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NEW ASCA PHD REPRESENTATIVE ON PHD COUNCIL: FAIRUZAH ATCHULO



Per 1 September 2025, Fairuzah Atchulo will replace Hannah Poon as the ASCA representative on the AIHR

PhD Council and on the ASCA Board. If there are issues you want to be addressed you may contact her at: f.m.m.atchulo@uva.nl.

Hello everyone! My name is Fairuzah Atchulo. I am a PhD candidate with the ERC Project *China Africa Fashion Power* (<https://www.chinaafricafashionpower.org>) under which I research on the consumption end of the China-Africa global value chains in Kenya and Mozambique. My PhD project is focused on standardized size and sizing systems and neo-colonialism in global fashion, which aims to examine the entangled histories of colonialism in global sizing systems and the inherent neo-colonialism still present in global systems and structures. I very much look forward to meeting each and every one of you!

SAVE THE DATE: 2 OCTOBER 2025 – POSTDOC MEETING, PHD MEETING, AND ASCA BORREL

On October 2nd, we will organize a meeting with Postdoc from 2-3 pm (OMHP A008); a meeting for all PhDs from 3-5 pm (OMHP C2.17); and then have drinks with the whole ASCA community and friends from 5-7 pm. in BG2. All welcome!

DISSERTATION DEFENSE: MARTINO CIPRIANI

Audiovisual Archiving in Mainland Southeast Asia. Analog and Digital Preservation Challenges of Thai and Vietnamese Film Heritage | Supervisors: Giovanna Fossati and Floris Paalman | 24 September 2025, Aula, 2 pm.



The thesis examines the preservation of audiovisual heritage in Mainland Southeast Asia, with a focus on the Thai Film Archive and the Vietnam Film Institute. It examines the interplay of environmental, technological, and socio-political factors that threaten the long-term

survival of film collections and shape preservation strategies across the region. The research focuses on the transition from analog to digital technologies in archival practices, highlighting that archival efforts are deeply embedded in local cultural values and involve ongoing negotiations among regional and global stakeholders. While digitization improves accessibility, it also raises concerns about technological obsolescence, the lack of specialized expertise, and precarious digital carriers and infrastructures. To address these challenges, the thesis advocates for sustainable, context-specific approaches, including safeguarding analog film processing knowledge, regional cooperation, shared infrastructures, and community engagement, to secure the legacy of Southeast Asian film heritage.

DISSERTATION DEFENSE: JORI SNELS

Sinofuturism as Worlding: Imagining Futures Sinophone Digital Art | Supervisors: Jeroen de Kloet, Esther Peeren | 1 October 2025, Agnietenkapel, 10:00 hrs.



“Sinofuturism as Worlding: Imagining Futures in Sinophone Digital Art” responds to the prevalence with which futures of the Sinophone sphere are imagined in either techno-utopian or techno-orientalist terms and as determined by either China or “the West.” The study asks: How does Sinophone digital art imagine technology-infused futures in response to techno-utopian and techno-orientalist imaginations of those futures? To answer this question, it adopts a theoretical framework that consists of three concepts: Sinophone, worlding, and Sinofuturism. They are mobilized to analyze how future-oriented Sinophone digital art brings into being technology-infused futures of Sinophone words. The chapters focus on four themes that are prevalent in imaginations of such futures: connectedness, embodiment, self-care, and artificial intelligence. By adopting a method of cultural analysis grounded in art historical and ethnographic methods, a more comprehensive understanding is produced of the multifaceted futures that are being imagined and brought into being across the Sinophone sphere.

VENI MARJOLEIN LANZING

Just not Fair: Towards a normative framework for AI and algorithmic surveillance technologies (ASTs) from the perspective of structural injustice



Facial recognition and risk prediction algorithms (ASTs) are increasingly used across social domains. Unfortunately, they can lead to ‘algorithmic discrimination’. ‘Algorithmic fairness’ is an inadequate concept for addressing it. Unlike structural injustice theories, it neglects the social structures in which algorithms are embedded, like institutions. This blinds us to important roots of discrimination such as unequal power relations. Therefore, building on three case studies, this project develops a new, normative framework for assessing ASTs from the perspective of structural injustice.

VENI DIVYA NADKARNI

Friendship as Political Practice: Reorienting Solidarity in a Globalised World



This project explores how literary imaginations of

friendship can help us rethink our relationships, strengthen our communities, and support democracies in troubled times. Using insight from novels and short fiction from Non-Western contexts, I show how these imaginaries of friendship can challenge old ideas and spark new ways of coming together. Through this fresh view, this project aims to inspire a stronger, more resilient form of democratic solidarity that meets the challenges of growing polarisation, authoritarian threats, and the instability of our world.

VENI FERNANDO VAN DER VLIST

Who controls AI? Power, platforms, and Europe's digital future



Big Tech companies play a dominant role in shaping artificial intelligence (AI) globally by controlling the infrastructure and financial systems that underpin it. This research investigates how these companies integrate AI technologies into different industries, influencing society and economies. It also explores how Europe can address challenges like reliance on foreign tech giants and market dominance. The project provides practical insights for making AI systems fairer, more resilient, and better aligned with Europe's goal of digital independence.

VISITING SCHOLAR: BERTRAN SALVADOR MATA



I hold a PhD in Communication from Pompeu Fabra

University (Cum Laude, with an honorable mention in the Fabra Doctoral Awards 2024), where I currently teach in Journalism, Global Studies, and official master's programs. I've carried out research stays at the University of Granada and the University of Chile, and I currently coordinate the Chair in Futures of Communication. I co-direct the SINAPSI section of the +RAIN Film Festival, a space for dialogue between creatives and AI developers within Europe's first film and AI festival. I also edit an annual report on the future of creativity in the age of AI. My research focuses on journalism as an academic discipline, news avoidance, and the impact of artificial intelligence on media. I've published around fifteen academic papers in international journals (such as Journalism, Journalism Practice...), edited two scientific books, and presented my work at international conferences such as ICA (Denver) and ECREA (Ljubljana). I will be visiting ASCA from September-December 2025.

WHATSAPP IN THE WORLD

Disinformation, Encryption and Extreme Speech

Everyone is warmly invited to a special book launch event on Monday, September 1, Room 0.03 in building BG1, 14:00-16:00 pm | More info: <https://nyupress.org/9781479833276/whatsapp-in-the-world/>

Featuring the editors:

Sahana Udupa, Professor of Media Anthropology LMU Munich; Berkman Klein Fellow, Harvard University; Francqui Chair and Herman Wasserman, Professor and Chair Department of Journalism; Director: Centre for Information Integrity in Africa (CIIA)

The session involves a presentation of the book and open discussion.

From the publisher:

Known by the popular nickname "ZapZap" in Brazil and synonymous with the Internet across Africa and South Asia, WhatsApp has emerged as a major means of communication for millions of people around the world. Unlike social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, WhatsApp offers a closed, encrypted communication architecture that ostensibly limits the reach and exposure of shared content.

While recent scholarship has drawn attention to the risks it poses to democratic systems and marginalized communities, WhatsApp in the World is the first study to offer a systematic global view of an encrypted instant messaging service. Rather than taking the technical feature of "encryption" at face value, the volume proposes the conceptual framework of "lived encryptions" to highlight the different, often contradictory, formations around encrypted messaging, as evidenced in the way the promised confidentiality of encrypted messaging is upturned

completely when surveilling states seize the phones from suspected dissenters to download the data, or how seemingly closed group communication is channelized to “broadcast” top-down political messages.

WhatsApp in the World features field-based and multidisciplinary research, including contributions from practitioners at leading fact-checking institutions on how encrypted instant messaging services play a critical role in shaping extreme speech and disinformation ecosystems in different regions of the world. From election manipulations in South Africa and Nigeria to Russian diaspora activism in Europe to WhatsApp use as an everyday infrastructure in Brazilian favelas and among nationalists in India, this volume demonstrates how many core features of WhatsApp—from disappearing messages and quick forwards to group chats and calls—allow for the amplification of disinformation and extreme speech. Highlighting complex political dynamics on the ground, it also introduces the significant methodological challenges of studying encrypted messaging services, providing critical pathways to address issues around ethical and technical issues of data protection, privacy, and confidentiality.

ASCA PHD WRITING CAFÉ

You are all welcome to the ASCA PhD Writing Café on 3, 10, 17, and 24 September, 09:00 - 17:00, PCH 210-211. (Times and places may change, please check ASCA website) An informal and supportive space dedicated to advancing your dissertation progress. Work alongside fellow PhD researchers, share insights, and pursue your writing goals in a focused and friendly environment away. | Organized by Shekoufeh Behbehani, Luc Marraffa, and Joe van der Eerden. Whether you are drafting chapters, revising sections, or simply looking for accountability, this space offers encouragement, motivation, and a sense of community. Each session held weekly on Wednesdays from 9:00 to 17:00, begins with a brief check-in and ends with time to discuss writing challenges and share strategies. Let's make dissertation writing less solitary and more productive together.

PREMIERE OF PAGTATAHIP

A new sound installation in the Hörraum at Humboldt Forum, Berlin By meLê yamomo | Premiere on 5 September 2025 Berlin 17:00. Pagtatahip is part of the Hörraum's permanent program, with regular listening sessions. RSVP (required): Please confirm your attendance by writing to info@phlgohfbf2025.net

Step into the Hörraum at Humboldt Forum and enter Pagtatahip, an immersive sound composition that brings colonial archives, ancestral memory, and contemporary sonic methods into resonant dialogue. Now part of the Hörraum's permanent program—a

unique elliptical space at the heart of the Humboldt Forum designed for 3D sound installations—Pagtatahip invites listeners into a field where time splinters, repeats, and recomposes itself across generations.

Sonic Grains, Spectral Voices

Artist and composer meLê yamomo draws from a constellation of sonic sources. Archival recordings—of a Malay soldier held in a WWI German camp intoning loss in captivity; of indigenous Kalinga soundscapes captured by early twentieth-century European composers amidst the aesthetic fervor of musical Orientalism; of a Filipino librarian in 1920s Berlin voicing anti-colonial poetry; and of a Javanese dancer on European tour cantillating the Panji epics—resound from Berlin's Phonogrammarchiv and Lautarchiv as living traces on exile. These spectral voices intermingle with contemporary field recordings by meLê and his brother Jay—lullabies, intimate murmurs between father and son, and echoes from a Southeast Asian village once called home. Together, they form an entanglement of dislocation and return, where the sonic debris of colonial encounter intertwines with familial memory, inviting a listening across an entire century.

Using granular synthesis, yamomo disassembles these materials into sonic particles—grains that loops the sonic past and present. Pagtatahip composes by sifting—through archives, through family stories, through spectral sound technologies—not to recover a singular truth, but to stage a listening in which fragments matter, and what remains unresolved continues to sound.

Winnowing Time

The title Pagtatahip—a Tagalog word for the traditional act of winnowing rice—offers a guiding metaphor. To sift is to separate, but also to circulate: to let histories rise, scatter, and settle anew. This becomes both the conceptual and compositional ethos of the piece.

At its core, Pagtatahip is a meditation on time. Many of the original archival recordings are bracketed by counting—traces of the colonial obsession with calibration, metric control, and universal time. Pagtatahip interrupts this chronos, not by reversing time, but by folding it. Loops stutter, rhythms rupture, and voices return altered. The piece composes through pluritemporality: coexisting durations that refuse to resolve into a single timeline.

Listening as Sifting

Rendered through wave field synthesis, the work occupies space not as a stage but as a temporal architecture. There is no fixed vantage point—no “correct” listening angle. Sound moves in recursive gestures, inviting the listener into a shared act of reckoning with what endures, what repeats, and what resists closure. In this acoustic field, the temporal

politics of the archive are reoriented through sonic multiplicity.

Listeners are invited into a listening as a mode of investigation and witnessing. Listening as a mode of inquiry investigates the acoustic landscape of technological imperfections—scratches, static, and ghostly resonances. Listening also bears witness to histories both hidden and inherited.

Concept and Composition: meLê yamomo

Spatial Sound Design: Nico Daleman

Curation and Dramaturgy: Jay Yamomo

MOMENTS OF MEANING-MAKING

On Anachronism, Becoming, and Conceptualizing

*Launch of Mieke Bal's 50th book. A personal yet analytical ABC of terms, memories and concepts • With visual contributions by photographer Lena Verhoeff and graphic design by Lotte Lara Schröder * With: Marlene Dumas, Tingting Hui, Maaïke Meijer, Abram de Swaan, Roos Theuws, and of course Mieke Bal. | 9 September 2025, 17:00, Spui25 | Registration:*

<https://spui25.nl/programma/moments-of-meaning-making>

Mieke Bal, ASCA, and Valiz warmly invite you to the launch of Moments of Meaning-Making, the 50th book by cultural theorist, video artist, and writer Mieke Bal. This remarkable publication, published by Valiz -- is both her most personal and her most associative, an ABC of concepts, memories, and reflections shaped by a life of teaching, writing, making, and thinking.

Rather than writing a conventional autobiography or a scholarly retrospective, Bal chose to explore her intellectual and personal journey through a series of terms -- Anachronism, Becoming, Criticism, Friendship, and many others -- that together form a web of meaning. With photographs by Lena Verhoeff and design by Lotte Lara Schröder, the book is also a visual and tactile experience.

Several artists, writers, and scholars will reflect on Mieke Bal's work through the lens of their own practices and fascinations. How have Bal's work and presence influenced their thinking or development: personally, intellectually, or collaboratively.

With: Marlene Dumas, Tingting Hui, Maaïke Meijer, Abram de Swaan, Roos Theuws, and of course Mieke Bal.

Join us for an evening of encounters, reflections, and a celebration of an exceptional oeuvre that continues to shape cultural analysis in all its forms.

The new book will be available for purchase during the event.

Mieke Bal has been a Professor in Literary Theory (University of Amsterdam). In 1994 she was a co-founder of the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA). Bal has been teaching at many institutes and universities in Europe, US, and beyond. She is known

for her specific ways of 'deep-reading' artworks (e.g. Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Louise Bourgeois, Nalini Malani), and intertwining her research with various disciplines, such as contemporary and nineteenth-century literature, psycho-analysis, gender studies, philosophy, bible studies. Bal also works as a video artist, which she approaches as a specific form of cultural analysis. www.miekebal.org

Marlene Dumas is one of today's most influential painters. Since settling in Amsterdam in the 1970s, her emotionally charged and psychologically complex paintings and drawings have explored themes of identity, race, sexuality, and politics. Often drawing from an extensive archive of press and magazine photography, she investigates how images shape our perception. Referencing both art history and current events, her expressive yet reflective work challenges conventions of representation and painting itself in a visually saturated era. www.marlenedumas.nl

Tingting Hui is an Assistant Professor at Leiden University, specializing in critical theory and contemporary literature and arts. Her research spans diverse areas, including care ethics, multilingualism, and translation theory. She has received multiple awards, such as the Justice Equity Diversity and Inclusion Fund (2023) and the Horst Frenz Prize (2019). In addition to her academic work, Tingting has contributed to the development of the innovative 'What's Your Story?' diversity card game, which fosters intercultural dialogue.

Maaïke Meijer is a literary scholar, feminist, and emeritus professor of gender studies (Maastricht University). She has published extensively on gender, poetry, popular culture, and cultural representation, including acclaimed biographies of M. Vasalis and F. Harmsen van Beek. Her recent book *Radeloze helden* (Desperate Heroes, 2023) explores masculinity in literature and film. Meijer lives in Amsterdam and is currently writing a biography on Doeschka Meijsing. She chairs the P.C. Hooft Foundation and advises various cultural and feminist organisations. www.maaikemeijer.nl

Abram de Swaan has been University Professor of Social Science at the University of Amsterdam since 2001 and, as of 2007, holds the title of emeritus. He served as Professor of Sociology from 1973 to 2001 and was co-founder and director of the Amsterdam School for Social Science Research (1987–1997), later serving as its chair until 2007. De Swaan authored *Words of the World* and received the prestigious P.C. Hooft Prize in 2008. He has taught at Columbia, Cornell, the Sorbonne, and the Collège de France. www.deswaan.com

Roos Theuws is a Dutch media artist known for installations that explore light, sound, and video as intrinsic media. She studied at Jan van Eyck Academie

(1981–83) and co-founded Stichting Time-Based Arts in 1983 to champion video art in the Netherlands. Active internationally since the mid-1980s, her work is held in private and public collections including the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, and Huis Marseille. She taught at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie until 2022.

Moderator:

Astrid Vorstermans is the publisher/founder of Valiz, with a background in art history and a long path in publishing.

HOW TO TURN YOUR PHD DISSERTATION INTO A BOOK

Seminar by Alf Gunvald Nilsen (University of Pretoria) organized by Fairuzah Atchulo | 11 September 3-5 pm., BG1 room 0.16.

Publishing your first book is a major milestone in an academic career in the humanities. A key starting point for your first book project is your doctoral dissertation. However, the journey from a text written to earn a PhD to a text that is publishable as a book can be a challenging one. In this workshop and mentoring scheme, we will discuss how early career researchers can best navigate this journey, addressing questions such as:

- What are the key differences between a PhD thesis and an academic book, and how do I get from one to the other?
- How do I identify a relevant publishing house for my book project, and how do I establish contact and communicate with editors?
- What are publishers looking for in a book project, and how do I develop a convincing book proposal?
- Once a book contract is in hand, what are the major steps towards the completion of my project?

Alf Gunvald Nilsen is the director of the Centre for Asian Studies in Africa at the University of Pretoria, where he also works as a professor in the Department of Sociology. His research focuses on the politics and political economy of democracy and development in the global South, with a particular focus on Asia. He is the author and co-author of multiple books, such as *Dispossession and Resistance in India: The River and the Rage* (Routledge, 2010), *We Make Our Own History: Marxism and Social Movements in the Twilight of Neoliberalism* (Pluto Press, 2014), *Adivasis and the State: Subalternity and Citizenship in India's Bhil Heartland* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), and most recently *Southern Interregnum: Remaking Hegemony in Brazil, India, China, and South Africa* (Manchester University Press, 2025).

Please register here:

https://uva.fra1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_aWw1HrNSLFZlZa

ON THE SOUTHERN INTERREGNUM

Hegemonic Projects in a Turbulent Conjunction

Global Africa seminar organized by Fairuzah Atchulo hosts Alf Gunvald Nilsen (University of Pretoria). Moderated by Tommy Tse | BG 1 room 0.16.

How do governing elites in the global South attempt to remake hegemony in a conjuncture of durable crisis? This is the question at the core of this talk, which draws on the forthcoming book *Southern Interregnum* to explore how political and economic elites across emerging powers in the global South work to reconcile accumulation and legitimation at a moment when significant geoeconomic and geopolitical transformations intersect with deepening precarity and widespread popular protest. Grounded in a Gramscian approach, the argument is developed through a comparative conjunctural analysis of recent political trajectories in Brazil, India, China, and South Africa.

Alf Gunvald Nilsen is the director of the Centre for Asian Studies in Africa at the University of Pretoria. See above.

This reading group is an initiative of the ERC project *China Africa Fashion Power* (<https://www.chinaafricafashionpower.org/>).

The Global Africa reading group aims to facilitate critical discussions and dialogues on topics pertaining to 'Africa' and the Global South as a whole. In this, it strives to create a scholarly community that encompasses and accommodates the multitude of studies of and from Africa, and an avenue for keeping abreast with the academic developments pertaining to our theorised notion of 'multiple Souths'. Combining aspects of a reading group and a seminar, Global Africa aspires to bring together esteemed international guest speakers with the *China Africa Fashion Power* project team, other African studies, humanities, and social sciences scholars based at Dutch universities, as well as interested PhD and Master students.

About the ERC project *China Africa Fashion Power*

Fashion is a significant economic force globally and one of the most poignant indicators of cross-cultural exchange. Thus, the *China Africa Fashion Power* project uses everyday fashion (clothes, textiles, accessories, hair) as the lens to investigate how China's global power is manifested, negotiated, and resisted in people's daily life in Africa (Kenya and Mozambique). This will be studied by critically examining Africa-China networks of everyday fashion production, trade, retail and consumption, using a multi-disciplinary, multi-method, multi-sited, and multi-scalar approach. Thereby, the five-year-project aims to theorise how everyday fashion is created, circulated, valued, and consumed in and through Global Souths Value Chains connecting Guangdong, Nairobi, and Maputo.

Time schedule: All Global Africa seminar events for this semester will be held in Room 0.16, BG1 Turfdraagsterpad 9, Amsterdam, from 3:00-4:30pm on 12th September 2025 and 21st November 2025. In addition to our seminar sessions for this academic semester, we will also be organizing an in-person skills seminar course on turning a dissertation into a manuscript for publication on **11 September 2025** for all those interested in turning their dissertations into book manuscripts for publications. All speakers will present in person.

Attendance: Online Attendance via Zoom will be possible for most sessions. Drinks and snacks will be served.

REALITY SHIFTING

Valentina Tanni - Exit Reality: Vaporwave, Backrooms, Weirdcore, and Other Landscapes Beyond the Threshold | Esoteric Media Reading Group organized by Sara Gelao and Amir Vudka | To participate send an email to: s.gelao@uva.nl; a.vudka@uva.nl

Observing the contemporary epistemic shift in the relationship between spirituality and technics, should we interpret this shift as signaling a spiritual crisis (as suggested by Bernard Stiegler) or a comeback of spiritual sensibilities? Or, as William James would argue, the sacred impulse simply reorients rather than vanishes in new epochs? What if these terms were never mutually exclusive, but always interwoven in an ongoing dialogue that has been reshaped with modern technology and media?

Esoteric Media emerges from the urge(ncy) of tackling such kinds of questions by challenging the prevailing narrative that dis-enchantment and de-sacralization are what largely defines current modes of thought, knowledge and experience. As George Bataille stated, "the more a culture denies myth, the more insistent the myth becomes in hidden, subterranean forms. Myth is never absent from life; it simply reappears in new forms, more deeply rooted in unconscious structures" (Bataille 1988 [1943], p. 132).

Today, the assumption that the triumph of technological rationality has condemned the spiritual imagination to the trash heap of history is increasingly being challenged. As Erik Davis argues in his book *TechGnosis*, myth, magic, and mysticism permeate the history of technology and have merged into the fabric of contemporary technoculture.

Esoteric Media refers to forms of media and modes of mediation that engage with occult dimensions of experience. This concept challenges the mainstream assumption that modern media are purely secular, materialist and rational, suggesting instead that contemporary media can serve as conduits for esoteric knowledge and spiritual exploration. By examining the

ways in which digital, cinematic, and other media channels mediate not only information but also affective and spiritual states, Esoteric Media highlights how these platforms facilitate access to symbolic, mythic, and quasi-mystical realms of thought. In this sense, Esoteric Media emerges from the need to understand the spiritual or sacred elements that persist within modern media systems, operating beneath or alongside their visible functions.

Working as a thinking hub, this reading group aims to inquire into modern processes of world-making ['worlding'] (Heidegger, Deleuze, Haraway, Stengers) as related to different 'esoteric' practices of thought-action, in the attempt to challenge western worldviews conceiving (technical) reality and its spiritual rhythms as disjointed parts. In other words, the manifestation of technicity (Simondon) and that of sacrality (Mircea Eliade) are to be resituated as processes and networks (re-)founding the world, jointly and similarly. Such a quest goes beyond the mere exploration of mythical figures (the mystic, the shaman, or the prophet) and religious or mystical traditions (alchemy, astrology, or Hermeticism), since we are not only interested in understanding esoteric media as a fixed category, but also, by flipping it around, in navigating the esoteric affordances that media withhold at large – be them images, films, generative AI, or other techno-aesthetic mediations.

Fall/Winter 2025-26 - Esoteric Media II Outline

Mondays 17.00-19.00, Location TBA

Session 1 September 15: Reality Shifting: Valentina Tanni, Exit Reality: Vaporwave, Backrooms, Weirdcore, and Other Landscapes Beyond the Threshold

Session 2 October 6: Reality Reconstruction: Federico Campagna, Technic and Magic

Session 3 October 27: Shamanism: Michael Taussig, Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing

Session 4 November 17: (Techno-)Animism: Isabelle Stengers & Betti Marenko, "Reclaiming Animism"; "Algorithmic Magic: Simondon and Techno-Animism"

Session 5 December 8: Soul-Technical Objects: Gilbert Simondon & Yuk Hui, "Technicity and Sacrality"; "On the Soul of Technical Objects"

Session 6 January 12: Materialism and Mysticism: Henri Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion; Creative Evolution.

FORM AND (DIS)ORDER

Reading Group organized by Stephan Besser and Michael Miller | This session will be devoted to Yuk Hui, "Machine and Sovereignty" (2025) | 16 September 2025, [P.C. Hoofthuis](#), PCH room 6.31

From perspective to narrative, database and beyond, symbolic forms organize experience and shape

epistemic horizons. If Lev Manovich's key insight was to recognize the entanglement of symbolic and technical form, we may now ask how (post)digital culture and seemingly limitless data flows generate a new desire for form in critical theory and cultural production. Situated at the intersection of literary theory, media theory, and the poetics of knowledge, this reading group will explore a wide range of symbolic and literary forms and their epistemic and ideological affordances. We will ask how various new formalisms understand terms such as structure, organization/disorganization, and order/disorder, and how these concepts travel across discourses and scales. In semester 1, our conversations will center on the thematic cluster Machine – Politics – Data – Language. Readings will include selections from:

- Yuk Hui, *Machine and Sovereignty* (2025) [September]
- Catherine Malabou, *Stop Thief!: Anarchism and Philosophy* (2023) [October]
- Leif Weatherby, *Language Machines: Cultural AI and the End of Remainder Humanism* (2025) [November]
- Maja Bak Herrie, *Thinking Through Data: How Outliers, Aggregates, and Patterns Shape Perception* (2025) [December]

In the second semester, our discussions will focus more explicitly on questions of literary and aesthetic form. Potential readings include:

- Timothy Bewes, *Free Indirect: The Novel in a Postfictional Age* (2022)
 - Rizvana Bradley, *Anteaesthetics: Black Aesthetics and the Critique of Form* (2023)
 - Jeremy Rosen, *Genre Bending: The Plasticity of Form in Contemporary Literary Fiction* (2025)
- Please email Michael @ m.f.miller@uva.nl to receive the readings and meeting announcements.

VIDEOGRAPHIC CRITICISM AND REFLEXIVE FOOTAGE

Workshop by Jason Mittell on Monday 22 September, 14:00-17:00 hours, OMHP C 1.17 | Organized by Jaap Kooijman contact: j.w.kooijman@uva.nl.

Throughout the emergence of videographic criticism as a scholarly practice in recent years, video essays have primarily used remix practices to rework sounds and images from source materials. However we can see a growing strain of videographic practice that incorporates original footage into video essays, shooting material that is placed in dialogue with source films and media to create interesting possibilities for reflexivity, embodiment, imitation, and creativity. Leading videographic scholar Jason Mittell will present a range of work by him and other critics that exemplify these possibilities, and guide participants through a hands-on exercise to explore the possibilities of using reflexive footage in their video work.

[Jason Mittell](#) is Professor of Film & Media Culture at Middlebury College. His books include *Complex Television: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling*, *The Videographic Essay: Practice & Pedagogy* (with Christian Keathley & Catherine Grant), and *The Chemistry of Character in Breaking Bad: A Videographic Book*. He is the journal manager for *[in]Transition: Journal of Videographic Film & Moving Image Studies*, co-director of the workshop series *Scholarship in Sound & Image*, and series editor of Videographic Books for Lever Press.

ARISTOTELIAN NATURALISM ABOUT THE GOOD

Talk by Dhananjay Jagannathan, Associate Professor, Hunter College, City University of New York | Monday, September 22, 15-16.45 hours CET (Amsterdam time) | Online or room OMHP C0.17. | Please email a.benedicty@uva.nl for the Zoom link. You may also come to room OMHP C0.17 to join the class, where we will Zoom-in the speaker on the larger screen.

This talk will focus on Aristotle's rejection of the Platonic absolute theory of goodness in favor of naturalism, the view that the good is relative to the nature of a thing. To come to grips with this idea, we will have to consider what Aristotle means by a nature, why this rules out the possibility of absolute goodness, and how these ideas relate to the realm of artifacts, including literary artifacts, where there are no natures, strictly speaking.

Dhananjay Jagannathan is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Hunter College-CUNY. His scholarly work spans Ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, ethics, political philosophy, and aesthetics. His first book *Aristotle's Practical Epistemology*, published by Oxford University Press in 2024, analyzed the ethical and political dimensions of Aristotle's theory of practical wisdom. He is currently working on a book on cultural identity, cultural transgression, and cultural appropriation entitled *Culture as Conversation*, which will be published by Penguin Press in 2026.

This conversation is hosted by Literary and Cultural Analysis department at the UvA, in the context of the undergraduate course *Contesting Critical Histories*, taught by Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken and Niall Martin.

MODELS OF BLACK THOUGHT

Philosophy Department Annual Opening of the Semester Lecture 2025, by Michael Thomas. September 25 at 17:30–19:00, followed by a reception from 19:00–20:00. Chair: Monique Roelofs | Please register at: secl.wijs-fgw@uva.nl. Location: OMHP C0.17

The works of W.E.B. Du Bois, James Baldwin, and Audre Lorde are foundational for readers inside and outside of the academy, who are interested in critical

approaches to race and politics. Their words appear in as many memes and blogs as scholarly papers, indicating their importance for both popular and academic discourse. We are attracted to their words not only for the accuracy of their ideas and their continued relevance, but also for the style of their writing which reflects forms of thought attuned to the way that our perceptions of race and politics are not simply a matter of proper knowledge, but are structured and reinforced through aesthetic practices that organize our experience and societies.

In this lecture, I will present a preliminary version of my book project, in which I approach the works of Du Bois, Baldwin, and Lorde as Models of Black Thought, which aim to reorient our political and ethical commitments through a reorganization of our sensibilities. Each author offers a critique of racial modernity that identifies the role of aesthetic practices in constructing and maintaining systems of oppression. Their works aim to reorient our sense of reality to make these practices sensible, highlighting their sources in social and economic relationships. At the same time, they model the development of their own thought for the reader, providing guidance to develop interventions in their own contexts. The thought of Du Bois, Baldwin, and Lorde leads me to an aesthetic philosophy of race and an approach to Black thought as an engagement with ancestors that I hope will guide my practices here at the UvA.

Michael L. Thomas is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy in the Critical Cultural Theory capacity group at the University of Amsterdam, where he also teaches in Media Studies as a part of the Film Team. He has held positions as a Humboldt Foundation Post-Doctoral Fellow in the JFK Institute for North American Studies at the Freie University Berlin, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and coordinator of Africana Studies at Susquehanna University, and a Post-Doctoral Lecturer in Structured Liberal Education at Stanford University, among others. He specializes in work in Social Aesthetics, an investigation of aesthetic dimensions of social life. He has published work in the Critical Philosophy of Race, Philosophy and Literature, American Studies, Social Theory, Political Theory, Speculative Philosophy, and most recently Band Research. In each of these arenas, he uses aesthetic feeling, art and media objects, or reflections on aesthetic theory to analyze sociological processes and their implications in the search for novel ways of organizing “social life.”

ASCA THEORY SEMINAR 2025-2026: WHAT’S AT STAKE

The Importance of Research

1 October, 5 November, 3 December, 11 February, 11 March, 15 April | Organized by Jaap Kooijman. Please register by sending an email to Eloë Kingma at asca-fgw@uva.nl by September 28th 2025.

The question of why our research matters has become increasingly urgent in current times when the value of academic knowledge in general, and the Humanities in particular, is being challenged. While there is nothing wrong with explaining the significance of our work, such a demand is often framed in terms of demonstratable societal relevance and measurable impact. In this year’s ASCA Theory Seminar, we will explore the different ways in which our research holds importance (and to whom) and how this importance can be articulated. As in previous years, each session will be moderated by a group of PhD candidates who will relate the assigned literature to their own research. This year, the assigned literature will be supplied by ASCA members, sharing examples of their own research alongside a “classic text” that has been foundational to their work.

CAPITALISM 2.0: POLITICAL ECONOMY IN CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL THEORY

*Reading Group organized by Marc Farrant, Ben Moore and Steyn Bergs. The first meeting will take place at 16.00-18.00 on Wed 1 October in OMHP 2.23, focusing on selected chapters from Yanis Varoufakis’s *Technofeudalism* (2023). To obtain the readings and join the mailing list, please write to b.p.moore@uva.nl and m.w.farrant@uva.nl.*

Since the 2008 financial crash there has been a veritable explosion of publishing in the area of political economy, with writers from various disciplinary backgrounds contributing to an ongoing discourse that seeks to reframe our present beyond the capitalist realism of a neoliberal age; an age defined by a “disenchantment of the political by the economic”. With the second Trump victory in 2024, the post-crash zombified murmuring of progressive neoliberalism has finally ceased. In this new multi-polar, populist and authoritarian world, what comes after neoliberal capitalism? It has perhaps never been more central to the work of critique to question rentier and extractivist forms of economic exploitation, not least since economist thinking threatens the university itself as an institution, but also that such thinking has never been more central to the ethnonationalist projects that are a hallmark of the postliberal era of the 2020s. This group will explore contemporary theoretical takes on this question, investigating the various labels posed as alternatives for refiguring the present, some of which include: Technofeudalism, Neofeudalism, Cybernetic

Capitalism, Postcapitalism, Vulture Capitalism, Too Late Capitalism, Technocapitalism, New Capitalism, Platform Capitalism. This group will also explore classical texts to open up the background to these recent regroupings and reformulations, for example Marx, but also the work of neoclassical economists and self-styled neoliberals (Hayek, Friedman).

CALL FOR PAPERS AMERICAN STUDIES

International PhD Seminar in American History / American Studies, Middelburg, The Netherlands, 26-28 November 2025

The Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (RIAS) is a leading research center and graduate school, partnered with Leiden University, dedicated to the study of American history, politics, and society. Since 2003, the Institute has organized regular seminars for doctoral students pursuing research in its areas of interest.

The RIAS will host its next in-person research seminar in Middelburg on **26-28 November 2025**. We kindly invite applications from current doctoral candidates whose research covers any aspect of American culture, media, society, politics, or foreign relations, recent or historical. We are particularly interested in studies in the following research areas:

- Culture and ideology
- U.S. in the world
- Environmental issues
- Race and gender studies
- Social justice movements, civil and political rights

We welcome proposals for research papers (e.g., a dissertation chapter) or papers that give an overview of the PhD project. Participants will present their paper and contextualize it within their research project in a 15-minute presentation. Each presentation is followed by a group discussion of approximately 45 minutes, providing extensive opportunities for feedback.

Applicants are invited to submit their **proposals, consisting of a 300-word abstract and a CV, both in PDF**, no later than **Friday, 12 September 2025**. These should be addressed to the seminar coordinator, Jeanine Quené, and sent to info@roosevelt.nl. To support a culture of diversity and inclusion, we strongly encourage proposals from students that reflect the diversity of our field in terms of gender, ethnicity, and disability. Participants will be expected to have a paper (approximately 6,000 words) ready for precirculation by Friday, 7 November 2025.

The RIAS will provide accommodation and meals in Middelburg. For further information, please consult our website at www.roosevelt.nl or contact the seminar coordinator at j.quene@roosevelt.nl.

CALL FOR PAPERS: (RE)IMAGINING SYMBIOSIS BETWEEN HUMANITY AND NATURE

Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory, Volume 12, Issue 1 July 2026. Issue's Editors: Mieke Bal, ASCA, Peggy Karpouzou, University of Athens, Greece, Nikoleta Zampaki | Abstracts' deadline (title, abstract 250 words, 5-7 keywords, bioprofile 100 words): 31st of October 2025. The material should be sent to Editors' e-mails pkarpouzou@phil.uoa.gr and nikzamp@phil.uoa.gr | Acceptance notice: 30th of November 2025 | Website: <http://metacriticjournal.com>

Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory is an open-access, peer-review, online publication for academic research, published twice a year by the Faculty of Letters, Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj, Romania. It promotes free-access for academic work and it welcomes authors who want to share their research and resources with their peers. It encourages, recognizes and rewards intellectual excellence in interdisciplinary and intermedial approaches of literary culture, visual culture and theory. The journal welcomes papers in English (or, for regionally oriented topics, Romanian) from the following domains: comparative studies, including digital and posthuman studies; literary studies, cultural studies, including social and gender studies; media and film studies, literary criticism and theory, cultural poetics.

CALL FOR PAPERS: LITERARY CRITICISM AS COMPOSITION: MONTAGE, GENRE, AND THE ART OF WORLD-MAKING

ACLA Seminar, Montreal, February 26–March 1, 2026 | Abstracts submission via ACLA portal: August 26–October 2, 2025; Seminar page:

<https://www.acla.org/seminar/19901266-d894-4c79-abab-68607f1dda41>

We explore criticism as compositional practice that brings together media, genres, and temporalities; the politics of form/genre; and criticism as world-making, drawing on current debates in aesthetics, intermediality, and visual culture. We welcome contributions that combine textual analysis with visual culture, trace the afterlives of narrative motifs, or stage criticism itself as a creative assemblage.

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS: CONTINGENCY, CULTURE & ONCOLOGY SYMPOSIUM ON

Interdisciplinary perspectives on existential care through arts-based research in oncology

Friday October 31st, 2025 | Location: Zaal 't IJ, [ADORE building](#), Amsterdam UMC, location VUmc | Deadline: Friday September 19th

The Department of Medical Oncology is pleased to invite abstract submissions for the first interdisciplinary

CCO symposium exploring the role of arts-based research in developing existential care for people living with incurable cancer. This symposium is grounded in the research line '[Contingency, Culture & Oncology](#)' (CCO) that investigates how arts-based interventions – particularly co-creative processes involving patients, artists, and spiritual counsellors – can support people in navigating existential disruptions such as the loss of meaning, purpose, and identity.

A key concept is the experience of contingency: the existential disorientation that follows a diagnosis of incurable cancer, which disrupts the coherence of a person's life narrative. Increasingly, innovations in cancer treatment (e.g. immunotherapy, hormonal therapy, targeted therapies) allow people to live longer with incurable disease. This gives rise to new challenges: how can the experience of disease-evoked contingency be integrated into a revised or renewed life story? What role can art, (popular) culture, spiritual care, and narrative reflection through arts-based interventions play in that process? And what epistemological, ethical and practical challenges do we engage with when developing, evaluating and implementing arts-based interventions?

We invite PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers from a wide range of disciplines to submit abstracts for presentations that critically engage with these questions – either theoretically, empirically, methodologically, ethically, or artistically.

Call for Abstracts can be found [here](#). If you wish to sign up without an abstract, you can do so [here](#).

For more information, please reach out to Niels van Poecke (n.vanpoecke@amsterdamumc.nl).

PHOTOGRAPHY / INTENSITY / MEASURE

Call for Book Chapters | Submission of abstracts: September 10th, 2025 | Co-editors: Dr. Andrew Fisher and Dr. Ali Shobeiri | <https://www.rmes.nl/call-for-book-chapters-photography-intensity-measure/>

Aspiring to understand these different measures of intensity, Photography / Intensity / Measure sets out to examine questions of intensity and its measures in photography. Or, to put it another way, it explores the photographic as a field of intensities that seem to exceed simple measure while, perhaps paradoxically, emerging from technical bases that are grounded on strict and unavoidable operations of measure.

Please send your abstract and a short biography (max 150 words) to: s.a.shobeiri@hum.leidenuniv.nl or andrewfisher@posteo.de

GREGORY SPRAGUE PRIZE

The LGBTQ+ History Association invites submissions for the Gregory Sprague Prize. The prize honors an outstanding paper, article, book chapter, or dissertation chapter on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer history written in English by a graduate student in 2024 or 2025. Work with a strong engagement in history and archives will be given special consideration. Please share this call with MA or PhD students who may be interested. <https://lgbtq-ha.org/prizes/gregory-sprague-prize/>