



TransHumanities

TransHumanities is a platform for dialogue between the disciplines of the Humanities, between the Humanities and other scientific cultures, between science and art, theory and practice, academia and society; and between individual and participatory, analytical and committed research.

TransHumanities serves to establish and cultivate discourses, initiatives and ideas that transcend institutional, socio-cultural, regional, linguistic and disciplinary barriers.

Call for Applications Summer School 2020

Deadline: 10 May 2020

When: 31 August – 4 September 2020

Where: Hotel Alpha Soleil, Kandersteg, Switzerland

Languages: English (main), German

ECTS: 6 | **Costs:** 400 Swiss francs (travel and accommodation [double room] covered by organizer). Members of the GSAH and the Bernese Faculty of Humanities as well as members of our partner institutions and supporters (f.e. GCSC Justus-Liebig-Universität Giessen, FDI Université de Lausanne) are free of charge.

Materialities & Subjectivities

Accounting for Complicated and Complicating Entanglements in the Humanities

Since the 1990s, the humanities' interest in material and materiality has been growing steadily. A material turn has been called out in order to coin a programmatic shift away from social constructivism and a text-heavy linguistic turn, which was criticized for maintaining modern and humanist binaries such as matter/subject, or nature/culture.

Feminist new materialists advocated for embracing the vitality of matter as it encompasses humans and non-humans alike (f.e. Donna Haraway, Karen Barad, Jane Bennett). The latter's rejection of anthropocentrism aligns feminist new materialism both with speculative realism (f.e. Quentin Meillassoux), a branch in philosophy that demanded a recognition of an autonomous reality that is independent of man and their consciousness, and with Actor Network Theory (ANT) (f.e. Bruno Latour), which positions humans as one actor amongst other "actants" who collectively form networks with particular capacities. And in regard to the emergence of New Media, media theorists such as Friedrich Kittler made a case for considering technology as essentially autonomous, leaving the human and written history behind.

While some matter-oriented approaches might have overstated the power of matter and technology by seemingly asserting and sometimes celebrating its primacy and self-sufficient agency (f.e. Kittler's polemic "driving the human out of the humanities"), for most of them (as well as this summer school), a return to matter does not mean to discount subjective, conceptual/ideal, discursive, or socio-cultural constructions of gender, class or race. The concepts that interest us consider how material objects, bodies, spaces, media stores and tools, technology, conditions are entangled with discourses and subjectivities, and how agency is co-produced – always infected by power modalities.

A mode of thinking through the intersections of (non)human life (bodies, animals, viruses, etc.), inorganic matter (particles, stone, waste, medial tools, technology, infrastructure, etc.), environmental phenomena (climate, streams, pollution, etc.) and socio-cultural or subjective/sensitive constructions puts forward a complicating, connecting, vibrant, processual, transmedial and open way to conceptualize the world, undermining an all too monolithic conception of systems, structures, fields, disciplines, and research objects. It allows us to think from transitions and beyond borders.

The summer school of 2020 analyzes and discusses present and past material and conceptual entanglements both as research topics and as a mode of thinking from (art)historical, literary, sociological, cultural, philosophical, archaeological, intermedial and artistic perspectives. It addresses the following questions a.o.:

- What do we really mean, when working with broad concepts such as "materiality" and "subjectivity"? How might a post-millennial (digital) approach differ from older conceptions?
- Since a shift towards the material might decentralize and destabilize the human subject and turns towards non-human performativity, while being a conceptual device nonetheless, how can we reasonably reconcile the material and conceptual/ideal, body/matter and sign/text, or, if necessary redefine it?
- Since thinking in entanglements is fundamentally about potentially limitless spatio-temporal relationality ("fields of force and flows of material", as Tim Ingold stated) – how can we still reasonably delimit our research, keep it focused and avoid arbitrariness?
- In what ways might performative, experiential, artistic or sensorial methodologies and methods help us to study entanglements of materialities and subjectivities? How can we, for example, account for sensual, aesthetic and performative aspects of material culture in our own research output – in text, visual, auditive, or intermedial forms?

Invited keynote speakers and possible foci of their lectures:

Prof. Dr. Christian J. Emden ([Professor of Politics, Law & Social Thought, Rice University](#))

Regarding the topic of the Summer School 2020, his areas of expertise include modern intellectual history, history of life sciences, history of scientific materialism and positivism, European philosophy since 1750, new materialism (critical gaze), genealogy of philosophical naturalism and political realism, theories of subjectivity.

PD Dr. Irina Rajewsky ([Privatdozentin, Institute of Romance Languages and Literatures, Freie Universität Berlin; Visiting Professor, Centre for Intermediality Studies in Graz \(CIMIG\), University of Graz, SS 2020](#))

Regarding the topic of the Summer School 2020, her areas of expertise include inter- and transmediality, transmedial narratology, media and materiality, digital transformation, concepts of realism, modern, postmodern and contemporary artistic practice, fictionality/factuality.

Prof. Dr. Caroline van Eck ([Professor of Art History, Director of Studies of King's College, University of Cambridge](#))

Regarding the topic of the Summer School 2020, her areas of expertise include art and architectural history (mainly 18th and 19th Century), anthropology of art, organicism in artistic theory and practice, agency, excess and material presence of art works, entangled history.

Programme:

Each morning session begins with a lecture given by one of our three keynote speakers, followed by responses and plenary discussions. These sessions prepare the ground for the parallel workshops in the afternoon, which focus on key concepts/problems and core texts that are particularly relevant for the research projects of the participants. Posters visualize the participants' projects and foster informal exchange throughout the week.

Week	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
Mon	Arrival (or afternoon)	Arrival / Welcome	Introduction / Poster Exhibition
Tue	Lecture, response, discussion	Parallel workshops	
Wed	Lecture, response, discussion	Excursion	Special Dinner
Thu	Lecture, response, discussion	Parallel workshops	Film
Fri	Parallel workshops	Reports and lessons learned	Departure (or Sat)

How to apply?

The Summer School offers doctoral and postdoctoral scholars a unique opportunity to contribute to a broader discussion with their own research and ideas. We encourage applications from researchers from the humanities and the social sciences with a strong interest in theoretical debates in an interdisciplinary setting.

Please provide us with the following application material:

- a letter of motivation, indicating how you expect to benefit from participating in this Summer School and how you can contribute, in turn, to the discussions (mentioning your specific interest in the topic)
- a CV of max. two pages
- an abstract (500 words) of your current research project with some keywords
- one referee we might contact

What do we offer?

The GSAH will cover your travel expenses as well as accommodation (double room) and meals at the Hotel Bad Muntelier. You will receive an e-reader with preparatory material and have the opportunity to present your research on the Summer School homepage and blog (<http://blog.wbkolleg.unibe.ch>). Most importantly, you are offered an intellectually stimulating, lively and friendly atmosphere conducive to fruitful exchange with both senior scholars and peers.

Contact

Please apply electronically (single PDF) to Michèle Seehafer who is happy to answer questions regarding the application: michele.seehafer@wbkolleg.unibe.ch. For all further questions please contact michael.toggweiler@wbkolleg.unibe.ch.

The project team

Prof. Dr. Urte Krass (Director IFN and GSAH, Head *TransHumanities*)

Dr. Michael Toggweiler (Coordinator IFN and GSAH, Coordinator *TransHumanities*)

Michèle Seehafer MA (Administrative Assistant *TransHumanities*)