is based between the Faculties of Arts and Education and Social Work at Waipapa Taumata Rau, the University of Auckland where she is researching in the fields of Sociology, Critical Education Studies, and Professional Development in Higher Education.

Eugenia Stamboliev is a media philosopher and postdoctoral researcher at the University of Vienna. She works on ethical issues around artificial intelligence and algorithmic/data structures while focusing on political, socioeconomic and normative concerns. Her present fellowship in the WWTF project, Interpretability and Explainability as Drivers to Democracy, focuses on the influence of complex algorithmic structures (like covid models) on democratic values and concepts and examines conceptual shifts in institutional power, social trust and explainability.

Thomas Sutherland is Senior Lecturer in Media Studies, and Programme Leader: MA Studies in Media Culture, University of Lincoln

Göran Svensson holds a Ph.D. in Media and Communication studies from Department of Informatics and Media, Uppsala University, Sweden, with the thesis *Understanding media criticism. Conceptual, empirical and theoretical studies of Swedish media criticism 1998- 2013*. He has published articles in *Sociologisk forskning*, *Javnost-The public*, *Nordicom- Review, Media Culture & Society, Journal of Social Science Education* and contributes to the Swedish *Handbook in journalism research*. He has recently published a chapter on Sweden in the *Routledge Handbook of Global Media Accountability*.

Robert T. Tally Jr. is a Professor of English at Texas State University. His books include *For a Ruthless Critique of All That Exists: Literature in an Age of Capitalist Realism* (2022), *Topophrenia: Place, Narrative, and the Spatial Imagination* (2019), *Fredric Jameson: The Project of Dialectical Criticism* (2014); and, as editor, *Spatial Literary Studies* (2021); *Teaching*

Space, Place, and Literature (2018); *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space* (2017); *The Geocritical Legacies of Edward W. Said* (2015); *Literary Cartographies* (2014); and *Geocritical Explorations* (2011). Tally is also the editor of the Palgrave Macmillan book series *Geocriticism and Spatial Literary Studies*.

Catherine Tebaldi has recently defended her PhD, Alt-Education, at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Her research focuses on far-right practices and ideologies of education, gender and language

Gavan Titley is Senior Lecturer at the Department of Media Studies, Maynooth University, and a Docent in the Swedish School of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki. His books include *Is Free Speech Racist?* (2020, Polity Press), *Racism and Media* (2019, Sage), *After Charlie Hebdo: Terror, Racism, Free Speech* (ed. 2017, Zed Books), and *The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age* (with Alana Lentin, 2011, Zed Books

Mandy Tröger received her PhD at the Institute of Communications Research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). She is currently a Visiting Associate Professor at the Institute for Journalism and Communications Research at the Hanover University of Music, Drama and Media, Germany, and a visiting scholar at the University of Munich, Germany. Her research focuses on the political economy of media and communications, Critical Theory and post-socialist and international media and communication history.

Sahana Udupa is professor of media anthropology at LMU Munich, and the principal investigator of the For Digital Dignity research program. Her publications include Making News in Global India (Cambridge University Press); Digital Hate: The Global Conjuncture of Extreme Speech (Indiana University Press); Extreme Speech and Global Digital Cultures (International Journal of Communication), among others.

Jorge I. Valdovinos is adjunct professor for media and communications and holds a PhD in Social Sciences from the University of Sydney. Working in the fields of design and multimedia communication, Valdovinos became interested in the broader social effects of digital technologies, especially in terms of interfaces and the technological mediation of everyday life. Soon he would turn his attention to ideology in its broadest sense—as meaning at the service of power. In his latest work—*Critical Theory and Transparency,* published by Palgrave Macmillan—he combines critical theory, media studies, and discourse analysis, to trace and uncover the conceptual origins of our contemporary celebration of immediacy and our cultural obsession with "access to information".

Marlen van den Ecker, M.A., is currently a research fellow and PhD candidate at the collaborative research centre "The Structural Change of Property" (SFB 294: Strukturwandel des Eigentums) in Jena, Germany. Her research focuses on the political economy and sociology of the digital platform economy, in particular problems of intellectual property. She has a theoretical background in Critical Theory, communication theories, and the philosophy of technology.

Scott Wark is Research Associate, 'People Like You: Contemporary Figures of Personalisation,' Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies, University of Warwick

Milly Williamson teaches in the Department of Media Communication and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London. Recent publications include *Celebrity Capitalism and the Making of Fame* (Polity 2016), 'Celebrity, Class and Leisure' in A. Press et.al. *Media and Class* (with J. Littler, Routledge 2017), Politics Goes Pop: Celebrity Feminist and Women's Political Engagement (contributing editor,) themed edition of *Participation: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*, Vol. 17 No. 2 (2020), 'Disrupting or Reconfiguring Racist Narratives about Muslims? The Representation of British Muslims during the Covid crisis', *Journalism*, July (with E. Poole, 2021)

Guobin Yang is the Grace Lee Boggs Professor of Communication and Sociology at the Annenberg School for Communication and Department of Sociology at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is the Director of the Center on Digital Culture and Society, Interim Director of the Center for Advanced Research in Global Communication, and Deputy Director of the Center for the Study of Contemporary China. He is also a faculty member in the Graduate Group in History, the Graduate Group in East Asian Languages and Cultures, the Graduate Group in International Studies (Lauder Institute), the Center for East Asian Studies, and an affiliated faculty in the Asian American Studies Program. His new book *The Wuhan Lockdown* has just been published by Columbia University Press.

Ferruh Yilmaz is currently Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at Tulane University, USA. Before becoming an academic, he worked as a journalist for a number of news organisations in Britain, Denmark and Turkey including the BBC World Service and Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR) and Cumhuriyet (Turkish daily newspaper). His latest book, "*How the Workers Became Muslim: Immigration, Culture, and Hegemonic Transformation in Europe*" (2016) examines the far right's populist strategies in Europe.

Pre-conference organization and registration

The conference is co-chaired by Sean Phelan (University of Antwerp/Massey University), Simon Dawes (Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines) and Pieter Maeseele (University of Antwerp) in collaboration with the Culture/cultures/CREA 370 research group (François Cusset, Veronique Rauline and Thierry Labica) Université Paris Nanterre.

People can register for the pre-conference at the following link:

https://www.icahdq.org/event/Critique

You can register as either an "in-person & presenter participant" or "virtual participant". In-person participants and (all) presenters are being asked to pay a registration fee of US$35, while virtual participants can register for free. Once your virtual registration is processed, you will be sent a Zoom link closer to the date.

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