

London Conference in Critical Thought 2015

University College London
26-27 June 2015

Call for Papers

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

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

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

- The Return of Actor Network Theory
- Art and its Externalities
- Bad Language, Wrong Signification
- Eating as Encounter
- Legacies of the Immaterial in the Arts and Practice
- Interruptions
- The Politics and Practice of "Just Making Things"
- Music and Sound at Work
- Re-thinking Political Violence, Memory and Law
- The Digital 1: Noology and Technics: Algorithmic governmentality, automation and knowledge in the age of the digital economy
- The Digital 2: 'Questioning the Digital': Critical Approaches to Digital Worlds
- Theory Lessons: Theorizing the Classroom
- Radical Transfeminism
- Truthful Politics

Please send proposals for 20 minute papers or presentations, with the relevant stream indicated in the subject line, to paper-subs@londoncritical.org. Submissions should be no more than 250 words and should be received by the deadline of **Monday 16th March 2015**.

Participation is free (though registration will be required).

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

Contact us at inquiries@londoncritical.org.

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The Return of Actor-Network Theory

Stream Organisers: Christopher Haworth and Michael Haworth

During the last ten years there has been an unexpected resurgence of interest in the body of literature-cum-methodological toolkit known as Actor-Network Theory (ANT), primarily associated with Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and John Law. A cross-disciplinary revival, it encompasses philosophy and media theory (the new materialisms, 'thing theory', and the Object-Oriented Philosophy of Graham Harman and his adherents), the digital humanities (the rise of digital methods for tracing networks in social science research), and the history and sociology of art (through the recent work on networks of human and nonhuman actors in avant-garde genres), amongst other disciplines. But this development is an intriguing one, not least because it was declared as early as the late 1990s that ANT was defunct, and that the name should be discarded. For example, in an essay called 'On recalling ANT', Latour announced that there were four 'nails in the coffin' for actor-network theory: 'the word actor, the word network, the word theory and the hyphen!'

Some aspects of this resurgence are simple enough to comprehend. Arriving just ahead of the World Wide Web, ANT would anticipate the vogue for thinking in terms of 'networks' as opposed to bordered entities such as 'nation', 'institution', and 'society', even if its own understanding of the concept was different to the topological webs of data it now seems to invoke. Similarly, its controversial injunction to afford agency to human and non-human actors alike, accepting no a priori asymmetry between them, can be seen as an important antecedent to the renewed turn towards materiality and the corresponding critique of anthropocentrism that has been gestating for some time in the humanities. But ANT has been criticised for its philosophical naïveté, its underdeveloped account of power, and its presentism, amongst other things. The time seems ripe to review the merits and limitations of ANT inside of this renewed context, asking whether its takeup in philosophy, media theory, and history of art reinvigorates ANT or repeats its perceived failings.

This stream invites papers that

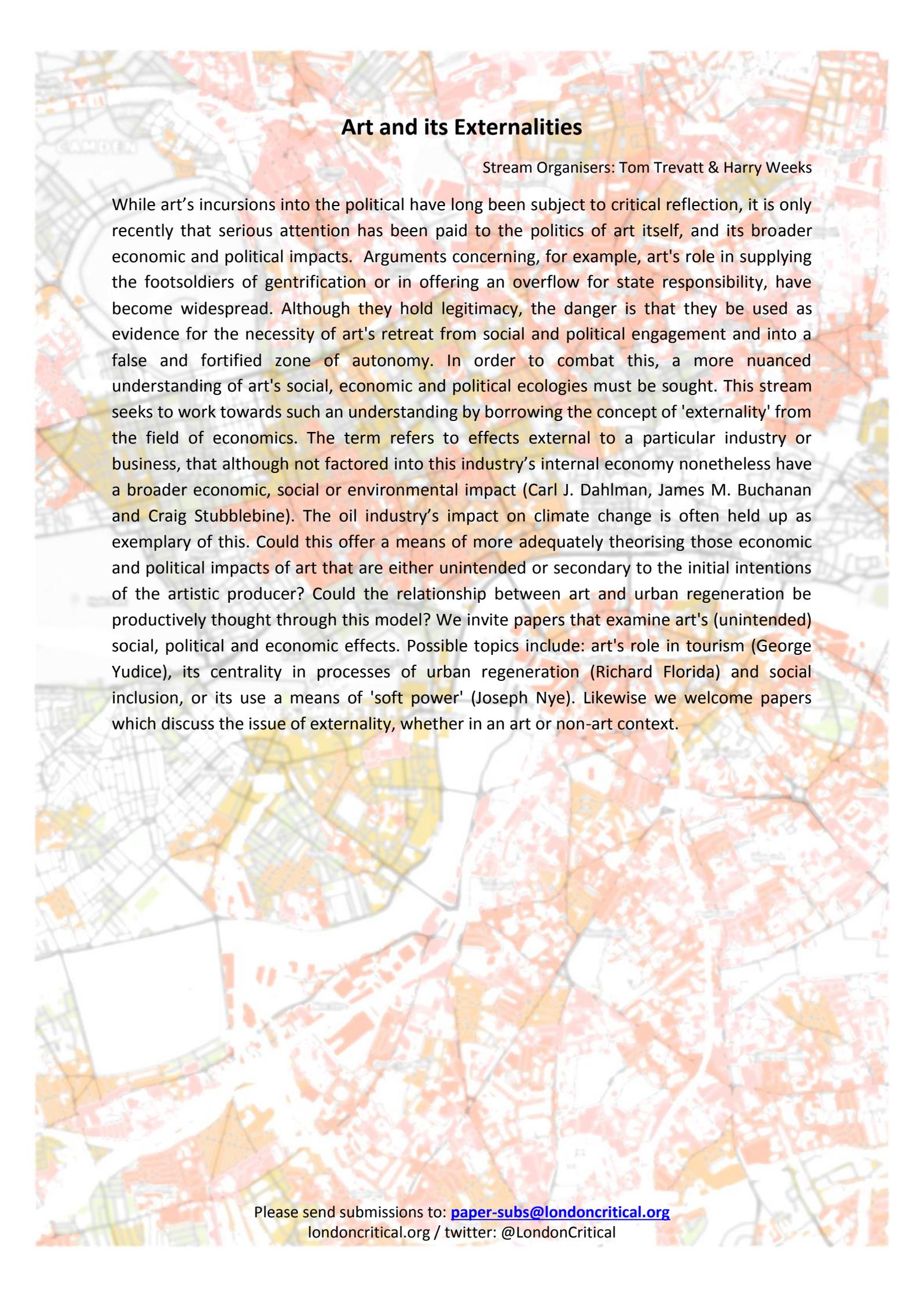
a) Consider the contemporary currency of ANT as methodological practice:

- Issues of translation: what frictions/novelties emerge when ANT is 'applied' outside of the Science and Technology Studies field in which it was originally developed?
- Digital methods and ANT: the World Wide Web as a medium to locate and analyse networks: e.g. political controversies, social networks, art genres and movements etc.

b) Critically engage with the legacy and philosophical presuppositions of ANT:

- Empiricity and the place of the transcendental in ANT.
- The mutation of ANT into Object-Oriented Ontology: Graham Harman as a reader of Latour.
- ANT and 'posthumanism', or the critique of anthropocentrism: is there room for the subject in ANT?
- The relationship between ANT and other important accounts of technological mediation, such as Derrida's concept of originary technicity - recently taken up and expanded by Bernard Stiegler and David Wills.
- Latour's critique of modernity and the nature-culture / subject-object dichotomy, plus its relationship to earlier (dialectical, phenomenological, structuralist, post-structuralist) analyses.

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Art and its Externalities

Stream Organisers: Tom Trevatt & Harry Weeks

While art's incursions into the political have long been subject to critical reflection, it is only recently that serious attention has been paid to the politics of art itself, and its broader economic and political impacts. Arguments concerning, for example, art's role in supplying the footsoldiers of gentrification or in offering an overflow for state responsibility, have become widespread. Although they hold legitimacy, the danger is that they be used as evidence for the necessity of art's retreat from social and political engagement and into a false and fortified zone of autonomy. In order to combat this, a more nuanced understanding of art's social, economic and political ecologies must be sought. This stream seeks to work towards such an understanding by borrowing the concept of 'externality' from the field of economics. The term refers to effects external to a particular industry or business, that although not factored into this industry's internal economy nonetheless have a broader economic, social or environmental impact (Carl J. Dahlman, James M. Buchanan and Craig Stubblebine). The oil industry's impact on climate change is often held up as exemplary of this. Could this offer a means of more adequately theorising those economic and political impacts of art that are either unintended or secondary to the initial intentions of the artistic producer? Could the relationship between art and urban regeneration be productively thought through this model? We invite papers that examine art's (unintended) social, political and economic effects. Possible topics include: art's role in tourism (George Yudice), its centrality in processes of urban regeneration (Richard Florida) and social inclusion, or its use as a means of 'soft power' (Joseph Nye). Likewise we welcome papers which discuss the issue of externality, whether in an art or non-art context.

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Bad Language, Wrong Signification

Stream Organisers: Vicky Sparrow & Jonathon Stafford

Artists and writers have long used their vantage point to enjoy the pleasures of transgressing social decorum and politeness. From DeSade's and Bataille's carnivals of taboo-breaking, to Beckett and Joyce's scatological imaginations, examples of artistic profanity are pervasive. Freud argued that the power of taboo found its source in 'a strong inclination in the unconscious' towards the forbidden action, and suggested that the stability of a society depended on the efficacy of its taboos. Freud's further insight that the 'privileged classes' are 'exposed to the strongest taboo compulsion' might suggest that an educated artistic producer's intentional transgression of such injunction against vulgarity may seek to destabilise the privilege of 'clean' language and its users. Indeed, for Bakhtin, swearing invoked a materialism that destabilises forms of transcendent power that seek to control the populous.

While profane language (such as blasphemy) might contravene linguistic and social regulation, it must also presuppose the conceptualisation of the sacred – just as taboo (as Butler argues in the context of censorship law) inescapably describes desire. Vulgarity and swearing employ material that resists cultural endorsement, such as waste, sexuality and dirt, but can it do more than reinforce taboo by gleefully, intentionally breaking it? If swearing can be thought of as a form of language devoid of meaning, can it be creatively deployed as critique?

Barthes' assertion that 'when written, the word shit doesn't smell' posits obscenity as a gesture towards a materiality outside the reach of representation. It can be read as a critique of representation's surreptitious collusion with euphemism, with taboo, in its inadequacy at encapsulating the material stench of lived experience.

The contemporary ubiquity of swearing and obscenity in western society might seem to contradict Bataille's description of the modern mind's inability to confront base material. It is, however, with Gillian Rose that we realise that in spite of profanity's apparent abundance, that 'Nowhere in the endless romance of world literature [...exists] an account of living with a colostomy'. For Rose, to write on this topic must be to remove it from the sacred-taboo dialectic itself: 'I need to remove the discourse of shit from transgression, sexual fetishism, from too much interest, but, equally from coyness, distaste and the medical textbook.' This might hint also towards the political and juridical dimensions of a process of re-sensitising language that the poet-activist Anna Mendelssohn called for. Or, perhaps, could it be better to hold on to our euphemisms for the sake of the plosive force they enable in their transgression?

This stream invites critical approaches to bad, low and wrong language and representation, and invites contributions which might consider the following topics:

- Profanity and vulgarity in literature
- Sacriligious language and theories of the sacred
- Obscenity and poetic expression
- Revolution and vulgarity
- Illness and the profane
- Linguistic stoppages and paralinguistic ruptures
- Bad grammar and its policing
- Censorship and punishment
- Gender and obscenity
- The breaking and making of taboo
- Profanity as a void of signification
- Swearing and visual culture
- Desensitisation.

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Eating as Encounter

Stream Organisers: Sam Barton & Edwina Attlee

Eating is an act of everyday transubstantiation, bread made flesh. Walking, seated, alone, together, in public, in private – food is necessarily a part of our everyday life. It is often imbued with meaning far beyond its utility as sustenance. Though to think of food beyond its calorific content must be understood as a luxury that is not universal. In its absence and in its presence food is deeply political.

We invite abstracts which engage with food as a simultaneously political, social, and economic substance. In particular we wish to engage with the thesis that eating is a form of encounter. Starting with bell hooks' rendition the middle class interest in 'ethnic' foods as "eating the other" we invite a discussion that relates food to colonialism and racism, as well as gender, class, sexuality and other forms of social and cultural difference. We are also interested in notions of conviviality (Paul Gilroy) and more broadly, every day social interactions in places like cafes, restaurants, and street markets.

We encourage submissions from a wide range of disciplines, and with a broad set of approaches. The question of food and encounter extends beyond sites of consumption into numerous other points of conflict. Thinking critically about food will invite discussions of gender and domestic labour, workplace politics, and urban planning. We also wish to include discussions of food as a cultural, sensual object – this may result in consideration of its role in the arts, sensory pleasure and disgust, or memory.

References: bell hooks, Michel de Certeau, Paul Gilroy, Ben Highmore, Michel Serres

Key Words: Food, Everyday, Post-colonial, Conviviality, Encounter, Bodies

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Legacies of the Immaterial in the Arts and Practice

Stream organiser: Sam Wilson

This stream asks what renewed interests in materiality mean for immateriality. In particular, it considers how this issue is critically negotiated through artistic, everyday, and socio-cultural practices.

The arts provide means for critically reflecting upon contemporary cultural and material conditions. They engage with both representational practices and their inherent problematics vis-à-vis immateriality. Potentially, they offer possibilities for conceiving of immateriality beyond 'a negation of' or 'negative to' materiality - e.g., by accounting for immateriality as constituted through material and artistic practices. This dialectic is diversely explored or manifest in the histories of the arts: the plastic arts proffer us material objects, yet these evoke immaterial excesses beyond the objects taken naïvely; music, regarded historically as perhaps the most ephemeral and abstract of the arts, appears in light of always-developing technologies and materialities of sound-production; experiential atmospheres are designated spatially through architectural and urban practices. Some might argue that these histories frame contemporary formations of art and culture.

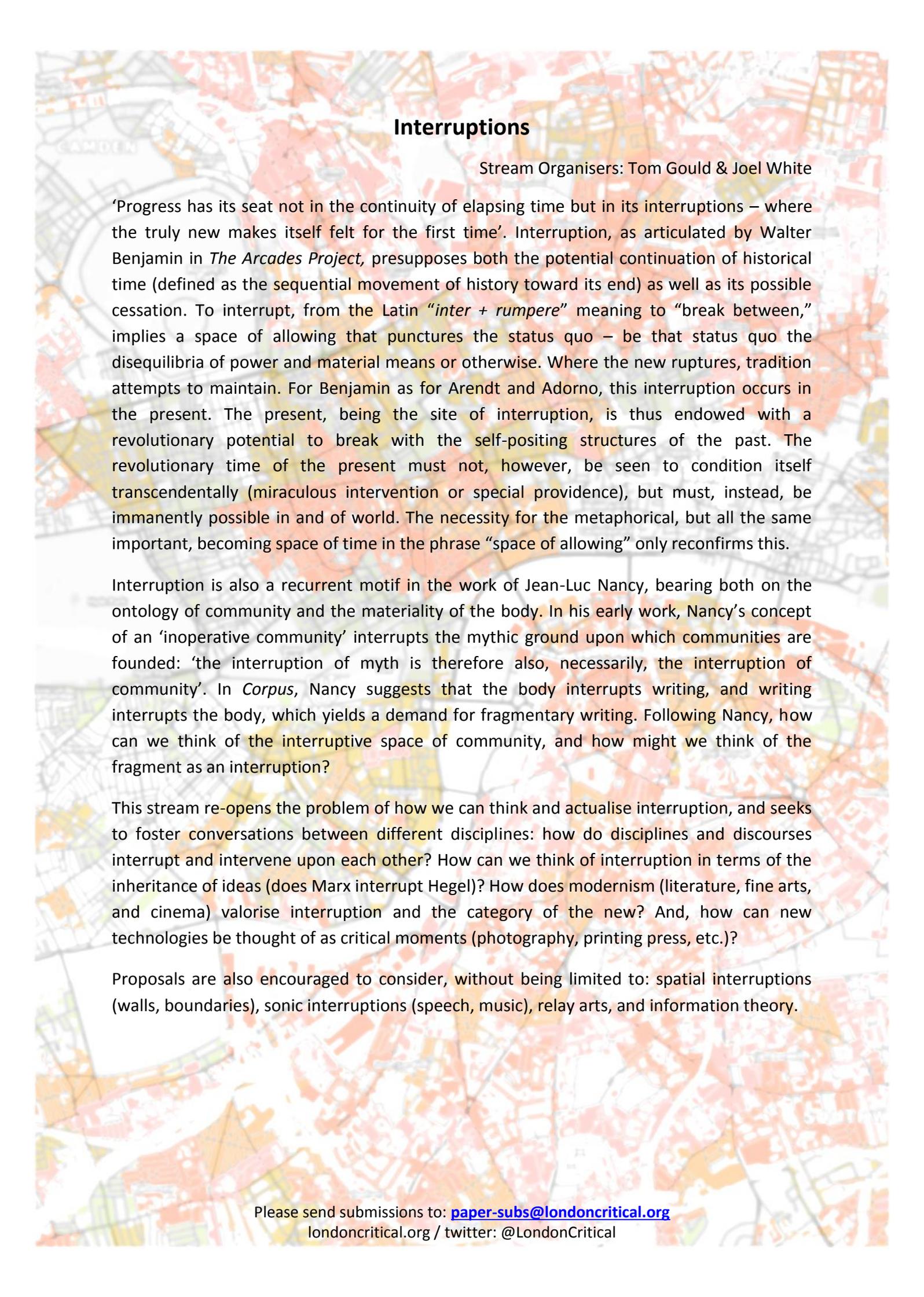
One sensitive to these concerns may pose a series of productive, intimately-related questions: How do (im)material practices appear within or react to dominant cultural contexts? Do ubiquitous digital technologies provoke aesthetic counterreactions that seek to reassert the place of materiality; or does one see a gesture of accepting the new (im)material regime? What is it to practice production and consumption within these socio-cultural contexts? In a Benjaminian recognition, might we see in capitalistic consumption promises of immaterial legacies (history, imagination, etc.), accessible only through the purchase of concrete commodities? What is the role of power in circumscribing (imagined) boundaries between materiality and the immaterial?

Submissions may focus (but are by no means limited to) the following areas:

- (Im)materiality in art, music, dance, etc.
- Materialising the immaterial (and vice versa) in art practices
- Immateriality in and after New Materialisms
- Immateriality and the problematics of (its) representation
- Immateriality, the body and/or identity
- Sound: as ephemeral and material
- Immateriality and modernity / late capitalism / 'liquid modernity' / the digital age, etc.
- Historicising the (im)material
- Immateriality and material histories of the arts
- Transversing the material/immaterial divide
- The politics and cultural economy of the material/immaterial divide

In addition to scholarly papers, artists, performers, and practitioners are encouraged to propose papers and other forms of presentation toward this stream. This stream takes "the arts" in the broadest terms (including: poetry, music, visual art, theatre, architecture, dance, film...etc.).

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Interruptions

Stream Organisers: Tom Gould & Joel White

‘Progress has its seat not in the continuity of elapsing time but in its interruptions – where the truly new makes itself felt for the first time’. Interruption, as articulated by Walter Benjamin in *The Arcades Project*, presupposes both the potential continuation of historical time (defined as the sequential movement of history toward its end) as well as its possible cessation. To interrupt, from the Latin “*inter + rumpere*” meaning to “break between,” implies a space of allowing that punctures the status quo – be that status quo the disequilibria of power and material means or otherwise. Where the new ruptures, tradition attempts to maintain. For Benjamin as for Arendt and Adorno, this interruption occurs in the present. The present, being the site of interruption, is thus endowed with a revolutionary potential to break with the self-positing structures of the past. The revolutionary time of the present must not, however, be seen to condition itself transcendently (miraculous intervention or special providence), but must, instead, be immanently possible in and of world. The necessity for the metaphorical, but all the same important, becoming space of time in the phrase “space of allowing” only reconfirms this.

Interruption is also a recurrent motif in the work of Jean-Luc Nancy, bearing both on the ontology of community and the materiality of the body. In his early work, Nancy’s concept of an ‘inoperative community’ interrupts the mythic ground upon which communities are founded: ‘the interruption of myth is therefore also, necessarily, the interruption of community’. In *Corpus*, Nancy suggests that the body interrupts writing, and writing interrupts the body, which yields a demand for fragmentary writing. Following Nancy, how can we think of the interruptive space of community, and how might we think of the fragment as an interruption?

This stream re-opens the problem of how we can think and actualise interruption, and seeks to foster conversations between different disciplines: how do disciplines and discourses interrupt and intervene upon each other? How can we think of interruption in terms of the inheritance of ideas (does Marx interrupt Hegel)? How does modernism (literature, fine arts, and cinema) valorise interruption and the category of the new? And, how can new technologies be thought of as critical moments (photography, printing press, etc.)?

Proposals are also encouraged to consider, without being limited to: spatial interruptions (walls, boundaries), sonic interruptions (speech, music), relay arts, and information theory.

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The Politics and Practice of "Just Making Things"

Stream Organisers: Ali Eisa & Phil Thomas

This stream asks: what are the politics of 'making things' as a method of intellectual inquiry?

We aim to think through the logic behind naming art or intellectual practice 'making' – the foregrounding of the production of and experimentation with physical media as a mode of knowledge production.

Oriented towards questions of developing methodologies, this stream is addressed primarily but not exclusively towards those doing interdisciplinary work between an art/design practice and a traditional academic discipline, or in practice based research. However, we believe it is crucial that these methodologies are contextualised within the arguably increasing or renewed significance of "making things" as a valued contemporary socio-cultural practice.

The sorts of questions we've been thinking about include:

What is the materiality of making? If we are all engaged in acts of production of different kinds, what is at stake in foregrounding this production as 'making'? What is the visibility of making and what kinds of practices are identified as such? What is specific about the relationship between 'maker' and 'material'? Is making always about experimentation, newness or fragility and how might this intersect with the neoliberal economy's celebration of the bespoke, the handmade and the unique? Are we witnessing a romanticisation of the idea of making, in the opposition constructed between commercialisation and craft?

How do we think *through* practices of making? Does making produce knowledge differently? What are the tensions involved in making within the academy as an institution set up to valorise traditional academic forms of knowledge production? Can methods drawing on the arts/design make work of 'value' in the age of the REF? What is the language of making, and what happens when we then turn to critical theory, philosophy, the sciences or sociology to explain, contextualise or reposition our making? Alternatively, what happens when we refuse to use this language? Is there an excess to practices of making that can't be fully captured or interpreted by academic languages? Is making naïve? Is it oppositional?

How is making gendered and classed, and how might this be underpinned by specific relationships to technologies of production? What would a post-human making be?

This stream will be a place in which to explore methodological strategies, experiments and issues. As well as traditional papers we invite contributors to share their practice and embrace non-traditional presentational formats. We're open to the suggestion of group or collaborative presentations.

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Music And Sound At Work

Stream Organiser: Toby Bennett

The creative impulse and the need for toil have long been characterised by a sense of their mutual incompatibility. The discourse of contemporary neoliberalism has blurred this enduring distance to sketch a picture of creativity as a resource, to be manufactured and exploited primarily for economic or social gain. It does so by deploying idealised and indiscriminate notions of the creative class/industries/economy (etc.), in which dichotomies of art-commerce, work-play, or production-consumption no longer hold. Music is no exception to this logic and, like 'creativity', tends to be thought of as an unalloyed good, bringing people together in joy and wonder. However, when the aural world is perceived to map directly onto the world of human emotion, the relationship between sound and various forms of labour (industrial, immaterial, audience) may be yet more intimate and insidious.

This stream seeks to provoke discussion around ways in which music could be considered 'at work'. This construction has two distinct but overlapping and complementary senses. Firstly, the acoustic ecology of the world of work: encompassing instances in which workers have soundtracked their labour; or used music to comment on working conditions. Secondly, sound and music that has been *put to work*: emphasising the exploitation of aural properties for specific social, economic or (bio)political ends, to drive the labour of consumption, for example. The intention here is to move the focus away from artistry and so-called 'creative labour', towards the technics of affect regulation as critical mechanisms of contemporary cultural and libidinal capitalism. Music or sound may work to distract from conditions of alienation; or intensify and improve productivity. It may be a seductive under-labourer in processes of addictive consumption; or it may reassure and legitimate, rendering exploitative practices more palatable.

The stream aims to bring critical perspectives from across disciplines into conversation, and may consider themes such as:

- Office, factory and domestic work soundscapes (background noise, muzak, daytime radio...)
- Work songs in oral traditions
- Songs which comment on work and labour conditions
- Singing, humming and whistling while you work (oral techniques of self-regulation)
- Sound design and 'ubiquitous music' in leisure and retail environments
- Company songs and corporate anthems
- Hold music and incidental white-collar sounds
- Branded music, jingles, audio logos, trademarked sounds and aural promotional culture
- Sonic weaponry and the military-entertainment complex

Contributions are encouraged that draw on anthropology, sociology and ethnomusicology; sound studies; psycho-acoustics; cultural history; political economy; organisational psychology; critical management and marketing; science and technology studies; labour process; aesthetics – amongst others. Indicative scholars might include (but are by no means limited to): Karen Bijsterveld, Georgina Born, Michael Bull, Eric F. Clarke, Martin Corbett, Tia DeNora, Nicola Dibben, Ted Gioia, Steve Goodman, Dave Hesmondhalgh, Anahid Kassabian, Jean-Luc Nancy, Keith Negus, Devon Powers, Jonathan Sterne, Bernard Stiegler, Peter Szendy, or Timothy D. Taylor.

Approaches that conceive of sound or music as an abstract object with its own sense of agency are welcome, alongside more humanist ontologies which may emphasise the actions of individuals and communities within or against industrial capital.

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Re-thinking Political Violence, Memory and Law

Stream organisers: Ozan Kamiloglu, Federica Rossi

According to Walter Benjamin the only possible messiah is the collective one: it is the oppressed humanity that can bring emancipation. Likewise, Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, Jacques Ranciere, Alain Badiou and other critical thinkers have theorised the emancipation of the oppressed over the last 30 years. On the other side, the liberal humanitarian tradition constructs the concept of human and its rights against any form of violence. This different subject of emancipation in the neo-liberal discourse and in the radical thought and social movements also reflects the difference in the source of the rule of law, in the legitimation of violence and whose memory is audible and sayable.

National liberation and decolonisation struggles, revolutionary groups, indigenous and separatist movements around the world have resorted to violence in various ways. Often labelled as 'terrorism' by states and international governmental actors, those groups claim to act in the name of the oppressed and challenge the state's monopoly on physical legitimate violence (M. Weber). However, contemporary debates on such political struggles seem to be trapped between the imperative of moral and legal condemnation of physical violence and the call for a civil reconciliation based on a consensus upon rights and punishments. In parallel, memory becomes more and more a field of struggle that reflects the tensions between the politics of emancipation of the oppressed and the liberal approach to the right to individual integrity or *noli me tangere* (A. Brossat). Thus, memories of past struggles become audible as far as they have a part in what Ranciere calls the 'distribution of the sensible', what is sayable, what is visible and what is not. Memories of 'perpetrators' can be accepted into the society only after condemnation of the political violence and principles that legitimise it. The field of memory creates what Robert Meister defines as 'good victims', the ones accepting the consensus, and 'bad victims', that refuse the reconciliation and the consensus upon shared responsibility of past violences. In this perspective, the chronicles of law represent the memory of the State.

This stream invites papers from different disciplines, presenting case studies or theoretical reflections questioning fields where law, political violence and memory intersect.

Papers may consider, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Processes of radicalisation and legitimation of Political Violence
- Transitional justice processes and the refusal of reconciliation
- Political Violence, Memory and Consensus
- Conditions of remembering and forgetting political violence
- Memory of anti-colonial struggles in times of austerity
- References to armed struggles in today's social movements
- Politics of history writing and law
- Memoirs, films, and other narrations and State control mechanisms
- Literary and cinematographic representations of political violence

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The Digital: Dual Stream

Due to the pertinence of the question, and the unique issues that each proposal addressed, we have chosen to run two streams that address this theme in tandem. Proposals will be considered with both streams in mind, so feel free to submit to either, or both (under the title 'The Digital').

1: Noology and Technics: Algorithmic governmentality, automation and knowledge in the age of the digital economy

Stream Organiser: Noötechnics Collective

In developing her notion of algorithmic governmentality, Antoinette Rouvroy (2013) has recently questioned how regimes of operativity replace regimes of truth in an increasingly seamless and immanent reality. She defines 'Big Data ideology' by fluidity and reliability in opposition to doubt and hesitation, as it is developed through a data-oriented and quasi-exhaustive objectivity. Rouvroy's diagnosis leads to the question: how is knowledge organised today in the age of neoliberalism and the digital economy?

This stream aims to revisit the questions of *Ideologiekritik*, as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari in 1980 who discarded the term of ideology for noology. At that time, noology was chosen to enlarge the understanding of ideology based on an impersonal conception of thinking and to do away with a certain Marxist legacy. To them, noology is not merely the study of the 'inverted world' and mobilized idealism that the masses need to be emancipated from, but rather the study of the images of thought and how they are wired into society. In short, it is not the brains that should be cured from ideology (such as religion or capitalism) but the modes of production. To be more precise, it is the machines and devices composing the noosphere that should be reimagined. That this noosphere is also a mecanosphere has never been more explicit: in today's digital economy, relations of production are modulated by algorithms that predict behavioral responses to the market, pre-empting the *voûç* in the automated control of drives and desires.

Given this context, critical theory, after Benjamin, Adorno and Feenberg, is neither a matter of opposing nor describing the contemporary world as being post-thought (or post-poetry). What forms does ideology critique take in the age of the digital economy? What modes of production and consumption are forgotten or political unthought? Noology implies 'taking thought seriously', and if today the images of thought are explicitly encoded in the algorithms of social control and modulation, our task is that of both diagnosing these nootechnical assemblages in their functional composition and inventing new nootechnical assemblages.

We welcome contributions on such topics as the Big Data ideology, critical theories of the digital, the restructured post-2008 economy, algorithmic governmentality, the sharing economy, artificial general intelligence, digital labour, cognitive capital and accelerationism.

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2: 'Questioning the Digital': Critical Approaches to Digital Worlds

Stream Organisers: Pip Thornton & Nat O'Grady

In a world whose conditions of possibility are increasingly mediated by digital technologies, new power dynamics have arisen to organise life. But what role does critical thought have in an increasingly digitalised, coded, sorted and algorithmically dependent world, and how does the history of critical thought allow us to make sense of such a world?

Can Foucault help us understand the underlying systems and hierarchies of digitalised society, or Derrida the language of computers and code? Can engagement with the Frankfurt School elucidate an exploration of digital culture, art and literature, or Deleuze and Latour the intricacies of social networks. What can Marxist economics teach us about the conflicting roles and motives of digital technology as a means of communication, a provider of security, and as a creator of wealth? (How) has the digital become political?

This session seeks papers which apply critical thinking to make sense of and engage with a digitally encoded, mediated and organised world. Along with the application of luminaries in the history of critical thought which we might see in the work of David M. Berry (2014), Louise Amoore (2013) and Rob Kitchin (2011), we wish also to provoke fresh - perhaps experimental - independent thinking and theory; examples of which might include recent contributions from Noortje Marres (2012), Sam Kinsley (2012), James Ash (2012), Jussi Parikka (2014), Matt Fuller and Andrew Goffey (2012). What we would ultimately like to achieve is a recasting of theory through a digital lens, shining a critical light into the black boxes of digital technology whilst reclaiming a means of redress and resistance through the power of critical thought.

Topics include (but are by no means limited to):

Big Data, Cyberspace, Social Media, Algorithms, Net Neutrality, Security/Surveillance, Conflict/War, Power, politics, Economies of technology, Technologies and gender, Technologies and race, Technologies and class, Biometrics, New epistemologies, New ontologies, Ethics : identity, privacy, security, Geographies of technology, Philosophies of technology, Search Engines, Language and code.

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Theory Lessons: Theorizing the Classroom

Stream Organisers: Eric Daffron & Becky McLaughlin

This stream emerges from a growing interest in the ways in which theory can illuminate not just the products and ideas of high culture but also the ins and outs of everyday life. Taking the university classroom, broadly construed, as a site of theoretical investigation, this stream asks if theory can help us to understand classroom dynamics, offer pedagogical strategies, and illuminate current pressures on higher education that find expression in the classroom. As a forum for these issues, this stream welcomes a variety of theoretical approaches, recognizing not only that these approaches are often in conflict but also that collectively they enhance our understanding of the classroom. For example, (how) can we combine a Marxist or Foucaultian emphasis on the disciplinary and hegemonic practices of educational institutions with a Lacanian or Barthesian appreciation for the disruptive pleasures and drives that the unconscious might produce within and through students, teachers, and classrooms? Which theoretical and pedagogical innovations can help teachers and students to 'get the job done' and to theorize 'the job'—simultaneously practice education and imagine other forms and ends for education? How can theory help us to historicize, criticize, and re-draw the productive but sometimes-disabling lines that 'make' the classroom and its subjects: e.g., lines between English and Communications, Literature and Creative Writing, Consuming and Making, Reading and Viewing and Listening, Teacher and Student, Administrator and Teacher, School and State? A site for lively theoretical debate about these and related issues, this stream invites paper proposals on, but not limited to, the following in relationship to the classroom (broadly construed):

- power, knowledge, and authority
- the subject-supposed-to-know, the unconscious, and Other ways of learning
- discipline and punish
- class, race, and gender
- confessions and examinations
- analyst and analysand; transference and countertransference
- models and mentorship; imitation and plagiarism
- sexuality and perversion; text and fetish
- performance, stage fright, and the masquerade
- cultural literacies, cultural capital
- communities, institutions, and group dynamics
- virtuality and authenticity
- non-traditional pedagogies and the fundamental pedagogical fantasy
- technology and the Luddite

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Radical Transfeminism

Stream Organisers: Mijke van der Drift, Chryssy Hunter & Nat Raha

Against a backdrop of social gains made by mainstream LGBT movements, the reality of trans* lives (particular for trans* persons of colour) continues to be one of material and social struggle against poverty, deprivation and violence.

While inclusion in existing structures, whether they be social initiatives or current feminisms, is often the focus of the transfeminist discussion, this stream looks to radicalise the trans* perspective. This redistribution of emphasis from inclusion in existing centres, to the possibility of elaboration from the limits outward, will open up new terrain for alliances, strategies, and politics. We propose to look at points of divergence instead of inclusion, both as means to build practices of solidarity, as well as highlight differences of perspective. By emphasising trans* as an open-ended category without a core, a potential radicalisation of perspective and action, as opposed to erasure, is actualised.

The stream aims to address the social, material and political necessity of transfeminism as a radical and potentially revolutionary sphere of thought and praxis. It will address the importance of a radical transfeminist critique of the limitations of liberal transgender politics that are being rapidly and unquestioningly taken up across the world. It specifically looks to extend transfeminisms beyond rights discourses, and formulate critiques as evolving practices and theories.

Specifically the stream aims to foreground the question of how solidarities are built across contexts and what different perspectives need to provide in light of a radical transfeminist critique. The stream aims to challenge the perspective that “it gets better”, and asks instead how the embodied trans* experience exposes slow death, social violence, and cherished privileges.

Papers submitted to this stream may want to engage with (but not be limited to) the following topics:

- the necessity of a trans* politics of absolute liberation, as a critique of trans* liberalism in the context of neoliberal capitalism: transfeminism as a politics of relief to immediate need, including class relations and the derailing of class analysis in trans* politics
- critiquing the trans* // cis* binary, and the formulation of radical trans* discourse beyond established dichotomies: post-post-trans*, post-queer, the abolition of hierarchies of trans*/queerness, and the juxtapositions of transmisogyny to transfemme.
- practice-based transfeminism, including linkages to disability studies, sex work activism, and carceral politics
- intersectional transfeminism; transfeminism as a necessary politics of solidarity; the plurality of the “we” from trans* perspectives; transfeminism as fundamental to feminisms; global transfeminisms
- radicalism and praxis in trans* art and literature
- intersex intersections in trans* activism and politics
- histories of trans* liberation, trans* feminism and activism, such as the work/activism of Leslie Feinberg, Kate Bornstein, Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera) and RadicalQueens (Ceji Bell, Tommi Avicelli Mecca), Vreer, Dean Spade, Fernanda Milan

Please send submissions to: paper-subs@londoncritical.org
londoncritical.org / twitter: @LondonCritical

Truthful Politics?

Stream Organisers: Chris Henry, Hollie MacKenzie, Hannah Richter & Ben Turner

As Misak argues in *Truth, Politics, Morality* (2000), 'the notion of truth has fallen from grace in some quarters of epistemology'. With the ontological turn of the 20th century and the subsequent rise of critical thought, truthful political philosophy became the target of a political philosophy of truth which seeks to unmask and dismiss the theoretical teleology of truth as dogmatic claim to authority. When the metaphysics of truth fell foul of their own lack of truthfulness, it was to resources such as deconstruction and constructivism, that political philosophy turned. So, when David Cameron, in his New Year speech, tells us that '2015 can promise to be a great year for our country - if we make the right choices together', the critical theorist has no problem in refuting the claim that there can be any 'right choice' at all. Yet, what is the status of this refutation? How true is it that there is no 'right choice' - and how can such a claim for philosophical validity itself escape the notion of truthfulness?

For Meillassoux, in *After Finitude*, casting the notion of truth aside out of hand constitutes a fideism akin to the same quasi-religious dogmatism that was the original target of critical thought. The claim that there is no truth carries, for him, the same metaphysical weight as a truth claim itself and must therefore be dispensed with in favour of thinking a world 'capable of subsisting without being given' (2008: 28). On the other hand, Badiou has argued that only the turn to truth, in its axiomatic form, can liberate us from the contemporary doxa of political philosophy. For him, it is precisely a Cartesian fidelity to the truth procedure of mathematics that can escape the metaphysics of truth in favour of a language of being qua being. Even Deleuze, often assumed to carry no truck with truth, nevertheless argues in *Difference and Repetition* that, a 'problem or sense is at once both the site of an originary truth and the genesis of a derived truth' (2004: 198). External conditions of truth-genesis, for Deleuze, cannot be understood as an isolated structure, but must be substituted with the intrinsic conditions contained within a problematic itself as 'a problem always has the solution it deserves' (*ibid.*).

This stream proposes to re-open questions of the conceptual, theoretical and practical-political relevance of truth, specifically against the background of post-foundational and post-structuralist theory and we welcome papers that investigate the concept of truth from a wide range of disciplines.

Topics for consideration might include (though are not limited to):

- The politics of truth/the truth of politics.
- The formal, linguistic, psychological, social conditions of truth and truth telling.
- Immanent vs. transcendent truth.
- The power of truth and/or its role in political discourse.
- The status of truth in anti-foundationalism and object orientated ontology.
- The foundations of truth claims; empiricism; positivism; naturalism.
- Truth and practice, the relevance of truth in social interaction and art.

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