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ASCA BORREL OCTOBER 2ND

You are all very welcome to the ASCA borrel on October 2nd from 17:00-18:30 in BG2. We will welcome many new ASCA members and drink to celebrate the new academic year.

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.

DISSERTATION DEFENSE: CLAUDIA AANONSEN

The technopolitics of cybersecurity. Sociotechnical configurations, epistemic devices, and the production of knowledge | Supervisors: Stefania Milan, Rocco Bellanova, 17 October 2025, Agnietenkapel, 13.00 hrs. Claudia Emilie Aanonsen's thesis critically examines how cybersecurity knowledge is produced and how it shapes political and social realities. It challenges dominant, technocratic approaches that frame cybersecurity as a purely technical matter, arguing that such views obscure the everyday practices and power



relations embedded in security technologies. By drawing on Critical Security Studies (CSS) and Science and Technology Studies (STS), her thesis reveals how cybersecurity reproduces hierarchies, legitimises surveillance, and transforms ordinary practices into tools of political control. Ultimately, the thesis calls for a rethinking of cybersecurity that remains open to democratic debate and acknowledges the sociotechnical processes through which insecurity is constructed.

DISSERTATION DEFENSE: YUKO MARUBAYASHI

Silence After Catastrophe: Disaster Survivor Witnessing in Contemporary Japan | Supervisors: Gaston Franssen; Ernst van Alphen | 20 October 2025, Agnietenkapel, 13.00 hrs.



This dissertation focuses on the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake survivor/izoku (family members of the deceased) testimonies, representations, art works, and collaborative acts of witnessing to examine how cultural silence during the aftermath of disaster is created under the public discourse of revitalization and commemoration practices. The author examines transformative modes of survivor/izoku witnessing to uncover discrepancies between survivor/izoku's memories and other public memory, and to contemplate this crisis of interpersonal and intergenerational memory transmission. The author argues that these alternative acts of survivor/izoku witnessing become processes that contribute to breaking through the crisis of disaster memory

transmission and the lack of forgiveness and healing in contemporary Japanese Shin Buddhist culture.

DISSERTATION DEFENSE: VASILIS ALEXIADIS

Prophecy and Power: The Politics of Popular Eschatology in Contemporary Greece | Supervisors: Maria Boletsi, Boris Noordenbos | 29 October 2025, Agnietenkapel, 13.00 hrs.



This dissertation examines the role of prophecy in contemporary Greek Orthodox Christianity and its influence on politics, culture, and national identity. Prophecies, framed as imminent visions of the End, circulate through charismatic monks, media, and popular culture, shaping responses to crises, conflict, and war. Drawing on discourse analysis, structural analysis, and ethnography, the study shows how prophetic narratives both critique the realities of neoliberal austerity and mobilize nationalist sentiment, legitimizing systems of oppression, exclusionary politics, and ethnoreligious authority. Far from marginal, they function as powerful meaning-making practices that connect past, present, and future through conspiratorial and apocalyptic lenses, shaping social and political life in Greece and beyond.

DISSERTATION DEFENSE: CARINE ALDERS

Caught in a web of silence. Composers in Dutch music history 1920-1955 and the impact of World War II | Supervisors: Julia Kursell, Rob van Laarse, Philomeen Lelieveldt | 29 October 2025, Aula, 14.00 hrs.



This thesis examines the lives, works and networks of

composers in the Netherlands who were persecuted by the Nazis. The first section deals with the interwar period and factors that blocked access to music historiography. The second section deals with the impact of Nazi rulings on performing opportunities, source production, networks and narratives. The third section addresses how performance opportunities were influenced by a national narrative on victory and resistance, causing victims of the Holocaust to be largely excluded from commemoration. With the help of biographical research and a network approach, this dissertation uncovers aspects of the history of composing in the Netherlands that have received little attention so far. Guided by Michel-Rolph Trouillot's theory on silencing in historiography it looks at performing opportunities, source production and narratives, and adds network analysis. Following theories on canonisation by Kerman, Caswell and Citron, this thesis also focuses on documentary recuperation to broaden the canon of composing in the Netherlands.

NEW ASCA PHD CANDIDATES

Since April 19 new PhD Candidates joined ASCA. Warm welcome!

Arsen Abrahamyan, *Conflicting Urban Layers: the Colonisation of Yerevan's City Landscape during the Soviet Period*

Supervisors: Marie Baronian, Patricia Pisters

This research explores the alteration of the urban landscape of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, focusing on the Soviet period (1920s-1980s). Using an interdisciplinary approach that combines cultural analysis, environmental anthropology, memory studies, and urban analysis, the study examines how the city's physical and social spaces were reshaped under Soviet rule, viewing these changes through a post-colonial perspective.

This research aims to fill the Armenian cultural and urban studies gap by critically examining Yerevan's development through the lens of urban conflict and environmental colonialism, offering new perspectives on the city's past and its ongoing struggles with modernisation and gentrification.

Flora Cantacuzino Levy, *Re-centering the Queer Child: Representation, Consumption and Temporal Dis/orientations in Contemporary Media*

Supervisors: Rik Spanjer, Balasz Boross, Misha Kavka

This project examines how childhood performances of conviction and self-knowledge challenge the normative developmental expectations that continue to structure contemporary representations of the queer child. I analyse various forms of mediated (self) representations of queered childhoods that deviate from those narrative norms that position the child as

innocent, vulnerable and in an emergent state of becoming. Alongside an analysis of the discursive practices that seek to infantilise these performances, I argue that, by insisting upon the present-tense of the child, these performances of self-knowledge reject the implied futurity of childhood and resist epistemological interrogation. The project combines textual and empirical methods of ethnographic research, interviews and focus groups.

Wen-Hsuan Chang, *Make-do Order: Performing (Un)Lectures in Transwar Asia, 1920s-1960s*

Supervisors: Rolando Vazquez, Sanjukta Sunderason

This project examines lectures as performative speech acts across colonial and postcolonial transitions in Taiwan, Korea, Indonesia, and the Philippines during the transwar era (1920s-1960s). It analyzes how art practices were mobilized as forms of lecturing—including political speeches, education programs, and propaganda campaigns—to mediate knowledge and negotiate authority under shifting imperial regimes. Adopting the lecture/unlecture/relecture framework and introducing the concept of make-do order, the study compares imperial framing strategies and colonial counter-lectures, and explores how contemporary artists activate decolonial aesthetics by revisiting these tensions. It contributes a transimperial, practice-based methodology to reframe the role of artistic and pedagogical practice in shaping historical consciousness.

Nour Chantout, *The New Dress as a Counter-Cartography of Resistance*

Supervisors: Sruti Bala, Jeff Diamanti

This project looks at Palestinian embroidery in the Shatila refugee camp in Lebanon. It explores how embroidery is influenced by the migration of Syrian-Palestinian and Syrian women who took refuge there after the 2011 Syrian revolution. Moreover, it focuses on the 'imperfect commodification' and the NGO-isation of embroidery as a post-war practice and a practice that turns 'from a labour of love to labour' in times of crisis, building upon the research of Rachel Dedman (2016, 2018) as well as Marxist analyses of the formal subsumption of this labour into the world market.

Eleri Connick, *The Materiality of Exile in Jordan: The Palestinian House*

Supervisors: Yolande Jansen, Asli Ozgen

"The Materiality of Exile in Jordan: The Palestinian House", sits at the intersection of critical heritage, memory studies and conflict studies. Where my interest has been in exploring how objects within the domestic space convey notions of exile that transcend the home and present time, and can enable the creation (and securing) of an extended archive of Palestine and resistance to cultural destruction. These objects are understood as "Material Witnesses of Exile" and are

first encountered through “playful workshopping” that takes place in Amman. Within the workshops, these objects become more than just mementoes; they are survivors, witnesses, and carriers of stories. The Material Witnesses give an access point into exploring encounters with insurgent Palestinian memories in Amman’s private and public memory-spaces and their role in rupturing the Jordanian regime’s narrative. The project is firmly rooted in an ethnographic commitment to the city of Amman.

Nicholas Ekkel, *The Political Uncanny: How anti-democratic movements mobilise the return of the repressed*

Supervisors: Misha Kavka, Jana Cattien

This project argues that the dissonance and decay of modern democratic life can be more deeply understood through the psychoanalytic concept of the uncanny – what Freud described as the unsettling return of repressed material in distorted form. By bringing psychoanalysis and political theory to develop the political logic of the uncanny, this project offers a new way to understand how the strange and unsettling are not only felt, but actively produced and mobilized. The project asks: how does the psychoanalytic concept of the uncanny help theorize the dynamics of repression and return in western liberal democracies, and the conditions they create for anti-democratic mobilization?

Alireza Kenari, *Politics of Absence: State Propaganda in Iran’s Urban Spaces and Media, and Its Contestation through Independent Cultural Practices*

Supervisors: Markus Stauff, Stephen Turner

This project examines how Iranian civil society resists the regime’s militarized and ideological narratives through everyday practices of micro-resistance. Anchored in the Woman, Life, Freedom movement and the Persian-specific culture of *Koocheh-Bazari*, rooted in working-class alleyways and bazaars, it investigates how mundane activities, from gatherings in cafés to digital activism, become acts of defiance. By combining audiovisual analysis and spatial ethnography, the study traces how physical and digital realms intersect to produce volumetric forms of subversion. Engaging with independent documentaries, grassroots activism, and diasporic networks, this research illuminates how cultural practices contest authoritarian control and reimagine civic resilience.

Leo Koivistoinen, *Digital Dissonance: Grotesque Aesthetics and Posthuman Identity in Contemporary Digital Art*

Supervisors: Jakko Kemper, Ansgar Mohnkern, Jaap Kooijman

The project examines how grotesque aesthetics operate in contemporary digital art through the work of Mario Klingemann, Hito Steyerl, and Lu Yang. Their practices

destabilise representations of body, identity, and subjectivity. Using psychoanalytic and posthumanist frameworks, the study treats the grotesque not as style but as a critical strategy that resists algorithmic certainty, disrupts systems of control, and reintroduces tension, ambiguity, and estrangement into visual culture.

Maithri, *Decolonizing the Future: South Asian Futurisms, Identity, and the Politics of the Possible*

Supervisors: Esther Peeren, Divya Nadkarni

This project explores South Asian Futurisms as a critical and decolonial mode of imagining futures beyond colonial epistemologies, ethno-nationalist logics, and Eurocentric temporalities. Focusing on 21st-century short-form speculative fiction from across the Indian subcontinent—written in or translated to English—the study examines how science fiction narratives engage with pressing regional concerns such as climate crisis, systemic marginalisation (across caste, religion, and gender), and migration. Grounded in decolonial theory, the research analyses how South Asian SF reconfigures identity, time, and knowledge production. By employing close textual and thematic analysis, the research positions South Asian Futurisms as an epistemic and aesthetic bridge between postcolonial critique and decolonial thought, contributing to wider conversations within global speculative fiction, including Afrofuturism and ecofeminism.

Yuval Moline Obedman, *Military Metaphysics. Toward a Materialist Philosophy of War and Technics.*

Supervisors: Yolande Jansen, Huub Dijkstra

Modern conflict’s inherence in ‘technoscience’ is often considered a given in present scholarship, but its conceptual significance in current innovation is rarely explored in STS or philosophy. This thesis seeks to reevaluate military science’s spillover into civilian innovation by engaging in a dialogue with mid-to-late-20th-century European continental philosophy, particularly the work of Günther Anders, Gilbert Simondon, and Gilles Deleuze. The main contributions will be: a) A parallel reading of these authors through the lens of war, which, to varying degrees, compelled them to address the question of technoscientific development as the primary philosophical concern of their time; b) A reappraisal of their work in the context of recent (civilian) technoscientific trends, with special interest in agricultural innovation.

Emmeline de Mooij, *Making Something from Nothing: Spinning Life Force as Aesthetic Reparative Practice*

Supervisors: Hanneke Grootenboer, Paula Albuquerque

In this practice-based research project I will investigate thread’s history of origin in a multi-fold way. Utilizing a transhistorical approach, I will explore the importance

of thread for human survival on the basis of the spinning-goddesses-cults that were central to European pre-Christian and pagan religions — as they are associated with the invention of the earliest technologies — and use this as a lens to look at today's garment industry, in particular the different ways in which technological innovation has reinforced the exploitation of predominantly female garment workers.

Merel Raats, *Mad Enby Theory: Notes on Maddening for the Abolition of Pathologies*

Supervisors: Daniel Loick, Lieks Hettinga

This research examines how institutional and relational conditions shape and sustain affective experiences of maddening among non-binary people, foregrounding how these experiences are lived and negotiated. It highlights various modes of relating within psychiatric institutions from the perspective of (formerly) incarcerated people, as well as the forms in which these relationalities seep through social interactions and intimate relations. Through an autotheoretical account of the latter, the entangled relation of violence and care within state institutions is addressed. This, in turn, calls for the abolition of pathologies to contemplate various strategies within abolition.

Harrie Reynolds, *From Disorder to Diversity: Incorporating Autistic Experience into Research*

Supervisors: Titia Benders, Josje Verhagen, Leni van Goidsenhoven

This interdisciplinary research addresses the disconnect between traditional academic discourse on autism on the one hand, and autistic experiences on the other. The project assesses the current trends in autism research, analyses the underlying assumptions upon which this research is built and ultimately asks, how can listening to autistic experience improve the quality of research in the field? Within this, a particular focus is placed on autistic language and communication.

Kiva Sakona, *Touching Images, Imaging Touch: The Entanglement of Our Audio-Visual Reality, the Erotic Sphere, and Advanced Capitalism*

Supervisors: Patricia Pisters, Paula Albuquerque

The aesthetic experience of everyday life in our audio-visual environments is intertwined with the ways advanced capitalism captures desire (or libidinal energy). My aim is to investigate the visual and temporal conditions fostered within the present-day attention economy and how these are closely entangled with our capacity to cultivate both the erotic sphere and the imagination — the realm where desire flows. Simultaneously, I seek to delve into the potential of art, including my own artistic practice, to create conditions where deep attention, awareness of embodied experience and imagination can flourish. This research will be grounded in an interdisciplinary approach, engaging with philosophy, media studies,

neuroscience, gender and sexuality studies, cultural analysis, visual anthropology and artistic research.

Nienke Scholts, *Pausing Together | regenerative dramaturgies of collaborative work*

Laura Cull, Lisa Skwirblies

This artistic research PhD takes the fatigued bodies of artists and cultural workers within the international performing arts scene in the Netherlands as carriers of knowledge towards a reevaluation of exhaustive ways of working within a market-oriented art field. Placed within dramaturgy this research proposes pausing as a critical and overlooked practice within dramaturgies of work and non-work. Studying cases of cultural production houses, I investigate how artists and cultural workers work institutionally and independently within precarious conditions. Plural lived temporalities and a forwarding of interdependency and relationality provide a theoretical framework. Beyond understanding the exhaustive and neuro-normative logic of separability within modernity/coloniality, these lenses will offer approaches towards co-developing regenerative dramaturgies of work based in a relational logic of being.

Benjamin Schoonenberg, *Post-disciplinary Witnessing: The Contemporary University and its Impasse*

Supervisors: Rolando Vazquez, Joost de Bloois, Pepita Hesselberth

Departing from an autotheoretical encounter with the barricades that were constructed during the student protests in the late spring of 2024 at the Universiteit van Amsterdam — taking the barricade as a material metaphor for the historical *impasse* that the university currently finds itself facing — this PhD project aims to conceptualize the possibility, as well as potential models, for the university to take up both its responsibility, and its role, as “witness”. In order to become more attuned to its responsibilities towards the questions of our present, I will research how, and in which ways, the university can become a post-institution: by performing different social functions and engaging with its potential as a witness. This is analyzed on three levels, (1) on the level of the institution, (2) on the level of the (anti-)disciplinarity of social movements, and (3) on the level of individual practice; as well as through a variety of case studies, ranging from the experimental art school Blackmountain college, to the multimodal practice of Forensic architecture.

Mehrnoush Shahbakhti, *The Reception History of Jazz Music in Iranian Culture (from the Cold War to the Present)*

Supervisors: Walter van de Leur, meLê Yamomo

This project examines the reception of jazz in Iran from the 1950s to today, analyzing its cultural, political, and musical dimensions. It highlights how policymakers, institutions, musicians, and audiences shaped its trajectory. Jazz entered Iran in the 1950s through U.S. cultural diplomacy and modernization policies but faced opposition from leftist critiques of Westoxication. After the 1979 Revolution, anti-Western and Islamic policies suppressed it, conflicting with Iran's tradition of cultural diversity. In the Reformist era, most popular music was legalized except jazz. Despite restrictions, it revived underground, and today musicians sustain it through private initiatives, international events, and online platforms.

Berhan Taye, *Resisting and Sabotaging Automated Decision-Making Systems*

Supervisors: Claudio Celis, Lonneke van der Velden, Stefania Milan

The PhD research investigates how digital ride-hailing companies in Kenya and Ethiopia deploy automated control mechanisms, the extent to which these systems create disparities in driver compensation, and the collective and individual resistance strategies and tactics developed in response to the automated control and compensation disparities. The research will use labor process theory to understand these dynamics.

Nuoyi Wang, *Reconceptualising AI agents: Reconfiguring power dynamics in global AI platform ecosystems between the US and China*

Supervisors: Thomas Poell, Fernando van der Vlist

The doctoral project aims to critically investigate the evolving role of AI agents within the broader AI platform ecosystems. This process of the "platformisation of AI" responds to the growing convergence of platform studies and the political economy of AI, especially in light of the recent surge in Generative AI and the industrialisation of foundation models. While existing research has predominantly focused on the infrastructural dominance and economic logic of US-based Big Tech firms, this project highlights the need to account for geopolitical variability, particularly the rising influence of Chinese technology giants.

ASCA GUEST RESEARCHER: DING ZHANG

I am a PhD researcher in Communication Studies at the Communication University of China, currently visiting the University of Amsterdam through the CSC scholarship program. I will be joining ASCA from September 2025 to August 2026. My research focuses on the digital lives of migrant communities, especially how

they navigate identity adaptation through social media platforms from both their home and host countries.



Ding Zhang

Previously, I have worked on the socialization of children in ethnic minority welfare institutions and the digital practices of shidu parents (parents who lost their only child). In general, my work centers on digitally marginalized groups, aiming to amplify underrepresented voices and stories within digital society.

IMPAKT EXHIBITION: AMBIENT PROPAGANDA

Like it, Share it, Make it Grow

29 August - 26 October

From TikTok trends to political fandoms, propaganda is no longer a matter of grand gestures and mass media but nestles unnoticed in our daily scrolling routines. The IMPAKT exhibition *Ambient Propaganda*, explores how ideology increasingly circulates in the digital age as a form of ambient influence—subtle, ubiquitous, and often unrecognizable. Where propaganda used to be imposed through top-down messages, it now flows through memes, aesthetics, and influencer performances that "feel good" and that we, often unknowingly, actively spread simply by liking, sharing, or by joining the latest trend. *Ambient Propaganda* reveals how information, emotion, and self-expression intertwine online, and invites you to reflect on the digital culture you help shape—a culture which has direct political, social, and even military consequences.

Artists: Noura Tafeche, Pedro Gossler, Total Refusal, Marc Tuters, Paolo Cirio, Dana Dawud, Brandon Bandy en Fantastic Little Splash

Curators: Marc Tuters, Lesia Kulchynska en Boris Noordenbos

Info & tickets: impakt.nl

Link website:

<https://impakt.nl/events/2025/exhibition/ambient-propaganda/>

ASCA PHD WRITING CAFÉ

You are all welcome to the ASCA PhD Writing Café every Wednesday from 9:00-17:00 hrs. 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. | Location: 09:00-13:00 PCH 5.25 13:00-17:00 PCH 3.08 NB Check the locations on the ASCA website: asca.uva.nl/events/events/events.html

TOWARD A THEORY OF MYTH CRITIQUE

Carmen Lea Dege is guest speaker in the Philosophy and Public Affairs seminar coordinated by Jana Cattien j.d.cattien@uva.nl | October 1st, 4-5.30pm. at [Oude Turfmarkt 145-147](#) Faculteitkamer II at OTM

The literature on myth has long defined myth in terms of its resistance to fact and rational argument. Although scholars working in this tradition have accordingly acknowledged the need to re-think the criteria by which we evaluate and critique myths, few have really endeavored to meet this task. This paper seeks to develop such a critical framework by taking up the case of David Graeber and David Wengrow's *The Dawn of Everything* (2021), and their explicit identification of prehistory as a myth that demands critique. Drawing inspiration from mythic interpretations of Rousseau's conjectural history, we argue that myth demands a distinct form of critique that must begin from a position of acknowledging the opacity of its subjects and, as a consequence, requires an aesthetic form. To mitigate the pitfalls of aesthetic modes of critique, however, we contend that it must also cultivate an attendant ethic of learned ignorance – an approach that we conceptualize by drawing from Karl Jaspers, Hans Blumenberg, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Finally, we turn to Nastassja Martin's autobiographical essay *In the Eye of the Wild* (2021), whose own unconventional approach to the critique of myths can be productively brought in comparison with more rationalist proposals.

Carmen Lea Dege is assistant professor of Ethics and Political Philosophy at Radboud University Nijmegen. Her research is situated at the intersection of critical theory, phenomenology and environmental philosophy. Her work probes the role of knowledge, power, and myth in individual and collective responses to uncertainty with a specific focus on the climate crisis, science denialism, and the new right. Before coming to the Netherlands, she was a visiting scholar at the Remarque Institute at NYU and the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies at Harvard University as well as a postdoctoral fellow at the Polonsky Academy at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute.

In 2019, she received a PhD in Political Theory from Yale University with a dissertation on Karl Jaspers.

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).

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

demonstrable 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.

ASCA POSTDOC MEETING

October 2nd, 14:00-15:00 hrs, OMHP A008

A special meeting for ASCA postdocs on October 2nd in the Oudemanhuispoort, room A.008. We are organizing this meeting to see how ASCA can best support postdoctoral researchers, but also to allow you to get to know each other and to welcome new postdocs.

ASCA PHD MEETING

October 2nd, 15:00-17:00 hrs, OMHP C217

All ASCA PhD candidates are welcome to join the first general PhD meeting in the new season. Carolyn and Jaap will share information on the ASCA program, the faculty policy regarding PhDs and we will welcome the new PhDs and the new PhD representative, Fairuzah Atchulo. And we will pay attention to the 2026 ASCA Workshop.

COME TO YOUR SENSES: A SENSES-BASED LEARNING GUIDE

Book Launches & workshops on Thursday 2 October, 17:00 at [Maastricht University](#) and Friday 28 November, 20:00 at Pakhuis de Zwijger, Amsterdam. The book was written by multiple authors from different disciplines on the use of sensorial-based methods in higher pedagogies. It is co-edited by Emilie Sitzia, Elene Kadagidze, and Tânia Alexandra Cardoso who also illustrated the book in a step-by-step comic book format that everyone can follow and use during their fieldwork.

Seeing, tasting, smelling, hearing, feeling – purposeful training of sensory skills is rarely practiced after primary education. [Come to Your Senses](#) provides 23 exercises that will help sharpen your and your students' senses so that they can utilize them in their professional and personal lives. This comic book offers step-by-step instructions on how to implement each exercise in a fun, visual manner.

POTENTIALITIES: BETWEEN THINKING AND FEELING

RMeS/ASCA seminar comprising 6 sessions between October 2025 and June 2026, organized by Sudeep Dasgupta | First session: Wednesdays: October 1st [P.C. Hoofthuis PCH 519], Second session on October 29

The seminar focuses on the tension between thinking and feeling as a crucial resource for understanding the mediation of politics and culture. This tension has often been lost in the "turn to affect". The seminar reorients the politics of feeling by setting it into relation with thought, concepts and reasoning. Rather than finesse varied forms of "affect theory", the seminar constructs a *mise-en-scène* within which thinking and feeling, reasoning and sensing, are explicitly staged as fractious interlocutors. The tension between thinking and feeling will be understood for their potential to generate forms of knowledge rather than as a block to action. Three broad perspectives frame the seminar: firstly, to engage with a much longer history of affect, feeling and sensorial experience from the specific vantage point of critical theory; secondly, to relate the question of feeling and the body in relation to post-structuralism and affect theory; lastly, close readings of texts in philosophy, aesthetics and media studies from queer, postcolonial, and feminist perspectives to rethink the relation between thinking and feeling. This theoretical focus will be concretized by looking at cultural objects and practices where the tension between thinking and feeling is staged. Media in many forms, from literature to film, photography to art in general, will be engaged with, as they relate to specific political struggles.

The seminar comprises 6 sessions between October 2025 and June 2026.

Dates/times for first three meetings (2025):

Wednesdays: October 3, 29 [P.C. Hoofthuis PCH 519]
December 10 [Oudemanhuispoort OMHP E0.14]
11 am – 2 pm.

COSMOLOGIES RETURNS FOR YET ANOTHER YEAR OF COSMOLOGICAL STUDY

First session of the Cosmologies Reading group on October 3rd, 15:00-18:00 hrs. OMHP D1.18A | Second session on October 30th from 15:00-18:00. Theme and readings tba. To join, contact: h.h.kuipers@uva.nl.

For this year, we have decided to expand somewhat, with numerous events and other occasions in prospect. We recomposed the ASCA page for that reason, now including info on our activities and more: <https://asca.uva.nl/programme/seminars/cosmologies/cosmologies.html>

Of course, our main activity — the reading group — also continues. For our first session we've set the date for the 3th of October, from 15:00-18:00 (room tbd). We will start with two excellent texts on cosmopolitique to

both refresh some main ideas, and reorient ourselves towards the upcoming year. The texts are:

-Stengers, Isabelle. "The Challenge of Ontological Politics." In *A World of Many Worlds*, eds. Marisol De La Cadena and Mario Blaser. Duke University Press, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478004318-004>.

-Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. "Cosmopolitics," in *Dictionnaires des mondes post-capitalistes* eds. Jérôme Baschet et Laurent Jeanpierre. Paris: La Découverte, forthcoming. (translated from French; original version available as well)

AFROVIBES FESTIVAL | DISCOURSE/CONTEXT

Afrovibes Festival 2025, in partnership with the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA) and the UvA Department of Arts and Culture, brings festival artists into conversation with UvA Arts and Culture students. Across three sessions, artists and scholars will reflect on audiences, performance, and cultural belonging from African and diasporic perspectives. | 6 – 9 October 2025

Audiences of Afrovibes - envisioning, seeking, and researching festival audiences

6 Oct. | 11:00–13:00 | Room 0.12 | BG2 Turfdraagsterpad 15-17, Amsterdam | With Jay Pather, Quinsy Gario, Cathal McKee, Gregory Maqoma

This panel explores how Afrovibes has envisioned, sought, and researched its audiences over time, with particular attention to Dutch contexts. Artistic and organizational voices will reflect on shifting audience expectations, marketing strategies, and the festival's evolving relationship with its spectators.

Epistemic and creative situatedness in performance/arts making

8 Oct | 13:00–15:00 | Ruyszaal, University Library | Vendelstraat 2-8, Amsterdam | With Thania Petersen, Chuma Sopotela, Lorin Sookool, Djam Neguin
Chair: Jay Pather

A session on epistemic and creative situatedness in performance/arts making, exploring how Afrovibes artists engage with works that "artistically shape current contemporary issues from an African perspective and have a unique vision on this.

Artist Talk/Workshop: Youness Atbane (Museum of Contemporary Art)

8 Oct. | 17:00-19:00 | Vondelzaal, University Library | Vendelstraat 2-8, Amsterdam

An open conversation with artist Youness Atbane, whose project Museum of Contemporary Art stages "cultural ghosts" and explores fluid identities, exile, and belonging. The workshop offers students a space to reflect on dramaturgy across performance and visual arts in transnational contexts.

These events offer a unique opportunity to meet the artists and join critical conversations at the intersection of art and society.

REALITY RECONSTRUCTION: FEDERICO

CAMPAGNA - TECHNIC AND MAGIC

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 | 6 October 2025, 17:00 - 19:00 | Location: Oudemanhuispoort OMHP C 1.23

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?

Read more: <https://asca.uva.nl/programme/reading-groups/esoteric-media/esoteric-media.html>

THE END OF SCIENCE? AGNOSIS AS A CONTACT SPORT

IAS Lecture by Paul Edwards on October 7th, 14.30-16.30 hrs. IAS Sweelinck room Oude Turfmarkt 147, Amsterdam.

In this talk, Paul Edwards, Director of Stanford's Program in Science, Technology & Society and Professor Emeritus at Michigan, and IAS External Faculty member, explores agnosis, the making of ignorance, in an era of populism, conspiracies, and eroded trust in expertise. The talk highlights threats from weakened institutions, AI misuse, paper mills, fraud, and ideological education, urging solutions.

Agnosis (etymology: a-gnosis) is the production of ignorance, false knowledge, or non-knowledge. As populist politicians, fascists, and conspiracy theorists take power in the USA and elsewhere, norms of expertise, credentialing, evidence, and method are being upended. Well-developed knowledge institutions, from the Centers for Disease Control to climate and environmental knowledge infrastructures, are being reshaped or even dismantled. But science faces other major issues as well, including AI, an explosion of low-quality publications from "paper mills," rampant fraud, and ideologically driven science education from such entities as Prager "University." This talk will explore these concerns and – along with you, the audience – consider ways to stanch the bleeding of this all-important mode of knowledge production.

Paul N. Edwards is Director of the Program on Science, Technology & Society and Senior Research Scholar at

Stanford's Center for International Security and Cooperation. He co-directs the Stanford Existential Risks Initiative and is Professor Emeritus of Information and History at the University of Michigan. He is also member of the External Faculty at the UvA Institute for Advanced Study.

Edwards studies the history, politics, and culture of information infrastructures, especially climate knowledge systems. His books include *A Vast Machine* and *The Closed World*, and he serves as academic editor of MIT Press's *Infrastructures* series. He was also a Lead Author for the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (2021).

SPECULATIVE FICTIONS AND (NON) MODERN FUTURES: THE FUTURE OF FOOD

Reading group organised by Elio Baldi, Verónica Copello-Duque and Irene Villaescusa Illán. This semester (fall 2025) we continue to meet once a month with a newly curated set of texts that help us explore visions of the future. Come read and discuss with us about speculative pedagogies, gastronarratives, precarity, labour and future relations of intimacy, language and nature. If you want to join us, please send us an email (i.villaescusaillan@uva.nl / E.A.Baldi@uva.nl) and we will add you to the mailing list where you will receive the details of the readings, both fiction and theoretical texts. | 8 October 2025, 15:00 -17:00, PCH 5.19

We assume that all fiction is, indeed, a form of speculation therefore, in this reading group, we are particularly interested in **the politics of such speculation and the forms that it can take**. The umbrella term speculative fiction includes science fiction, utopian/dystopian fiction, feminist fiction and numerous other genres and writing modes. We think of speculative fiction as a mode of creating which not only focuses on science, technology and futurism but one that is also experimental, unfamiliar, posthuman.

We propose to engage with the **concept of modernity and of the future** through speculation. Human beings try to adapt to (anthropogenic) "slow violence" by adopting all kinds of future scenarios driven by dominant ideas on modernity, informed, mostly, by advances in science and technology which generally display AI generated/controlled worlds, climate apocalypses and geoengineering in an increasingly technocratic Global North. But forms do speculative fictions about the future that are liberatory, decolonial and sustainable take? What about past and peripheral imaginations of the future? What imaginations of the future envision less 'futuristic' futures for both (human) animals and the planet?

Since 'modernity', 'human beings' and 'environment' are dynamic and plural notions, they need to be investigated critically, especially in a context in which

neoliberal capitalism and techno-utopianism combine to create mostly conservative futuristic solutions that reproduce Western, patriarchal and anthropocentric worldviews.

These worldviews (re)produce an essentially monolithic idea of the future through linear notions of time and progress and extractivist and expansionist conceptions of space (conceptions that are more and more projected in another space to be conquered and claimed for nation states and megacorporations, such as the outer space and the deep seas). We want to study how speculative fictions from literature, film and other art forms employ a strategy of indirection to think through visions of the future that interrogate constructed identities and the gendered, racialized, and speciesist elements of our contemporary world.

In these seminar sessions we are also interested in **diversifying our library** by reading fiction works across languages and critical theory. In these seminars we would also like to explore the boundaries and porosities of (non) European texts and Western epistemologies in relation to transnational languages and transcultural texts.

IDFA & DECOLONIAL FUTURES: CINEMA UNDER SIEGE #3

In a new collaboration, Decolonial Futures and Het Documentaire Paviljoen explore the multifaceted relationship between cinema and (de)coloniality. | 8 October 2025, 19:30 -21:30 | Location [Het Documentaire Paviljoen: De Spiegel | Vondelpark 3, 1071 AA, Amsterdam](#)

Under the title *Cinema Under Siege*, this first series explores the risks filmmakers face under political regimes that monitor, censor, and suppress dissent – often at great personal cost, from legal persecution to exile. How do filmmakers navigate these threats while continuing to tell urgent stories.

The previous events in the *Cinema under Siege* series explored the boundary between censorship and self-censorship among filmmakers in Turkey, and the destruction and preservation of audio-visual heritage in Palestine. This third event expands the conversation on contemporary cinema under constraint by focusing on Hong Kong, where a new generation of filmmakers is reimagining their relationship to the city and reshaping their craft in the wake of recent political upheavals. How do activism, social unrest, and the risk of legal repercussions shape the contemporary cinema of Hong Kong?

The program features recent short films from Hong Kong, introduced by Nadica Denić, and followed by a conversation with the directors. The films and their creators have chosen to remain unnamed.

[Buy tickets](#)

Speakers:

Nadica Denić is a film scholar and lecturer at the University of Amsterdam. Her research centers on first-person films about migration and the ethical and political dimensions of contemporary documentary.

MORE-THAN-HUMAN DELIBERATION

Moving towards Justice with Animals, Plants and Other Earth Beings | Online Workshop organized by Matthias Kramm, Eva Meijer, Lucia C. Neco | October 13 and 14, 9 am - 1 pm, CET, via zoom

Humans are not the only beings who have interests they can express, yet our political institutions and practices do not take into account the views of other-than-human beings like animals and plants in decision-making. This omission is problematic from the perspective of democracy and justice. In this workshop we explore why and how *Earth others* can have a say in questions of common importance, with a particular focus on deliberation. We bring together scholars working on including more-than-human interests and insights in human decision-making, researchers who investigate how other-than-human beings express preferences or interests, and scholars working on multispecies deliberation. Together, we will explore how humans can take these preferences or interests into account in deliberative practices. The workshop also addresses (problems with) the normative structures that guide our views about deliberation, and the relation between more-than-human deliberation and other frameworks for including nonhuman preferences or interests, like rights of nature and multispecies justice.

[More information and registration](#)

ON SELF-PRESERVATION AND SPEAKING OUT

A Young Hegelian, Feminist Response to University Censorship.

On 15th October, Philosophy and Public Affairs will be hosting this year's SW*IP-NL (Society for Women* in Philosophy Nederland & Vlaanderen) Academic Lecture with Rae Aumiller | 15th October, from 4pm to 5.30pm | Place: Universiteitsbibliotheek, D2.08 (Ruyszaal) and on Zoom <https://uva-live.zoom.us/j/82948697572> | Organized by Jana Cattien.

The Young Hegelians formed an underground resistance movement in response to the Prussian censorship, which targeted university student organizations and protestors who were identified as “volatile.” Two of its members, Arnold Ruge and Karl Marx, posed critical questions that remain urgent today: How can academic philosophy survive under the attack of government censorship and the university censorship of its own members? What is the cost of self-preservation under these conditions? When is it necessary to risk termination to stand against discrimination and save the substance of critical thought?

This talk redirects this Young Hegelian line of questioning to contemporary university censorship, which targets those labeled as “foreign” and the dimensions of our identity and thought cast as *other*. The foreign is portrayed as inherently volatile, not because of what they/we do or say, but because they/we exist. I offer a feminist defense of “volatile speech” that confronts discrimination, injustice, and violence. Emotional outbursts within academia and activism—expressing grief, anger, dark humor, and rambunctious joy—make it harder to ignore the insistence of life in all forms.

R. A. Aumiller (Rae) is an assistant professor in the department of Metaphysics and Philosophical Anthropology at Radboud University, Nijmegen. They received their PhD in Continental Philosophy from Villanova University (2016), specializing in social and political affects and sensations. Their publications include *Hegel, Marx, and the Laughing Matter of Spirit* (Northwestern UP, 2025) and *A Touch of Doubt: On Haptic Scepticism* (De Gruyter, 2020). Aumiller is the recipient of a U.S. Fulbright Grant to Slovenia and fellowships at the Maimonides Center for Advanced Studies, The New School in Hamburg, and the ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry. They previously taught at Columbia University and the University of Hamburg.

FAREWELL ELLEN RUTTEN

We warmly invite you to the farewell event for Ellen Rutten, Professor of Slavic Literatures at the University of Amsterdam, on 15 October at 17:00 at [BG 3](#) the VOXPOP stage. As of 1 September 2025, Ellen Rutten will leave the UvA to dedicate herself to strengthening cooperation between museums, heritage organizations and knowledge institutions.

This new step is also fueled by concern about political crises and taken with special attention for researchers, artists, and cultural institutions in need. We mark the occasion with a final edition of [Eastsplainers](#), a public lecture series that Ellen co-organized. In this series, intellectuals, researchers, curators, and artists with personal ties to e.g. Komi, Kyiv, Lviv, Minsk, Moscow, Prague, and Warsaw offered a counterbalance to ‘westsplaining’ – the habit of viewing Central and Eastern Europe mostly through Western lenses.

In October, Ellen re-offers the stage to three memorable *Eastsplainers*:

- political scientist [Olga Burlyuk](#) (UvA, on her award-winning research into epistemic inequality in thinking about Ukraine),
- composer/pianist [Hanna Shybayeva](#) (who introduces her initiative *Music for Belarus* and shares clips of her performance of [Oxana Omelchuk](#)'s music),

- filmmaker [Ena Sendijarević](#) (we will view fragments from her film [Take Me Somewhere Nice](#) and her work for the [Bosnian Girl](#) collective).

The programme at VOX-POP runs from **17:00 to 18:30**, followed by drinks. Attendance is free, but we kindly ask guests to register via secl-slavisch-fgw@uva.nl.

If you would like to contribute, you are welcome to make a voluntary donation to the [UNE mentoring programme](#) – a support initiative for Eastern European students, researchers, and artists at risk that Ellen co-founded. Donations can be made via Stichting UNE Foundation: NL67TRIO0320631265. Contributions are welcome, but of course entirely optional.

THE ANTHROPOMETRIC RECORD

On Legal Branding And the Production of Social Death in the Postcolony | Presentation of Safae El Khannoussi in the Abolitions Democracies Seminar | All sessions are at 17.00-19.00 h in OMHP C 2.23

Seminar organized by Safae El Khannoussi el Boudrin, Daniel Loick and Oscar Talbot | In the first semester of the 2025/26 academic year, the Abolition Democracies seminar will focus on presentations of the work in progress of seminar members. If you want to participate in the seminar or present your own work, please get in touch with Daniel (d.loick@uva.nl). The dates of our meetings are: 11 sept., 16 Oct., 20 Nov., 18 Dec., 29 Jan., 17.-19.00 hrs.

Read more:

<https://asca.uva.nl/programme/seminars/abolition-democracies/abolition-democracies.html>

THE BLACK DIALOGUES 2.0

Decolonising Afropean entanglements in material culture, embodied heritage, and extractive industry
21 October 2025, 15:00 -18:00, BG 3 VOX-POP

This dialogue will open up conversations on what it means to decolonise material cultures, embodied heritage, and the legacies of extractive industries. Together, we will look at how these histories continue to shape, and are shaped by, the complex transnational ties between Africa and Europe. The programme will feature a seminar and exhibition led by a wide range of voices, alongside artistic presentations.

The structure of The Black Dialogues 2.0 is inspired on traditional African forms of engagement like palace gatherings and village assemblies. It consists of a two-day symposium, the first taking place on October 13th at Utrecht University (you can find the program for day 1 [here](#)). On the 21st of October, we will explore contemporary global issues relevant to Africa and the African diaspora today. As conversations about decolonisation grow in universities, cultural spaces, corporations, and politics, we invite you to critically reflect on the historical entanglements between Africa

and Europe. These complex ties, formed through long histories of migration and globalisation, have shaped unequal experiences of place, movement, and belonging across borders, with lasting effects on people's lives.

This programme will bring together conversations on three connected themes: the impact of European colonialism on African material cultures, African and Afro-diasporic cultural expressions, and Afropean experiences of identity and belonging. Through dialogue, we will address issues such as cultural erasure, assimilation, industrial consumerism, and cultural sustainability. Our goal is to reflect on the complexities and intertwined histories of these relationships together. We will focus particularly on the legacies of natural resources, material cultures, and embodied heritage.

Participants will critically examine colonial and postcolonial histories and address socio-economic and ecological inequalities. Through this dialogue, we'd like to offer suggestions and strategies to enhance equilibrium in Afropean partnerships across academic, cultural, and corporate sectors in society. [Read more](#)

CATHERINE MALABOU, STOP THIEF!: ANARCHISM AND PHILOSOPHY

Form and (Dis)order Reading group organized by Stephan Besser and Michael Miller | 21 October 2025, 15:00 -17:00 | [P.C. Hoofthuis](#) Room PCH 6.31 [Read more](#)

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 of the academic year 2025-26, our conversations will center on the thematic cluster Machine – Politics – Data - Language.

Please email Michael @ m.f.miller@uva.nl to receive the readings and meeting announcements.

LEGAL BODIES: WOMEN, ECONOMIES, AND THE LAW IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY NOVEL

English Department Lecture by Dr. Jolene Zigarovich, organized by Michael Miller | Thursday, 23 October—17:00-18.30, P.C. Hoofthuis 1.04, Spuistraat 134

This talk argues that the female body—central to the legality of birthright and legitimacy—is presented as a form of extralegal evidence in eighteenth-century courts and British novels. I distinguish this argument by uncovering court cases where female emotion, resemblance, and virtue become part of the proceedings and jurist decisions. The presentation then identifies a shift in the latter half of the century, when women's success within the legal system declines, and narrative jurisprudence responds by depicting women inheriting, bequeathing, and claiming birthright through their own private means. My main claim is that unlike the law, fiction more often allowed women possibilities for agency and private identity. Working with law and affect theory, I examine how emotional and coercive aspects of female birthright and inheritance cases are reworked and reimagined by female novelists, suggesting that narrative becomes a more reliable space for women to be active legal and moral agents.

Dr. Jolene Zigarovich is Associate Professor of English at the University of Northern Iowa, where she teaches and researches at the crossroads of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century body politics, death studies, and queer and trans studies, with particular emphasis on the history of the novel. She regularly teaches courses on the long eighteenth century, women writers, Romanticism, and Gothic literature. In Spring 2021 she was a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh and in 2021-22 was a fellow at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study, part of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Amsterdam. She is author of *Writing Death and Absence in the Victorian Novel: Engraved Narratives*, and editor of *Sex and Death in Eighteenth-Century Literature* as well as *TransGothic in Literature and Culture*. Her monograph *Death and the Body in the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023) had the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Currently, she is working on two new book projects that engage law and literature, *Victorian Necropolitics: Legislating the Dead Body and the Novel, 1847-1874* and *Legal Bodies: Women, Economies, and the Law in the Eighteenth-Century Novel*.

THE 'MERE' ALTERNATIVE: CULTURE, AESTHETICS, SENSUALITY... AND THE REMAINS OF THE UTOPIAN

Lecture and Master Class by Malcolm James, Co-Director of Sussex Centre for Cultural Studies, *New Tendencies in Critical Theory* series | *New Tendencies in Critical Theory* is a series hosted by program coordinators in Comparative

Literature, Comparative Cultural Analysis, and RMA Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam. Supported by ASCA and NICA | 23 October 2025 | Contact person: Aylin Kuryel, a.kuryel@uva.nl

In this lecture, Malcolm James lays the groundwork for thinking about the cultural politics of the alternative – historically and in the context of the contemporary world. Disparaged as the 'mere' alternative by the Resistance Through Rituals Collective, this lecture traces the ongoing persistence of the alternative in popular culture and cultural theory. The lecture demonstrates the various ways in which a mass cultural search is being undertaken for alternative forms of social, aesthetic, felt and political life in a moment of aggravated social, economic and ecological violence. Tracing fluctuating lines of inquiry on culture, aesthetics, and sensuality through critical theory, cultural studies, postcolonial studies and Black studies, James argues that the 'mere' alternative is a cultural concept well-suited to interrogating these utopian remains. The lecture adopts a political perspective on the study of the alternative. It is not a question, of "arriving at the scene of an area devastated by an earthquake" and laying out a moth-eaten Persian carpet "to display the somewhat tarnished gold and silver vessels", as Walter Benjamin said of Ernst Bloch but rather in a time of fascist coalescence, to understand how, and with what quality, alternative cultural politics move through the materiality of the same moment.

Masterclass - The Cultural Location of Fascism and Counter-Fascism

Sadism, resentment, and reaction permeate contemporary politics and are given spectacular expression on the street and in popular culture. The far-right mobs and politicians that dominate daily news feeds channel an emergent energy and direct it at various outsiders held responsible for national decline. Public and academic debate is familiar with these right-wing or fascist politics and their presence in elections and on the street. Contemporary studies of far-right formations have developed rich sociological, political and psychoanalytic insights on their socio-economic conditions, electoral dynamics, and psychic fantasies. This masterclass furthers this exploration by moving into the murkier location of culture, arguing that the broader structure of feeling of fascism is only beginning to receive adequate attention. Authoritarian politics thrive on everyday cruelty, humiliation and sadism, but these phenomena are not the unique preserve of the far-right. Rather, they curdle and diffuse in the micropolitics of culture, and are ubiquitous in the cultural objects in which we seek entertainment, pleasure, and enjoyment. The fatalistic programming of Netflix and HBO, or the stark moral designation of insiders and outsiders on social media, fold into a mood

otherwise identified with Trumpian deportation videos and UFC. This calls into question the political designations we have for moderate and extreme, left and right, and demands that we get a grip on the mass cultural momentum of those forces.

Corresponding with the paired lecture on 'The 'Mere' Alternative', this masterclass also asks what counter-fascist energies exist in the same cultural moment, and potentially in the same objects of analysis. These are emergent questions requiring collective investigation. As such, participants in the masterclass will be asked to submit a 1-page intervention in advance of the session outlining questions, ideas or theses. Participants will share and read each other's interventions before the masterclass takes place. In the masterclass itself, we will discuss and develop our collective sense of the cultural location of fascism and counter-fascism.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS IN THE WORLD

October 24, 2025, 11:00-17:00: SCCS-ASCA Workshop

Place: TBA

It's a truism that cultural studies is different wherever it's practiced. In this workshop, two institutions come together to compare notes on the field in relation to present conditions and challenges: the Sussex Centre for Cultural Studies (SCCS) and the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis (ASCA). The workshop is informed by the SCCS seminars on the "state of cultural analysis" (exploring the most contemporary approaches to culture and cultural analysis) and the recent volume [The Future of Cultural Analysis: A Critical Inquiry](#) (edited by Murat Aydemir, Aylin Kuryel, and Noa Roei) on the pasts, presents, and futures of cultural analysis.

Program:

11:00 Keynote lecture: Ben Highmore, "Cultural Analysis in the World."

The history of cultural analysis can't be separated from its institutional settings, whether these are the adult education classes that Raymond Williams taught in the 1960s or the postgraduate opportunities for interdisciplinary close reading of more recent years. This talk shifts away from the question of how to undertake cultural analysis to the question of where cultural analysis is performed and pursued. What happens when we shift our purview to take in not just universities and adult education but art galleries, political collectives, TV documentaries, and so on? Perhaps we can think of a vernacular humanities that has a rough and ready relationship to the established professional humanities ensconced in universities. Within this vernacular humanities, perhaps we can see versions of a "wild" cultural analysis.

Ben Highmore is emeritus professor of cultural studies at the University of Sussex, United Kingdom. He has

published extensively on everyday life, lifestyle, domestic interiors, British art, and playgrounds. His books include *The Art of Brutalism: Rescuing Hope from Catastrophe in 1950s Britain* (2017), *Cultural Feelings: Mood, Mediation, and Cultural Politics* (2017), *Culture (Key Ideas in Media and Cultural Studies)* (2016), and *The Great Indoors: At Home in the Modern British House* (2015).

12:30 Break

13:30 Workshop: Naaz Rashid, "The Cultural Politics of Nutmeg"

Alongside the symposium, Dr Naaz Rashid will run an informal workshop centered on nutmeg. As an (almost) everyday commodity, rooted in both Dutch and British colonial and culinary history, it offers a vehicle for the analysis of everyday culture. Participants will be encouraged to think about the cultural politics and poetics of nutmeg through engagement with multiple senses, including touch, taste, and smell, as well as the more common sight and sound.

Naaz Rashid is a scholar in Media and Cultural Studies and the author of *Veiled Threats: Representing the Muslim Woman in Public Policy Discourses* (2016). She is currently working on a project titled "Eating the Other: Exploring the Dynamics of London's Pop-Up Restaurant Scene."

14:30 Break

15:00 PhD Panel, convened by Charlotte Fraser

PhD researchers from the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis and the Sussex Centre for Cultural Studies come together to reflect on institutional approaches, their own projects, and the shifting states and futures of cultural analysis.

Charlotte Fraser is a postgraduate researcher in Cultural Studies at the University of Sussex. Her PhD maps cultural responses to the "cost-of-living crisis" and considers how it was narrativized in mainstream and popular sources.

16:00 Plenary Discussion

Participants share key takeaways and insights, and discuss suggestions for further collaboration.

17:00 Drinks

Contacts: Aylin Kuryel, a.kuryel@uva.nl; Murat Aydemir, m.aydemir@uva.nl; Charlotte Fraser, Charlotte.Fraser@sussex.ac.uk

BRIDGING WOR(L)DS: FUTURE-PROOFING THE LANGUAGES AND CULTURES SECTOR IN DUTCH HIGHER EDUCATION

National Conference of the sector plan Languages and Cultures, University of Amsterdam, 24 October 2025 co-organized by Alice Fleerackers | Roeterseilandcampus, University of Amsterdam, Building C (Nieuwe Achtergracht 127). Time: 10.00 – 16.30, followed by drinks [Registration now open!](#)

On 24 October 2025, we will hold the first [National Conference of the sector plans for Languages and Cultures](#), jointly organized by the Dutch faculties in Arts and Humanities and hosted by the University of Amsterdam (UvA). The conference is intended for all staff (research and teaching) working within the field of Languages and Cultures.

The aims of the [sector plans](#) are to ensure a sustainable foundation for education and research, to facilitate multidisciplinary collaboration, and to generate greater impact of humanities research and education in tackling complex social issues. At the conference we will take stock of our sector and identify future directions and (collaborative) opportunities. A varied and interactive [programme](#) has been put together, providing ample opportunities to discuss how to future-proof the languages and cultures sector. There will be plenty of time to meet colleagues and explore collaboration. The conference includes lunch and there will be drinks afterwards. Attendance is free of charge. You can register now via the [registration form](#). Registration closes on 15 October. If the maximum number of participants is reached earlier, we will close registration earlier. We therefore encourage you to register as soon as you can.

[Read more](#)

THE FUTURE OF MEMORY

A History of Lossless Format Standards in the Moving Image Archive

Book Launch hosted Giovanna Fossati and Floris Paalman, coordinators of the UvA/ASCA Research Group Moving Images: Preservation, Curation, Exhibition | October 24, 14.30-17.00 hrs. | Location: Eye Filmmuseum, Collection Centre, Asterweg 26, Amsterdam

[The Future of Memory: A History of Lossless Format Standards in the Moving Image Archive](#)

"A new generation of video standards promises lossless storage of digital objects for future generations. Jimi Jones and Marek Jancovic document the development and adoption of JPEG 2000, FFV1, MXF, and Matroska while investigating the social and material aspects of their design and the forces driving their journeys from niche to ubiquity. Drawing on interviews with archivists and developers, Jones and Jancovic reveal the archive as a dynamic space where deeply entrenched social practices produce disagreements but also resourceful collaborations. They contrast the unprecedented rise of archivist-driven standardization and controversies around non-standard technology with the historical dominance of the film and broadcast industries. Throughout, the authors clarify the role of tech companies, software developers, film pirates, hackers, and other players with poorly understood roles in the process. A timely look at the state of

audiovisual preservation, *The Future of Memory* provides a history of recent innovations alongside a snapshot of a field in the midst of profound technological change." (www.press.uillinois.edu)

About the authors

[Marek Jancovic](#) is Assistant Professor of Media Studies at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. His research is centered around the materialities of the moving image, film preservation practices, media and the environment, and format studies. He is the principal investigator of CINEAGRI: *Agriculture and the Global History of Celluloid Film Manufacturing*, the author of *A Media Epigraphy of Video Compression: Reading Traces of Decay* (2023); co-author with Jimi Jones of *The Future of Memory: A History of Lossless Format Standards in the Moving Image Archive* (2025) and, with Axel Volmar and Alexandra Schneider, the editor of *Format Matters: Standards, Practices, and Politics in Media Cultures* (2020).

[Jimi Jones](#) is the Manager of Gift Documentation at the University of Illinois Foundation. He has a PhD and an MLIS from the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois. For the past sixteen years he has taught courses for the School of Information Sciences including Audiovisual Preservation in Libraries and Archives, Digital Preservation and Metadata in Theory and Practice. Jimi's research focuses on standards for moving image digitization - the social aspects of their design, the technical choices that drive their development and the decision-making processes of large and small cultural heritage repositories when picking an encoding/container combination for digitizing legacy video materials. He is coauthor with Marek Jancovic of *The Future of Memory: A History of Lossless Format Standards in the Moving Image Archive*, by the University of Illinois Press. He is now researching the history of horror hosts and their contributions to American broadcast television history.

Entrance = free; **RSVP:** f.j.j.w.paalman@uva.nl

You can also attend the book launch online.

Program:

Presentation of the book by **Jimi Jones** (adjunct lecturer of Library and Information Sciences, School of Information Sciences, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) and **Marek Jancovic** (assistant professor of Media Studies, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam)

Conversation between the authors and **Sam Yang** (digital film registrar, Film Conservation & Digital Access, Eye Filmmuseum) and **Floris Paalman** (coordinator of the MA Preservation and Presentation of the Moving Image, University of Amsterdam)

General discussion.

THE MATERIALITIES OF TELEVISION

Inspired by Ramón Lobato's forthcoming book, this seminar session on Materialities of Television asks: What happens when we apply a materialist lens to television research? Organized by Frédérique Khazoom and Markus Stauff | 28 October 2025, 3-5 pm.

The first presentation explores how *device theory* can be employed in the analysis of smart TVs. The second presentation combines *theory of media infrastructures* with environmental concerns, offering a critical reflection on the carbon emissions generated by streaming television content.

Following the presentations, we will open the floor for a collective discussion of these themes, encouraging participants to consider how materialist perspectives can deepen our understanding of contemporary televisions.

15.00 Opening

15.10 Device Theory and Smart TV – Ramon Lobato

15.50 Break

16.00 Infrastructures and environmental impact of video streaming – Judith Keilbach

16.40 Collective discussion

17.00 Drinks

UTOPIA AND SOCIAL CONFLICT

Lecture and Workshop with William Paris (Philosophy, UToronto). The central aim of the event will be to elucidate the central meaning of the category of "utopia" in Paris' book, "Race, Time, and Utopia: Critical Theory and the Process of Emancipation" | 30 October 2025, REC C2.03 for the workshop from 10-13, lecture at 4pm, UvA, room OMHP C0.17

The workshop will be a discussion of selection(s) from the book chosen by Paris with faculty and students. The workshop will center on questions for students, though faculty will have time for questions as well. For credits, students will complete the readings, prepare a set of reading notes and discussion questions for the workshop, and attend both events.

To register, please send an email to Lillian Cicerchia (l.h.cicerchia@uva.nl) or Michael Thomas (m.l.thomas@uva.nl), and include the following basic information: I am a ResMA student/ PhD candidate. I am affiliated to [name University/ program]. I plan to participate in this event for credits and choose option (see below, if applicable). I consent to the sharing of my personal information (name and email address) to receive additional information.

The lecture, held that evening, will allow Dr. Paris to present his work to a mixed audience of University members and the public. He has provided us with the following abstract of his talk:

We all know the story of utopia: it is an ideal and perfect place that we will never reach. Perhaps it can inspire us,

show us how the world falls short, but it can never itself be an object of practical activity. The idea that utopianism and realism are polar opposites appears to be the dominant consensus. This consensus has led critics of utopia to make the accusation that utopianism is primarily a moralistic practice or non-political. I argue that the dominant narrative of utopia is unpersuasive on two fronts:

First, it assumes that the content of utopias primarily concern perfection rather than social critique.

Second, the dominant narrative supposes that the genesis of utopia is to be found primarily in the ideas and ideals of philosophers and poets rather than the social conflicts between the dominant and the dominated.

Utopias, I will argue, are not opposed to realism; they are expressions of social conflict over who has the power to determine what will be considered "realistic." It is in the interests of the dominant to cast the claims of the dominated as "utopian" and thereby concealing the contingent and contestable foundations of political life. Revealing the interest-laden standpoints concerning utopia is the first step toward grasping utopia as the immanent ferment of real class conflict and, perhaps, the self-emancipation of the dominated.

NEW BOOK: RURAL IMAGINATIONS FOR A GLOBALIZED WORLD

Editors: Esther Peeren and Tjalling Valdés-Olmos

<https://brill.com/display/title/72340>

This volume explores what aspects of contemporary rural life as deeply globalized – and thus implicated in the ongoing, destructive unfolding of colonialism and capitalism – are highlighted and obscured in social, political, economic, and cultural imaginations. It asks how this shapes the ways in which rurality is politically mobilized, affectively encountered, and artistically mediated. Coming from the humanities, the social sciences, and the art world, the contributors bring into focus the persistence of romanticizing imaginations of the rural (such as, for example, the idyll) that position it as a wholesome escape from globalization and its excesses, including looming environmental collapse. In addition, they detail attempts at deromanticization designed to disassociate the rural from whiteness, rugged masculinity, heteronormativity, anthropocentrism, and agrilogistics.