The Forms of Academic Work: Practices, Taxonomies, Perspectives

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Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich


Fleming's Hotel
Mercure Hotel
Center for Advanced Studies, LMU

The Forms of Academic Work: Practices, Taxonomies, Perspectives

Conference Brochure

"Forme is power…"
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

"The external appearance of any thing; representation; shape."
Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary* (n.1)

"(i) a visible or outward shape, with a strong sense of the physical body […]; (ii) an essential shaping principle, making indeterminate material into a determinate or specific being or thing"
Raymond Williams, *Keywords*

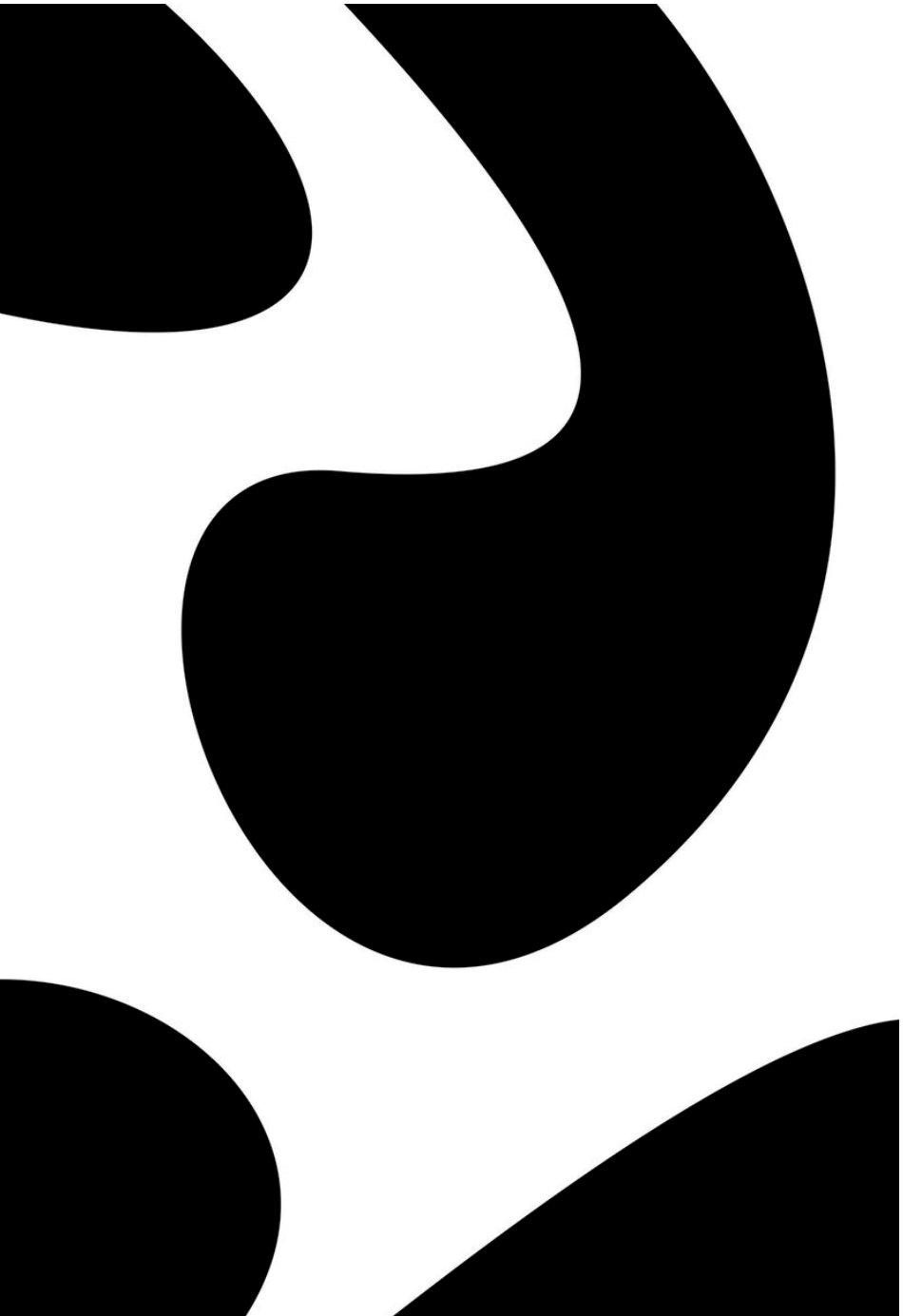
"A form is simply something which allows something else to be transported from one site to another."
Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social.*

"All shapes and configurations, all ordering principles, all patterns of repetition and difference."
Caroline Levine, *Forms*

"There is no reason to maintain or to desire a consistent use of the term form across the disciplines or even, perhaps, within a single discipline."
Jonathan Kramnick and Anahid Nersessian, "Form and Explanation"

"Form is composed relationality."
Anna Kornbluh, *The Order of Forms*.

"*[I]t is easier to imagine the end of the world and the end of capitalism than the end of the academic essay*."
Bernd Herzogenrath, *New Perspectives on Academic Writing*



We study the forms of academic work in all their various genres, from the intellectual to the managerial. The monographs, seven-thousand word papers for book collections or journals, peer-reviewed or not, the book reviews, edited collections, special issues, conferences and their keynotes and fifteen minute papers and lightning talks that frame how we perform our research, distribute and publicize it: where do they come from? What work to do they do? Are they ideal forms, or conventional, or both? What do they say about our work? Who and what are they for? Why are they? The various forms of readers' reports (on dissertations, peer-reviewed manuscripts), committee reports, minutes, protocols, applications that give shape to our managerial writing: what are the points of contact and interdependencies between these and more properly "scholarly" forms? How do forms of writing qualifying texts—seminar papers, theses, dissertations, Habilitationen—shape and orient our academic work, and how and why do they, and other written and oral forms, reproduce the system of the university? At a first approximation, these forms, material and symbolic, perform and make us perform, bind us to the preexisting system of the university machine even as—for instance, in Adorno's reflections on the essay—they ask us to exceed any firm routes and obvious destinations.

We see the groundwork of the humanities, its self-understanding, reflected in these forms: they circumscribe what we do, and how we understand our scholarly work; and they do so in a historical lineage, often virtually unchanged since the days when actual manuscripts were sent to actual typesetters. While some movements have been made in the last two decades towards taking advantage of the affordances of the digital—both shorter and longer forms of argumentative essays and/or scholarly papers, increasing collaborative work on shared-work platforms, and digital opportunities for public and professional outreach, such as podcasts and videos—as a profession, we hold on to often-ancient forms. These forms often appear to respond to the publication and communication regimes of their original day more than ours, and so, perhaps too, more to the intellectual needs of those days than ours. Maybe they not only respond to older regimes of communication but also constrain our approaches to our work. Equally as possibly, they retain their validity because they are the best way of doing what we understand our work to be and indeed what that work must be. How do those forms serve or disserve the best work of the humanities and the university as a whole, then—and how do they not? What is their relationship to the regimes operative in the university landscape today, including neoliberalism? What is their orientation (to whom are they directed?), and why? How do disciplines and national traditions produce these forms differently, and what is the significance of these differences, if there is any?

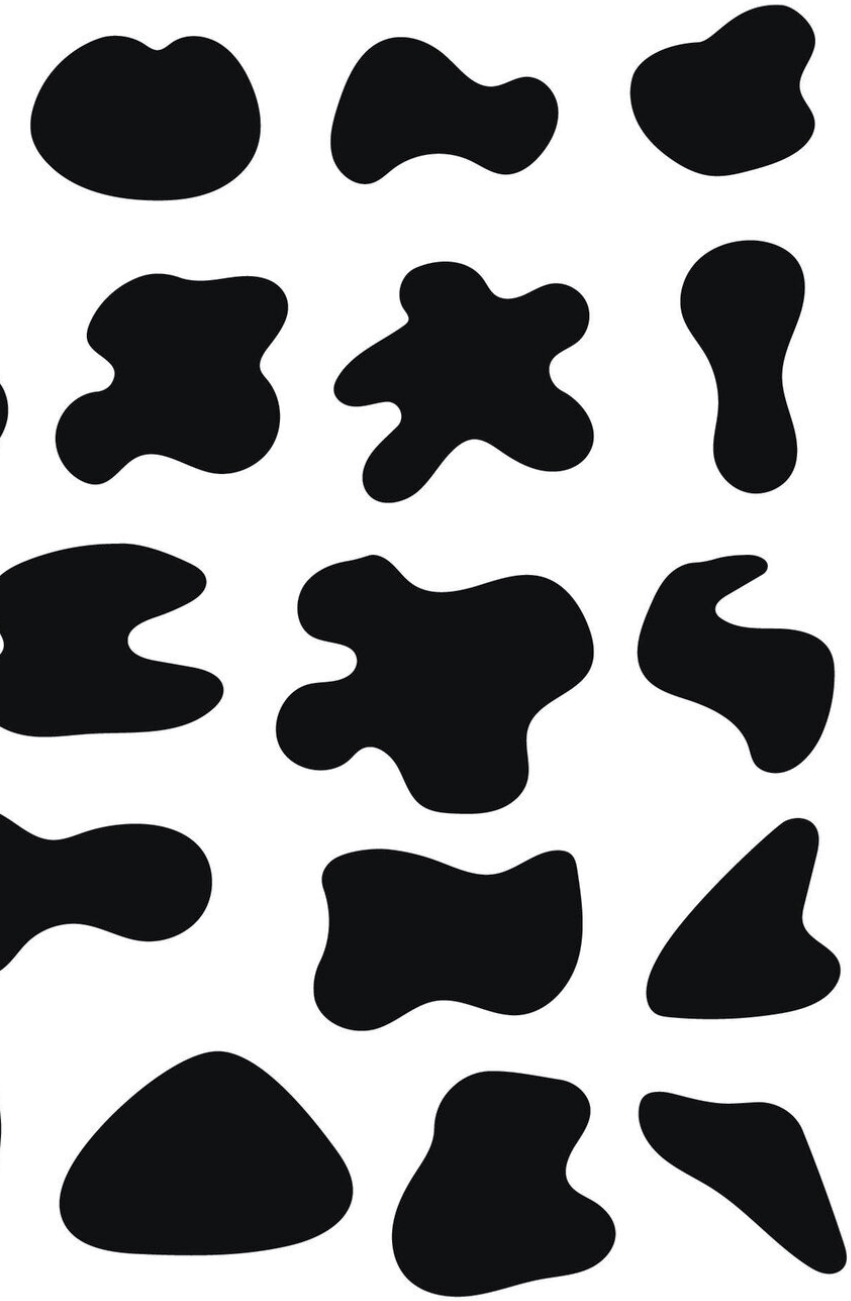
Our aim in proposing a cooperative working group—a thinking group, if you like—is to begin at the very beginning, with the feeling that we've not thought about the form of our practices a whole lot, but that we should. We should do so on general principles, we think, just to have done it; but we should also do so on the assumption that we may find other ways of doing our work, perhaps even ways that are more conducive to what we understand our work to finally do in the world. But the "perhaps" is operative: we lay no claim on us to develop alternatives, merely to spend some time to think through the premises and aims of our academic forms.

For now, we are explicitly not proposing anything like a call for papers, since we want to discuss the form of the

“paper” as much as the form of the “call;” we are explicitly not proposing it as a call for written contributions to some publication or other, because we want to explicitly think through the form of written academic work as much as oral academic work. We may eventually end up producing an object—perhaps a glossary in print or online, or even an edited collection, or a multi-author monograph—but we also very well may not.

If you are interested in thinking through this problem, including trying to develop it into a potentially useful academic object, objects, project, projects, or performance, please contact get in touch with Tim Lanzendörfer and Fabio Akçelrud Durão .

Conference Information



In recent years, humanities scholarship has turned intensively to considerations of its own various practices and infrastructures, the things the humanities do and the system in which they do them (e.g., Bourdieu 1988, but especially: Hyland 2009, Bennett 2014, Frietsch/Rogge 2015, Hyland 2015, Krentel 2015, Martus 2015, Krause/Pethes 2017, Fitzpatrick 2018, Hoffmann 2018, Etzemüller 2019, Chihaya et al. 2020, Krey 2020, Niemann 2021, Sagner Buurma/Heffernan 2021, Martus/Spoerhase 2022, Guillory 2022, Herzogenrath 2023, Lanzendörfer 2023). One aspect that has received comparatively little attention is what this conference will call the question of the "forms" of academic work.

Most recently, "form" has been proposed as an overarching concept capable of finding homologies between disparate sets of things (Levine 2015), both textual and practical. "Forms", as the proposed conference will understand it, designates the discrete things, objects, shapes, and configurations that emerge from and in interaction with academic practices and systems, from monograph books and journal articles to syllabi and keynote addresses to breakroom chats and email exchanges. It also takes the guise of "minor" forms, such as footnotes, epigrams, letters of recommendation, lightning talks, office hours, and so on. The reach of forms, their historical and contemporary valences and the ways in which new medial opportunities and systemic infrastructural changes shape and reshape them is what the conference will take as its object of discussion and exploration. Academic work practices emerge to a great extent in particular forms, and the particular forms in which we work in turn shape humanities practices and humanities infrastructures, from our efforts to produce a certain size monograph to the need to write the prose of a funding application. But despite the fundamentality of these forms to our practices and professions writ large, the question of the relationship between form and academic work has been addressed only haphazardly, usually in individual examinations of specific forms and their work (e.g. Kemp 2009, Roach 2018, Callaci 2019, Carriera da Silva and Brito Veira 2019, Germano/Nicholls 2020, Webster 2020, Karshan and Murphy 2020).

The conference seeks to make amends in this situation by starting an interdisciplinary and international conversation about the work of academic forms, understanding this conference work as both an initial critical inventory-making and as agenda-setting. Fundamentally, the persistence of such by-now almost transhistorical forms as the monograph, the journal article, the essay, the review, the grant application, the CV, and other more-or-less self-evidentially academic forms poses questions about how practices and forms interact with one another, how disciplines are shaped by historically persistent but by no means readily understood forms. At the same time, these transhistorical forms have been reshaped and revalued, resituated and sometimes fundamentally changed, by developments that also impact the larger infrastructures of academic work. Forms are, but have been taken to be, central to how we think and rethink our practices and the systems in which we labor, if often invisibly. Forms of qualification writing (doctoral dissertations and Habilitationen), for instance, are becoming awkward in a market interested in shorter monograph forms (e.g. Palgrave's Pivot series, Routledge's Focus On, U Tampa P's Pith, Minnesota UP's Forerunners, Suhrkamp's 100 Seiten). Accustomed forms, such as the 7000 word essay, may come to appear less relevant against the backdrop of online publication of unlimited length. Digital teaching has created the need for new forms and revisions of the old; indeed, the affordances of the digital inclu-

ding the challenges of generative "AI" have barely been addressed in what they mean for academic work (with the exception of teaching); and whether or not a lunch-break chat with a colleague is work or not is not clear. Indeed, not everything we do is readily perceivable as work, even though it generally takes recognizable form. Whether we are literary scholars reading Dickens, musicologists listening to Brahms, or sociologists going to football matches, often, the forms of our work are untransparently work, sometimes untransparently form. And that does not even address the fact that concrete forms which are the result of what is clearly work may be troubling in the larger system in which the humanities operate. Concrete forms of academic work meaningfully correlate with the perceived struggle against expressions of the academic humanities' irrelevance: who but other humanities scholars reads an academic monograph, for instance? The insistence on greater public impact is often framed as concern over the forms of community engagement and outreach, including the role of social media and other forms of public presentation. The question of how forms are concretely distributed, often by international for-profit conglomerates, is ultimately about inclusivity, global barriers of access, and the appropriation of public value for private gain, a practice in turn afforded by the structure of academic work itself as understood largely for the production of objects in need of distribution.

To understand these and other issues as problems of forms—bound up in the shapes and guises of our work—is a crucial step in rethinking what is possible in the humanities in the 21st century. The conference's desire to locate, conceptualize, and taxonomize form must be read is an intervention into the current crisis in the humanities. It provides a much-needed inventory-taking as the grounds on which a perspective of the future idea of can be built. The major intervention of this conference is that a fundamental (re-)consideration of the concrete forms of academic work is absolutely necessary to progress in thinking perspectives for the humanities' future. As a first step, therefore, a critical inventory of forms, understood both practically and expansively, will permit us an insight into how we conceive of the shapes of academic practices in the first place, and what kinds of grey areas persist. The production of such an inventory at the conference will require us to reconsider where we invest our labor as academics, and how that academic work is perceived and, in the best case, valued and valuable. Grounded in such an inventory, the conference then aims to produce a sense of how academic forms function and how they might be historicized both for the contemporary and as a point of departure for a future agenda. It aims to think about how to most productively utilize existing forms and how to prospectively reshape and repurpose them, even as it imagines the work of future forms.

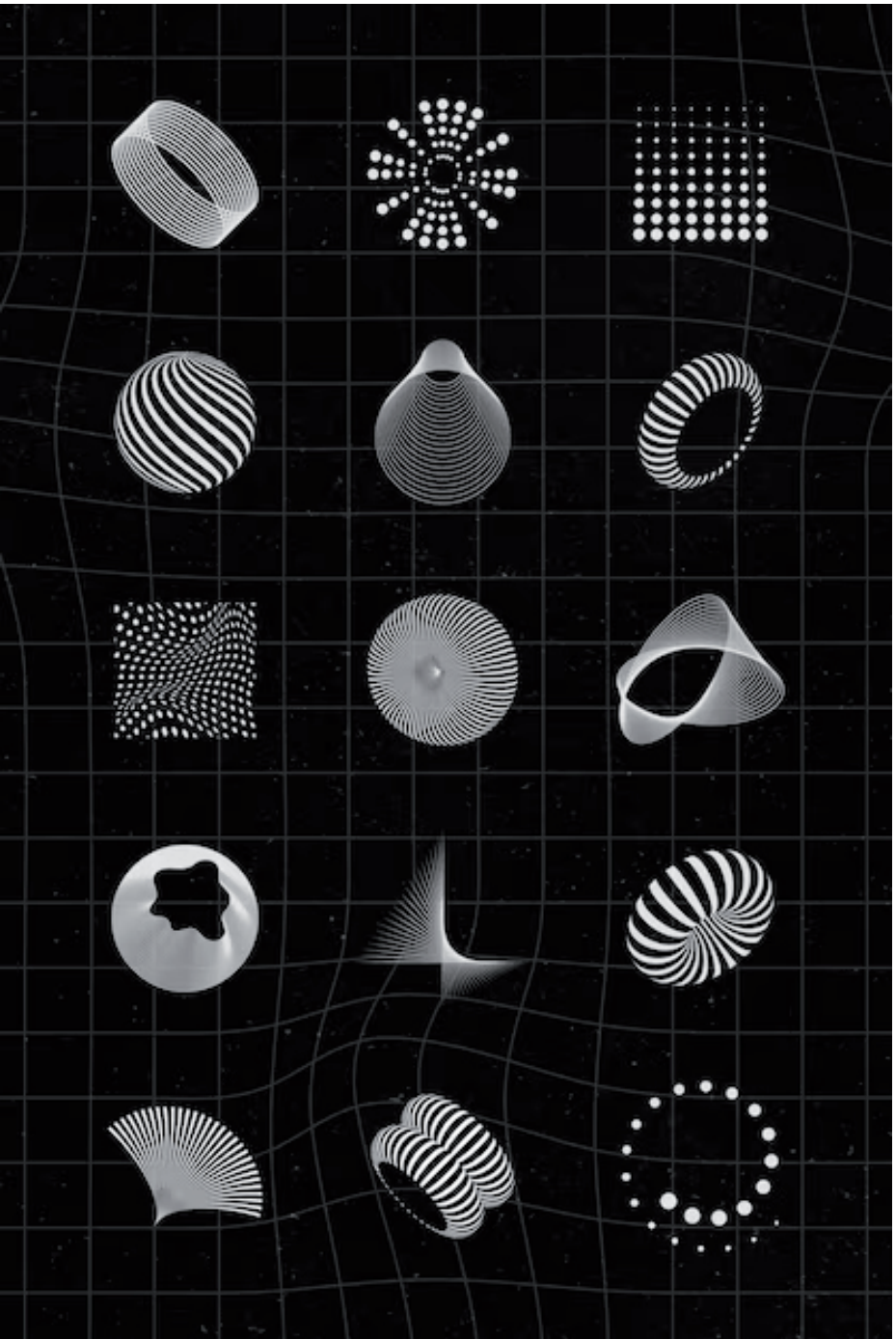
Fabio Akçelrud Durão is Professor of Literary Theory at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Brazil. He is the author of numerous books, including *Modernism and Coherence* (Berlin/Brussels, 2008) and *Fragmentos Reunidos* (Bogotá, 2023), and essays. He is the co-convenor, with Tim Lanzendörfer, of the Academic Forms network that organizes this conference.

Tim Lanzendörfer is Heisenberg Fellow in Literary Theory, Literary Studies, and Literary Studies Educaton at Goethe University, Frankfurt, Germany. He is the author of three monographs including *Utopian Pasts and Futures in the Contemporary American Novel* (Edinburgh, 2023). He is the principle investigator of the DFG-funded research project "Spiel|Erleben" and the co-convenor, with Fabio Akçelrud Durão, of the Academic Forms network that organizes this conference.

Pierre-Héli Monot is Professor of Transnational American Studies at Ludwig-Maximilians University, Munich. He is the principle investigator of the ERC Starting Grant "The Arts of Autonomy: Pamphleteering, Popular Philology, and the Public Sphere, 1988-2018." He is the author of the monographs *Mensch als Methode: Allgemeine Hermeneutik und partielle Demokratie* (Heidelberg, 2016) and *Hundert Jahre Zärtlichkeit: Surrealismus, Bürgertum, Revolution* (Berlin, 2024) as well as numerous articles. He hosts this conference.

Elisabeth Reichel is assistant professor of American Studies at the University of Osnabrück, Germany. She is the author of *Writing Anthropologists, Sounding Primitives: The Poetry and Scholarship of Edward Sapir, Margaret Mead, and Ruth Benedict* (Lincoln, 2021) and the editor and co-editor of several special issues. She is the co-editor and book reviews editor of *Utopian Studies*.

Rebecca Roach is Associate Professor of Contemporary Literature at the University of Birmingham, UK. She is one of the principle investigators in the Stuart Hall Archive and the author of the monograph *Literature and the Rise of the Interview* (Oxford, 2018) and two forthcoming books on computing and literature.



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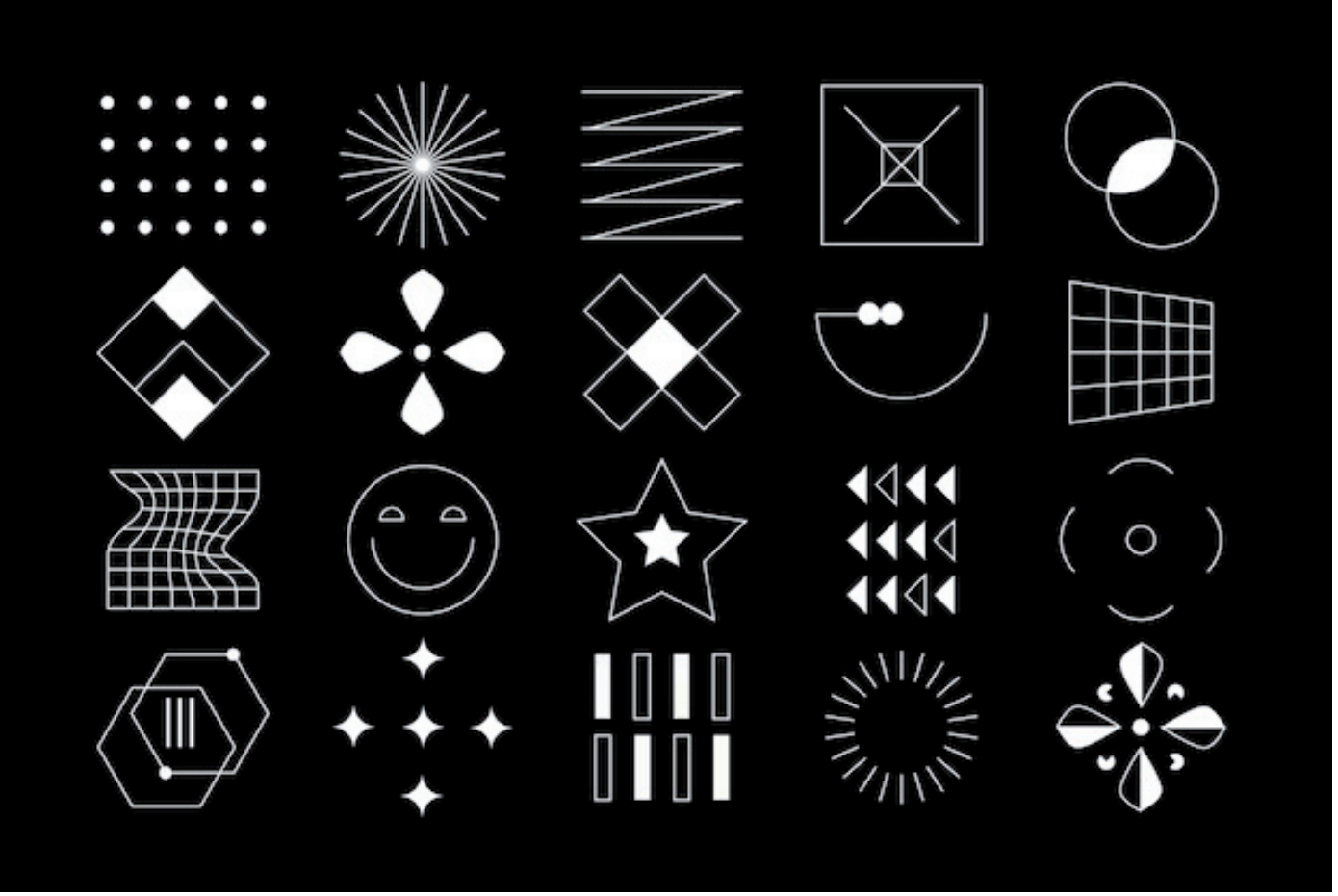
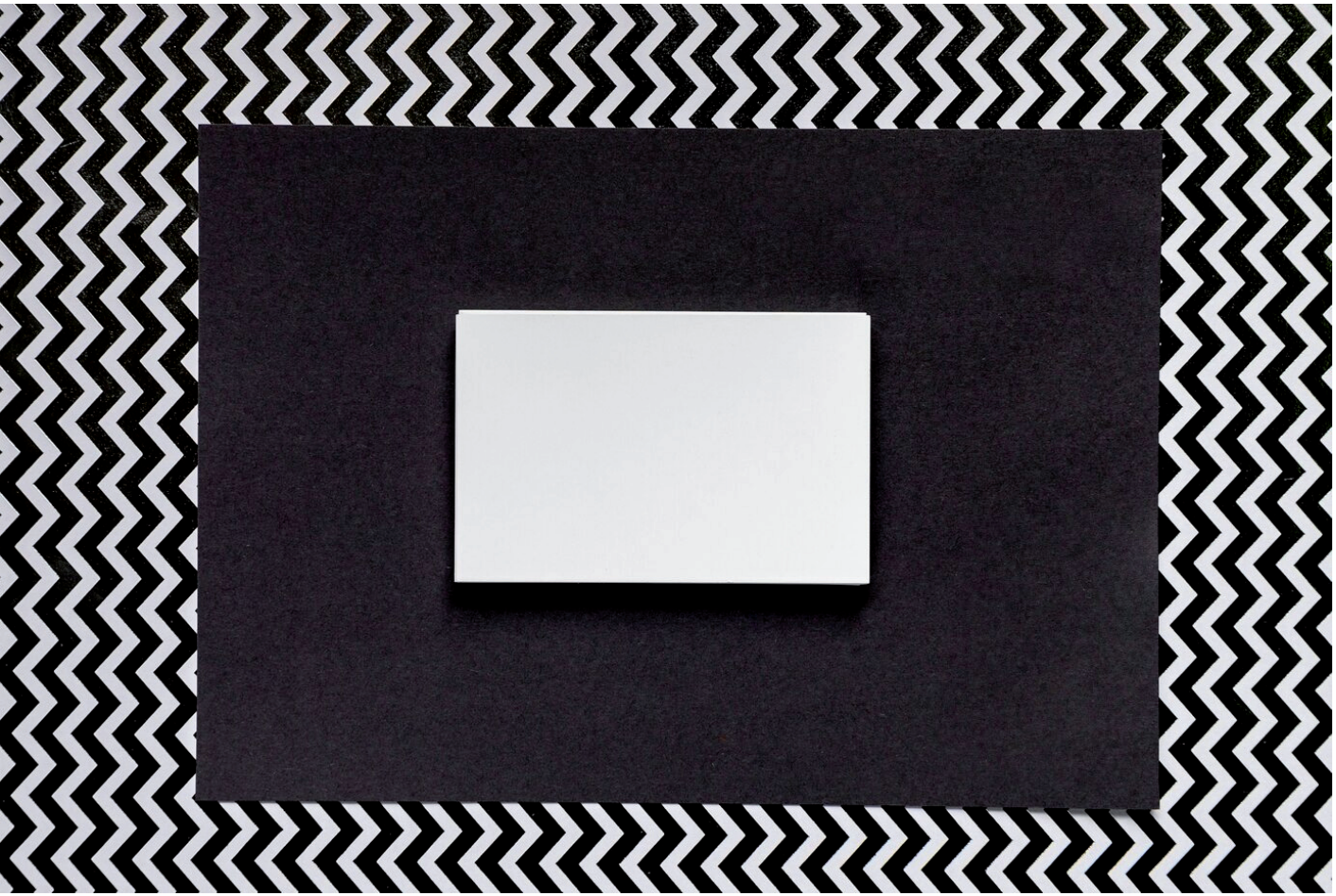


Name	Form	Title
Almeida-Amir, Maia	*Youtube Videos*	"Outsider Scholarship and Youtube"
Berry, David	*University*	"The Historical Forms of the University: From Plateglass to Digital Universities"
Buurma, Rachel Sagner and Laura Heffernan	*Class Prep*	"Is There a Form in This Class Prep?"
Dowthwaite, James	*CV*	
Gillis, Stacy	*Supervision*	"On Grief and Shame: Neoliberalism, Precarity and PhD Supervision/Advising"
Handl, Laura	*Manifesto*	"Manifesto of Palimpsestism; or, The Mani festo is Undead, Long Live Its Palimpsest"
Harris, Kirsten	*Undergrad Research*	"The Form of Undergraduate Research"
Springett, Ben	*Office Hours*	"The Function and Form of Office Hours"
Irving, Roslyn	*Script*	"Scripting: Seminars, Lectures, and Formal Essence."
James, David	*Monograph*	"The Hunger for Consequentiality: Literary Studies' Aspirational Forms"
Jenkins, Joey Isaac	*Queer Teaching*	"The Queer Pedagogue: Subjectivity and the Affective Disruptions of Queerness on the Formal Structures of Teaching"
Karshan, Thomas	*Essay*	
Kathke, Torsten	*Tweet / X*	"Historian Here: Form, Platform, and Com munity in the Academic Twitter Thread"
McManus, Patricia	*Teaching*	"Classrooms, Publics, Context Collapse"
Schindler, Larissa	*Peer Review*	"The Form of Peer Review"
Spoerhase, Carlos	*Summary*	"What Are Condensed Texts, and Why Are They Saying Such Terrible Things about Them?"
Volpato, André	*Article*	"The Article as Form"
Winters, Jane	*Book*	"Thinking about the Academic Book of the Future"
Zappe, Florian	*Aphorism*	"Powers of Ten – A Reappraisal of the Apho rism as an 'Eternal' Form"



Thursday, October 10th

9.00 ***Conference Opening***
Greetings from CAS, Pierre-Héli Monot (host), Tim Lanzendörfer (Academic Forms group convener)

9.30 – 13.00 ***Panel 1: Conventions***
Chair: Elisabeth Reichel

Karshan, Thomas (Norwich):	Essay
Volpato, André (Campinas, Brazil):	Article
James, David (Birmingham):	Monograph
Dowthwaite, James (Mainz):	CV
Winters, Jane (London):	Book

Incl. Coffee Break

13.00-14.00 ***Lunch at CAS***

14.00-17.30 ***Panel 2: Contractions***
Chair: Rebecca Roach)

Spoerhase, Carlos (München):	Summary
Zappe, Florian (München):	Aphorism
Handl, Laura (Dresden):	Manifesto
Kathke, Torsten (Mainz):	Twitter / X
Almeida-Amir, Maia (Newcastle):	Youtube Videos

Incl. Coffee Break

19.00 ***Dinner (Georgenhof, Friedrichstr. 1)***

Friday, October 11th

9.00 – 12.30 ***Panel 3: Infrastructures***
Chair: Tim Lanzendörfer

Berry, David (Sussex):	University
McManus, Patricia (Sultan Qaboos):	Teaching
Irving, Roslyn (Mainz):	Script
Buurma, Rachel Sagner (Swathmore), and Laura Heffernan (U Florida):	Class Prep
Hindiyeh, Suhair (Durham), and Springett, Ben (Manchester):	Office Hours

Incl. Coffee Break

12.30 – 13.30 ***Lunch at CAS***

13.30 – 16.30 ***Panel 4: Interactions***
Chair: Pierre-Héli Monot

Harris, Kirsten (Bristol):	Undergraduate Research
Jenkins, Joey (Newcastle):	Queer Teaching
Gillis, Stacy (Newcastle):	Supervision
Schindler, Larissa (Bayreuth):	Peer Review

Incl. Coffee Break

16.30 – 17.30 ***Conference Closing, Discussion***

19.00 ***Conference Dinner (Café Puck, Türkenstr. 33)***

Saturday, October 12th

10.00 – 18.00 ***Conference Hike*** (depending on weather)

Youtube Videos

"Outsider Scholarship and You(Tube)"
Maia Almeida-Amir

As social media become ever more prevalent sources of information for many, some content creators have begun acting as cultural communicators, using their content to informally impart knowledge of cultural and political topics to their audiences (Villegas-Simón et al., 2023). These content creators function as public scholars, conducting original critical research and analyses, and publishing them to audiences of millions (Sylvia and Moody, 2022). As Sankofa (2023) wryly notes, this kind of reach far exceeds the limited impact of much academic work. In our contemporary moment, where the value of research is often judged by its public-facing impact and engagement, she wonders what we can learn from such "critical knowledge workers" on YouTube and other social media platforms.

On YouTube specifically, a loose group of left-wing content creators known as BreadTube have proven themselves particularly effective at producing and disseminating this type of material. Known for their distinctive video styles, use of humour, and willingness to tackle touchy subjects, BreadTubers' scholarly stylings can be instructive of how we (re)think our own academic practices. Although still deeply inculcated with the capitalist and neoliberal logics that shape both social media platforms and contemporary university (and other research) environments, by operating outside of traditional academic institutions, BreadTubers can circumvent the breakdown of institutional support for critical scholarship. Taken as a community of practice, BreadTube fosters diverse intellectual practices, democratic access to knowledge, and radical approaches to pedagogy.

Building on the learning opportunities identified by Sankofa (2023) and addressing the institutional and cultural tensions surrounding contemporary critical academic work, this paper focuses on the implicit challenges BreadTubers pose to presentations and representations of scholarly work, as well as to the scholarly self. Within these broad challenges, I identify three key areas: the curation of a presentation of self through performance and theatrical elements; the democratisation of knowledge and commitment to transparency; and the exploration of non-traditional funding mechanisms as a model for working simultaneously within and against capitalist systems. Framing all of these are considerations of politically engaged and activist scholarship (Svirsky, 2010), contemporary knowledge practices across social media (Kanai, 2021), and how the meeting of these threads may amplify "voluntary participation in mutual education through proliferating new voices and visions" hosted within YouTube's pedagogical setting (Kelner and Kim, 2010: 15).

As we navigate the evolving digital landscape, these outsider scholars may offer valuable insight into how we reimagine our work, pushing us to consider alternative, inclusive, accessible, and dynamic forms of knowledge production and dissemination. By examining the audio-visual practices employed by BreadTube content creators to (re)configure themselves as cultural communicators, this paper explores the transformative potential of outsider scholarship on YouTube for re-imagining our own academic practices in these areas.

References

Kanai, A. 2021. *Online Knowledge Cultures and Feminism in the Everyday*, (Online), 18th May 2021, University of Warwick. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIDfsz78rJI (Accessed: 30th June 2023).

Kellner, D. and Kim, G. 2010. 'YouTube, Critical Pedagogy, and Media Activism', *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 32(1), pp. 3-36.

Sankofa, N. (2023). 'Does the "big tent" include non-academics? Social media content creators conducting critical scholarship', *Qualitative Research Journal*, 23(4), pp.427-444.

Svirsky, M. 2010. 'Defining Activism', *Deleuze Studies,* 4(supplement), pp.163-182.

Sylvia IV, J. J. and Moody, K. 2022. 'BreadTube Rising: How Modern Creators Use Cultural Formats to Spread Countercultural Ideology', *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 24(1), pp.1-11.

Villegas-Simón, I., Anglada-Pujol, O., Lloveras, M. C. and Oliva, M. (2023). '"I'm Not Just a Content Creator": Digital Cultural Communicators Dealing With Celebrity Capital and Online Communities', *International Journal of Communication,* 17, pp.6447-6465.

Biography

Maia Almeida-Amir is a PhD candidate in the School of Arts and Cultures at Newcastle University. Her dissertation explores left-wing content on YouTube, focusing on audience responses to and engagements with contemporary political issues through the platform.

University

"The Historical Forms of the University: From Plateglass to Digital Universities"
David M. Berry

As Thomas Arnold wrote, "no one ought to meddle with the universities, who does not know them well and love them well."[1] Universities have historically claimed to educate "rounded persons" with "an understanding of themselves and their place in the cosmos" but in fact a large number of students are narrow specialists with extremely limited horizons. They also have claimed to develop a liberal and critical attitude to study, but in fact too often produce an attitude which is self-centred and utilitarian. Additionally, they have included in their aims a claim that they cultivate objectivity and impartiality, but increasingly they have deferred to the unexamined assumptions and attitudes of the student, failing to develop their capacity for reason and judgement. Lastly, the often a university professes to be a community which has a transforming influence on its students and staff, awakening a sense of wonder through contact with inspiring persons. But increasingly there is little vital communication between departments or faculties, or between students and staff, offering only an a la carte menu of study options and little overall sense of unity or coherence in their degree. Early theorisations about universities began, therefore, to be concerned with mobilising and arranging a set of values, ideas, and norms around which a university community was to orient itself. These debates took in a range of influences, from the traditional, such as Wilhelm von Humboldt, John Henry Newman and Mark Pattison with more recent critics, such as Bruce Truscot and A.D. Lindsay, seeking to diagnose problems with existing teaching at Oxbridge and Redbrick universities in the UK. However, the mobilisation of theories and ideas of the university were nonetheless particularised due to the very specific historical and material conditions under which universities operate. More recently, shifting forces in the political economy of the university now call for a new conceptualisation and justification for a university, perhaps a new form of the university. This new role should help to sustain and augment the existing institutional character of the university but also provide new orientations and give an impetus to a set of new long-range commitments for the university. In this talk I want to discuss the changing conceptualisations of the forms of the university and speculate on a new pattern emerging under the conditions of computation in the 21st century, leading, I argue, to a new kind of digital research university.

Biography
David M. Berry is Professor of Digital Humanities at the University of Sussex. He publishes widely on know-

1 Thomas Arnold was the Head of Rugby School, a historian and a writer on Church matters. He was the father of the poet, Matthew Arnold. The full quote is "no man ought to meddle with the Universities who does not know them well and love them well; they are great and noble places - and I am sure that no man in England has a deeper affection for Oxford than I have - or more appreciates its inimitable advantages. And therefore I wish it improved and reformed - though this is a therefore which men are exceedingly slow to understand" (Stanley, 1847, p. 55).

ledge formations, algorithms, code and software and his most recent book is *Digital Humanities: Knowledge and Critique in a Digital Age* (Polity). He is currently working on a book titled *Artificial Intelligence and Critical Theory* (MUP) and another co-written book on the history of Joseph Weizenbaum's ELIZA software titled *Please Go On: The Invention of ELIZA* (MIT Press). His latest research project is a history of the Plate Glass universities.

Class Prep

"Is There a Form in this Class Prep?"

Rachel Sagner Buurma and Laura Heffernan

Preparing for class is a common but little-acknowledged form of academic work. Class prep often requires us to exercise our professional expertise, to engage in the scholarly research practices we are trained in, and to collaborate with colleagues, and yet it rarely rates mention in appointment letters, curriculum vitae, or promotion files. Involving activities like reading books and articles in order to get current in an aspect of your field you teach but never publish in, discovering what texts other teachers are assigning in a standard course, working around the strictures of a shell course or set curriculum, and struggling to invent an introduction to a new field, class prep can feel at some times ad hoc and unproductive, at others generative and revolutionary. Whether we encounter it as the deliberate exercise of designing an entire course or the task of hurriedly preparing for a single class, considering class prep as a form opens up important questions. What are the gaps between the intellectually meaningful academic labor we perform and institutions' categorizations of research, teaching, and service? How do we think about the role that preparatory activities play not just within the arc of a semester, but over the arc of an entire career? In the records of class prep, we can see how apparently idiosyncratic or quotidian aspects of preparation thread through to future scholarly projects and create continuity over the course of a career.

Our 2021 book, *The Teaching Archive: A New History for Literary Study*, drew on professors' papers - syllabuses, lecture notes, course descriptions, and class assignments – to make the case that teaching and research cannot be separated from one another, despite the strong institutional forms that often require the administrative separation of these activities. In this talk, we will focus specifically on some of the examples of class preparation we found in those archives. We will describe and analyze how David Nichol Smith composed and revised his Lectures for the History of English Studies course at Oxford University in the 1910s; how Josephine Miles prepared to teach her version of the standard first year composition course English 1A at UC-Berkeley in the 1940s; how J. Saunders Redding prepared to teach his class on American Biography at multiple universities in the 1970s; and how Simon Ortiz used his daily journal to prepare a new course on Native American Literature at Marin College in the 1970s. We will ask what it might mean to think about these teaching materials in their own right – as records of preparation – rather than as mere representations of actual classroom activity. Drawing on theorizations of preparatory work by Roland Barthes (*The Preparation of the Novel*) on the plural self by Bernard Lahire, and scholarship on preparatory note-taking by Ann Blair, Simon Reader, Petra McGillen, and Kate Briggs, we will consider how a better understanding of the paradoxical and liminal nature of class prep – as essential yet often uncompensated labor, as disciplinarily-located research that leaves no professional trace, as goal-oriented work whose outcomes are often invisible – helps us better understand and grapple with the significance of more established academic forms.

Biographies

Laura Heffernan is Professor of English at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. Her research focuses on nineteenth and twentieth century Anglophone literature, with a particular focus on histories of reading and histories of literary criticism. She is author, with Rachel Sagner Buurma (Swarthmore College), of *The Teaching Archive: A New History For Literary Study* (University of Chicago Press, 2021), which won the Modernist Studies Association Book Prize (2022) and the Teaching Literature Book Award (2023). Dr. Heffernan has been a core faculty member in UNF's Digital Humanities Institute, which she directed in 2019-2021. In 2021, Dr. Heffernan received a National Endowment for the Humanities Grant to complete the Viola Muse Digital Edition, which publishes – for the first time – the notes and drafts made by Viola Muse, a fieldworker in the Negro Writers Unit of the Florida Federal Writers Program.

Rachel Sagner Buurma is Associate Professor of English Literature at Swarthmore College. She teaches courses on nineteenth-century literature and culture, the history of the novel, literary informatics, and book history. She has recently published essays on book indexes, Anthony Trollope, and reading in the digital age, and is currently writing a book on the literary and social forms shared by Victorian book reviewers and novelists. She is author, with Laura Heffernan (University of North Florida), of the award-winning *The Teaching Archive: A New History For Literary Study* (University of Chicago Press, 2021). In addition, their co-authored work has appeared in *PMLA*, *New Literary History*, *Representations*, *Victorian Studies*, *Modernism/Modernity*, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

CV

James Dowthwaite

There is nothing that happened on 16 June 1904 that would enter into Leopold Bloom's Curriculum Vitae. From the point of view of prospective employers, the day is utterly inconsequential, even if it reveals far more about his character and abilities than half a page could ever do. It is only from the point of view of the characters, the readers, and the students and academics who dedicate considerable time to meditating on the various dimensions of that single day who can find value in it. Consider the scholar, who might dedicate years of his or her career to an interpretation of the novel, considering its relation to broader contexts or broader philosophical ideas or, indeed, considering what it has to say about a universal human condition. Such a scholar must think and argue that life can only be taken in the holistic, expansive, and open-ended way that Joyce presents, resisting a too-ready classification or reduction of human existence. And yet, when such a scholar comes to apply for a new position, or for third party funding, or creates a public-facing internet page, they are forced to reduce their life in a manner against which their actual work strains.

The CV is by no means exclusively an academic phenomenon but it is, I argue, in academia that the pressures and absurdities of the form is most revealed. In my talk, I will argue that the Curriculum Vitae is a form of life-writing, one which relies on two contrary movements: first, an abstraction of the individual's actual gained experience into categories and institutions, and a second movement of reduction of life as lived into data points. In both of these cases, I will argue that academics, who are trained to be expansive, encouraged to search for nuance, to 'read closely', not to reduce life into categories, are in fact forced by the form of the CV to commit what Cleanth Brooks famously called the 'heresy of paraphrase', and to commit this with regard to their own lives. It is in the tension between the ways in which scholars are encouraged to think about human existence, and how they present it on the page in life-changing applications, that the pressures of this contradiction are revealed as an academic form.

Biography

James Dowthwaite is assistant professor of English Studies at Friedrich-Schiller University, Jena. He holds a PhD from Oxford University. He is the author of *Ezra Pound and 20th Century Theories of Language* (Routledge, 2019) and several essays and book chapters, as well as the editor of collections on lyrical populism and on aesthetics. His current project is a book project on aesthetics and fate.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Supervision

"On Grief and Shame: Neoliberalism, Precarity and PhD Supervision/Advising"

Stacy Gillis

The permanent or tenured post in academia has traditionally offered the promise of doctoral supervision/advising as part of its intellectual jobscape; PhD students working in one's field who will carry the imprint of one's intellectual mentoring into the future of the discipline. There have been challenges in the past twenty years with the neoliberalisation of higher education: PhD students are now entries in workload models; the development of their projects is monitored by programme approvals, annual reviews, supervisory allowance capacity, and completion rates data; the 'encouragement' to take more international PhD students and their higher tuition fees. All of this is made bearable for many because of the tremendous intellectual charge of working with someone who should be at the forefront of shaping their field, and because of the generational dynamic of nourishing the discipline more broadly.

However, as the practices of neoliberalism have bit hard in higher education, this trade-off has become compromised by the spectre of precarity. The generative premise of PhD supervision/advising has been eroded by the lack of job security for those who complete their doctoral work: in the arts, humanities and social sciences, it is the lucky very few – in the West, primarily from research intensive institutions (metrically or otherwise designated as R1, Go8, Russell Group and the like) – who go into permanent positions, and this is often after a years-long period of hourly-paid and/or short-term positions. Precarity goes hand-in-hand with the strategic planning of institutions in austerity, and higher education is one in which the surfeit of apparently cheap hourly/short-termly labour has meant a neoliberal lack of commitment to re-shaping job structures and families to meet the challenges of austerity. To put this another way, there are thousands of PhD students, produced by a system that values them for tuition fees, on a job market with very few positions for them.

This paper is a meditation on the emotional labour of being a PhD supervisor/advisor in today's HE economy, focusing on grief and shame. There is the grief for the loss of potential to research and teaching as PhD students have to leave academic either before or after years of precarity, and the grief for the future of one's discipline; alongside this there is the shame of being implicitly involved – through being employed in an open-ended post – in the processes and structures that sustain this precarity. I use the framework of feminist care theory (Hochschild, 1983 and 1987; Schultz, 2022; Springgay, 2022) and affect (Ngai, 2005; Hanlon, 2023) to consider how emotion and form intersect in the act of PhD supervision/advising, before turning to a discussion of affective pedagogies and the PhD (Dahan, 2007; Lofstrom and Pyhalto, 2015; McAlpine, 2014), neoliberalism and precarity. As the hustle economy drives HE and those working precariously within it, a discussion of uncertainly (Graham, 2023; Thieme, 2018) underpins this reading of loss, anxiety, grief and shame in higher education.

Biography

Stacy Gillis is Associate Dean (Education) and Senior Lecturer in Modern and Contemporary Literature at Newcastle University, UK. She is one of the convenors of the Gender Research Group, and the managing editor of *Feminist Theory*. She is currently working on a project about the country house and detective fiction. Gillis has supervised over 20 PhD students, initially with excitement and pleasure, and latterly with foreboding and grief.

Manifesto

"Manifesto of Palimpsestism; or, The Manifesto is Undead, Long Live its Palimpsest"
Laura Handl

1. Indeed, a manifesto. On manifestos.
2. Or, more accurately, it will be, but only if You continue reading. It will start soon.
3. I know, this has already been done (and better, too), but that seldomly keeps things undone.
4. (Remember, You can always stop reading.)
5. However, who is to say what is 'better' manifesto, anyhow? Not me. Anymore. Starting now, soon.
6. (But I would prefer if You read on, if it is all the same to You?)
7. So, first things first: Manifesto of… what?

MANIFESTO OF PALIMPSESTISM (extended & edited version)

8. Manifestos are "machines to generate discourse" (Somigli 26).
9. But is a "manifesto […] a text suited for dystopias" (Stallings 9)?
10. If the most discourse-generating manifesto falls in a dystopian forest but I call it a (now slightly longer) abstract, would it make a sound?
11. (I encourage You to take a moment and let this make sense in Your head, too, or we will have a hard time to make sense together in the following. But remember, You can always stop reading.)
12. To declare a manifesto is "a formative and performative action that actively shapes its subject" (Ariel 8, my emphasis).
13. Palimpsestism is the manifestary practice of trying to make oneself understood, write something, among and with the undead bodies of former thoughts. The palimpsestist credo: We relate upon them. Do not be afraid of their leaking fluids and gasses! Those are only the natural processes of unlife.
14. (If they were honest, and sometimes they are, palimpsestist manifestors mostly still write for themselves. Nobody asked me to write this. Maybe something, not, however, necessarily, this.)
15. "Forms serve the culture; when they die, they die for a good reason: they're no longer embodying what it's like to be alive" (Shields 111). Palimpsestism is undead shorthand, it is using a whole cemetery of meanings to inscribe your thoughts. Its approach to quotation is, therefore, ethical pragmatism: Remember You cannot account for every reference. Remember that You should try. Respect inspiration's spectre.
16. In palimpsestism, a run-on sentence stretched over more than three lines (therefore too many lines to be read comfortably, if we are honest) points to the manifestor's feelings of encoding-pleasure versus the anxiety of having to make oneself understood as well as the potentialities of readers' annoyance about authorial self-indulgence versus their decoding-pleasure.
17. At its worst, palimpsestism is unrecognizably unique. At its best, it is cheeky territorialism. (But remember,

You can always stop reading.)
18. The manifesto is undead, long live its palimpsest.
19. “Twenty is a good number of points for a manifesto to have.” (Thomson)

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Biography

Laura Handl is assistant professor (*Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin*) at TUD Dresden University of Technology in the field of American Studies. Holding a BA in media communication (2016) and an MA in literature and culture studies with a specific focus on English and American Studies (2022), she works on a dissertation on the politics of anger in contemporary queer/feminist manifestos; further research interests include queer/feminist media studies as well as critique.

Undergraduate Research

"The Form of Undergraduate Research"
Kirsten Harris

There is a tendency in humanities education to expect undergraduate students to have an innate understanding of what constitutes academic research despite rarely engaging in work which bears significant resemblance to the (multiple) form(s) of research undertaken by faculty. Traditional assessments generally test the consumption, comprehension and interpretation of knowledge rather than the production of it. Even the essay, which develops some key research skills and is probably the most prevalent form of assessment in the arts and humanities, is frequently a reactive form: academic staff identify what they consider to be important aspects of a topic by producing a limited set of questions which students must respond to in a prescribed format. Students progressing to postgraduate studies are often unprepared and untrained for the forms of work they are required to undertake as postgraduate researchers and unaware of the possibilities for producing and communicating research available to academics. Students moving into employment may struggle to articulate the relevance and value of their academic experience.

This presentation explores the relationship between form and process in this context by considering the impact of recognising the undergraduate student as a researcher-in-training and designing their education to explicitly and intentionally develop their knowledge, skills and experience as such. This would require engaging with different forms of research outputs; for example: the long essay, the edited collection, the annotated edition, the monograph, the conference presentation, the podcast, the poster, the social media engagement. The different characteristics of outputs, the contexts they operate in, and the audiences they engage impacts what research can do: its use and (different kinds of) value. However, the form of research is more than the form of its output; it constitutes the whole research cycle: from conceptualisation, developing a research question and designing a project, to finding, selecting or generating primary and secondary data, to interpretation, argumentation and dissemination. A research-based education would develop a critical understanding of the shape and structure of this process, as well as familiarity with its component parts.

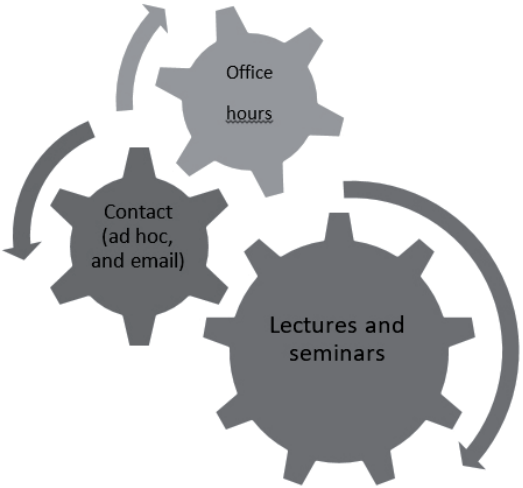
I will focus on the research project as a form of authentic assessment which asks students to make decisions about different parts of the research process and share my experience of integrating such assessment into modules designed using research-based pedagogy. Students are required to consider project design, a key academic and professional skill, and make decisions about content, methodology and output; that is, they must

identify a problem that they want to investigate, make decisions about the most useful strategies for primary and secondary research, and present a response in an appropriate format. Peer review and work-in-progress meetings provide support and scaffolding as well as introducing them to forms of collegial work that fall within the wider research remit. I will discuss how a programme-level approach which progressively develops understanding of different forms of research, and its constituent parts, is crucial to the success of such interventions.

Biography

Kirsten Harris is a Lecturer in Liberal Arts at the University of Bristol. She is the author of *Walt Whitman and British Socialism: The Love of Comrades* (Routledge, 2016), and her research spans three interconnected areas: Walt Whitman's British readerships, C19 socialism and transdisciplinary utopian studies. She is managing editor of *Utopian Studies* and is on the editorial board of the *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*. She leads public and community talks and workshops on topics relating to the relationship between art and activism. She has held School-level leadership positions in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and as Director of Teaching/Undergraduate Studies.

Office Hours



"The Function and Form of Office Hours."
Suhair Hindiyeh and Ben Springett

In our paper, we look at the nature of the office hour for lecturers and academic advisors. We examine how the office hour fits into the larger processes of teaching, student experience, the rhythm of the semesters, and the relationship between students and academic staff. Office hours are unofficially not taken to be all that important, and in the vein of Freud, they barely register in our conscious awareness much more than adhering to them with automaticity. Office hours – and how they are approached by staff and students - must have some effect on (and be shaped by) the rest of the course, and so also the wider culture of the university.

It seems to us there are three approaches to the office hour: eliminative; passive; and conscious/ proactive. Some staff would rather do without regular office hours at all, seeing them as an inconvenience and underused anyway; some staff are happy to be available at the given times, but wait for students to turn up as and when. We have been experimenting with a more conscious, proactive approach, encouraging students to use the office hours and draw value from them. There is a case to be had for each approach, but we argue for the proactive approach, using key pedagogical literature, survey data and philosophical theory in support.

We look at the rationale behind office hours and how they could be utilised to greater effect by, and for, staff and students. We examine the functional role of the office hour and consider how seemingly small parts of academia such as office hours can have bigger impacts on the phenomenology of the wider student experience and university work life. We argue that Levinasian dialogue is at its best in the setting of the office hour, offering phenomenological richness to both teacher and student in their learning experience. The office hour is an unconditional invitation for dialogue made first by the lecturer.

In the recent Bayesian brain and predictive processing paradigms (which owe their heritage to Kant) the human mind is taken to model its understanding of the world on prior experience and receives ongoing feedback in the form of fine-tuning/pruning affirmations or corrections. The office hour is a distinctive opportunity for a student to model their holistic understanding of the course on various points and receive 1:1 feedback (on any aspect of the course) and is therefore an important way for the student to rapidly develop, and for the lecturer to gage how their current cohort of students are engaging with the dynamic unfolding of the course (veteran lecturers may be teaching old courses with quite some automaticity) and to bring

to conscious awareness key details of what might need to be altered on the course. We argue then, that office hours have much bigger potential than is currently consciously admitted.

Ms. Suhair Hindiyeh, Durham University
Office hours Mondays 4-5

Dr. Ben Springett, University of Manchester
Office hours: Thursdays 3-5

Biographies

Suhair Hindiyeh is assistant lecturer in Arabic Studies at the School of Modern Languages and Cultures at Durham University. She has long been thinking about the nature of her office hours.

Ben Springett has been trying to capture forms for some time. In his PhD in philosophy of mind at the University of Bristol, he tried to trace the form of dreams. Now he thinks about the form of law and the academic forms of educational experience at the University of Manchester.

Script

"Scripting: Seminars, Lectures, and Formal Essence"

Roslyn Joy Irving

The 1773 edition of Johnson's dictionary offered thirteen definitions for "Form" (noun), of which several stand out: "[r]egularity; method; order"; "[e]xternal appearance without the essential qualities; empty show"; "[a] formal cause; that which gives essence". These three definitions do not even give a full picture of the dictionary entry, let alone the multifarious ways in which form permeates academia, but they do point to the questions raised by this conference. How is academia "ordered" (at individual and institutional scales); is this merely performative: and how does form produce "essence"?

Kramnick and Nersessian have discussed the ways we approach form, challenge its conceptual coherence, and suggest that its definition is slippery and contingent on context (661). In the academic context, one of the forms we regularly encounter is that of the "script", by which I mean a pre-written paper delivered in a lecture or seminar to students and colleagues. Scripting for junior academics is a way to stay on track, to meet the time constraints of a paper, or indeed to ensure accuracy when discussing primary and secondary materials. For (more) senior academics a lecture script might be the precursor of a monograph – promised to be reshaped and fine-tuned into a manuscript. On the other hand, it might be something we, as academics, abandon as we become more confident and expert in our fields. It is a form which might imply careful preparation or trepidation and uncertainty. This presentation does not seek to vilify the script but rather consider it in a range of contexts, and in the hands of different scholars (at different career stages). As a form, scripts are valuable, a tool to be used for an occasion and perhaps to (re)think things we have said in the past (Steyaert and Hjorth 769-770).

Scripts fit Johnson's definition of form as a self-imposed "method". They also tend to be covered in notes and editable up until the moment in which they are "performed". While scripting might preclude spontaneity and imply our discourse is an "empty show", it also allows for the academic to focus on the "essence" of their research. In other words, I would argue that the "script" is a form which points to heart of the variable definitions of the term "form". It exists both before, during and after the talk in new shapes- transcripts for example (often produced by computers, see Choi et al.) and unlike the original incorporate audible marginalia into the body of the text. In this (very short) paper I invite a reconsideration of the script, academic performance, and the ways scripts live on. Scripting is a useful tool to think about forms more broadly because it bridges both written and oral communication, and can speak for us, even after we have finished speaking.

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Biography

Roslyn Joy Irving completed her PhD at the University of Liverpool and Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University. Her research considered literary historiography in Ann Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), drawing upon archival materials from the late eighteenth-century. Her postdoctoral project focuses on topographical and loco-descriptive poetry, particularly the prospect form. She works at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz. Her research interests include the Gothic, Form, Poetry, and Prospect.

Monograph

"The Hunger for Consequentiality: Literary Studies' Aspirational Forms"
David James

The 'move' of 'mistaking epistemology for effect', suggests Steve Connor, 'is one of the most common of the dream-machines of the humanities'. One would be forgiven for assuming that in recent years literary studies have preferred not so much to challenge that kind of move as to nurture and even endorse it. Just as the climate of self-examination escalated by method debates over the past decade has paradoxically only intensified claims for literary studies' political efficacy even as the transformative effects of both reading and of literature itself have come under intense scrutiny, so the widespread perception of the field's institutional precarity has resulted in increasingly vociferous claims for its indispensability for tackling social and political ills. Idioms of imputed traction have flourished, allowing literary studies' aspirational sense of its own consequentiality to thrive in ways that are reshaping (formally, not simply topically) what has historically remained its principal 'genre' of dissemination—the monograph.

One might think of Michael Clune's recent defence of judgment and Eric Hayot's exuberantly abstract case for taking better care of humanist reason, in their respective books from 2021. Both Clune and Hayot embrace the humanities' current tumult, in general, as a momentous opportunity for literary studies, in particular, to show us alternative ways forward. They offer audacious propositions for rethinking the way we articulate the value of connecting aesthetic experiences and humanist literacies to the production of knowledge, while also redefining what might be claimed and pursued—in aspirational terms—within the parameters of a monograph. To achieve this, though, they depend on what monographs are traditionally averse to doing: offering broad generalizations about the collective behaviours and inclinations that have shaped the field's fortunes, as a means of promoting aesthetic education and humanist reason, respectively, as vital to the long-term durability of the humanities at large. As a result, Clune's and Hayot's books capture the confidence with which literary critics today can position themselves as the source from which aspirations flow about the ethical and political utility of academic expertise, while also evincing a certain impatience with the kind of local, specialized forms of argumentation for which the monograph has traditionally been home.

Clune and Hayot are hardly alone. Aspirational styles of criticism are have been showcased by Caroline Levine's *Forms* (2015) and *The Activist Humanist* (2023), as well as by Anna Kornbluh's *Immediacy, or, The Style of Too Late Capitalism* (2023), which like its predecessor, *The Order of Forms* (2019), arrogates to itself a degree of diagnostic prowess on behalf of the battle against contemporary conditions of economic regulation, asserting the urgency of the critical monograph as a form of academic labour at the very moment when claims for its socially transformative impact have never seemed more wishful or at least empirically unquantifiable. What agenda-setting books like those from Clune, Kornbluh, Hayot, and Levine disclose is a hunger for consequentiality, which is to say a hunger for critical practice to have a 'bearing', in Helen Small's phrase, 'on all

aspects of intellectual, social, and political life'. However enduring though that aspiration remains, it's 'not self-evident', as Small reminds us, that such a practice should 'have special rights or responsibilities', not least 'over disciplines with more obvious claims to understanding the operations of modern government and modern economies'. When literary scholars start to believe that their function is special, they risk perpetuating what Small calls 'romanticizing accounts of the intellectual as a quasi-external authority on the structure and operations of political life'. Tracing the contours of that romance, this paper gauges whether the mistaking of epistemologies for effects—along with the presumption that textual interpretations are also tangible interventions—might, as an operative form, be soothing for field under systemic attrition. But it also examines what this combination of self-aggrandizement and self-consolation might spell for the future of the specialized monograph.

Biography

David James is Professor of Modern and Contemporary Literature at the University of Birmingham. His books include *Discrepant Solace: Contemporary Literature and the Work of Consolation* (Oxford University Press, 2019) and *Modernist Futures* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). He has edited numerous collections, including *The Legacies of Modernism* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), *The Cambridge Companion to British Fiction since 1945* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), and, most recently, *Modernism and Close Reading* (Oxford University Press, 2020). For Columbia University Press he co-edits the book series 'Literature Now', and he serves as Editor for British and World Anglophone Fiction at Contemporary Literature. He is currently completing *Sentimental Activism* (forthcoming with Columbia University Press), a book about the politics of compassion and solicitation in medical memoir, poverty fiction, and refugee writing.

Queer Teaching

"The Queer Pedagogue: Subjectivity and the Affective Disruptions of Queerness on the Formal Structures of Teaching."

Joey Isaac Jenkins

Discussions of queerness in relation to pedagogic practice in higher education have tended overwhelmingly toward a focus on the application of queer methodologies in/as teaching (Thomas-Reid, 2018). As such, most discursive ventures relating to the incorporation of queer pedagogy into teaching practice have typically centred the experiences and intellectual development of students in the classroom space, as well as the ways in which queer methodologies can enrich and alter the student learning experience (Nemi Neto, 2018). This has led to a relative forgetting of the queer subject as pedagogue. And yet, this kind of queer subjecthood cannot but inform the implementation of queer methodologies and the emergence of a queer pedagogy in teaching practice.

This paper therefore offers a reframing of the discussion of queerness in the classroom by reflecting more fully on the positionality and experience of the pedagogue as a queer subject. Teaching while queer – whether out/open/legible or not – insists upon particular teaching strategies, modes of relating, and approaches to engagement. Possessing a particular relationship to so-called straight temporality (Halberstam, 2005; Muñoz, 2009), the queer subject as pedagogue calls into question the structuring of feedback as a future-looking form, for instance, while opening up avenues for students to use the traditional essay format as a more intimate means of 'touching the past' (Dinshaw, 1999). Likewise, both anti-relational (Bersani, 1996; Edelman, 2004) and more utopic (Muñoz, 2009) modes of queerness engender particular ways of relating which the queer pedagogue must navigate as part of their approach to teaching.

My intervention seeks especially, here, to throw light on the extent to which the queer subjectivity of pedagogues is liable, in these ways, to disrupt the formal structures of teaching practice in higher education contexts. I draw on a framework that employs queer theories of emotionality (Ngai, 2005; Ahmed 2004) to reflect, in particular, on the affective underpinning of these disruptions, the opportunities and challenges they generate in pedagogy, and the emotional landscape which emerges around them. Ultimately, I contend, a fuller accounting of the pedagogue as queer subject, rather than as simply a conduit for the delivery of queer methodologies and theories, is needed in order to build a more holistic understanding of the relationship between queerness and pedagogy – be that a relationship of disruption, of intimacy, or, the more likely, of both.

Biography

Joey Isaac Jenkins is an Associate Lecturer in English at Newcastle University. His research considers queer (mis-)representation in rural American literature of the late twentieth century. His latest research project is a study of the narrativization of blood disorder in contemporary literature and culture. He has recently co-led on a number of faculty- and institution-wide projects focussed on pedagogic practice and student perceptions of feedback.

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Essay

Thomas Karshan

As Peter Womack says in his 1993 article, 'What are Essays For?', 'our educational system […] makes the form look natural, as if intellectual activity produced essays the way a tree produces leaves. Clearly this is not so: the essay is a culturally specific form of communication which has not always existed, and which depends for its existence now on some quite definite institutional contexts.' As is well known, the methodical essay only entrenched itself as the default mode of student work in the humanities across the Anglo-American education system some time in the late 19th and early 20th century, displacing a panoply of other forms, written and oral, including translation, imitation, declamation, composition, and the 'theme', or prose composition based on commonplaces and structured on the Ciceronian oration (the direct structural predecessor of the pedagogical essay). In Britain, where I was educated, to study a subject is to write essays about it, so much so that it is hard to conceive of thinking in any other form than the essay. It is therefore startling to look across at, for example, the Italian university system, in which assessment is mostly oral.

In this paper I will draw on the research I have been conducting since 2010 on the history of the essay (which led into my co-edited *On Essays: Montaigne to the Present*, OUP 2020), and especially, in the last three or so years, on the history of how essays have been taught in schools and universities, part of which is shortly to be published in my chapter on 'The Essay and the Theme' in the forthcoming *Cambridge History of the British Essay*.

In the first half of the talk, I will begin by very briefly reminding the audience of the recentness of the academic essay, and the formative role Macaulay played in establishing it in Britain. I will review its emergence from the Latin theme and describe several of the various structures which have been taught in schools and universities (the oratorical, the logical, the scientific, the dialectical), and the difference between British and American essay structures. I will quote various of the claims that have been made for the political, education, and spiritual virtues of the essay.

In the second half of the talk, I will ask some questions about the virtues and vices of the essay as a form for the study of, specifically, literature – as against earlier academic forms, notably translation and imitation. Are these different paths to understanding, or do they simply correspond to two different kinds of understanding of literature?

Biography

Thomas Karshan is Associate Professor at the University of East Anglia. He has a PhD from Oxford University and is the author of *Vladimir Nabok and the Art of Play* (Oxford UP, 2011) and editor and co-editor of several volumes, including *On Essays: Montaigne to the Present* (Oxford UP, 2020). He has published widely in a variety of venue and is currently at work on a second monograph, *Undelivered Letters: Modern Literature and Message*.


A.3

Tweet / X

“Historian Here”: Form, Platform, and Community in the Academic Twitter Thread“
Torsten Kathke

The death of “academic Twitter” in late 2023 meant the end of the “Twitter thread” as a site-specific academic form. After choices Twitter made after it was taken over by tech billionaire Elon Musk in 2022 degraded the experience for academic users, many left the platform. One instructive case study for such an academic Twitter community is the circle of “twitterstorians,” professional historians interacting on the platform. At its height, from the U.S. 2016 presidential election through the Trump presidency and the early years of the Covid-19 pandemic, Twitter hosted the closest thing to a universally–frequented, transnational community of scholars in history and related fields. While initially populated mostly by U.S.-based users, by the late 2010s, English–speaking humanities and social sciences scholars across the globe had become involved in overlapping exchanges on both professional and personal interests there.

They encountered an increasing number of high-profile journalists, politicians, science communicators, celebrities, and ordinary people from all walks of life. This environment, combined with Twitter’s open nature and its character limit (140, later 280 characters), meant that experts in a topic could share their knowledge in a pithy, public way, and had a chance of achieving notability (or notoriety) as important voices on that topic. The form of text that made this possible was the “tweetstorm,” or “thread,” which combined short tweets, into longer explanations and narratives. Academics, frequently admonished for being long-winded, incomprehensible, and irrelevant, could demonstrate the opposite by using this popular form, which forced writerly restraint. I posit that Twitter’s limitations thus allowed for a specific academic form to emerge in the academic Twitter thread. Historians often commented on news events in order to present their scholarship as helpful to an understanding of the current moment. The successes of this tactic for public history (threads were picked up by news outlets as commentary or as newsworthy themselves and some scholars became minor celebrities for their writing on the app) meant that some began chasing social media virality through the form.

Yet, soon after the acquisition of Twitter by Elon Musk, the community began thinning out. With it ended the era of the academic Twitter thread as a distinct style and phenomenon. While threads continue on Twitter/X, and the form has been adopted by other platforms, such as Bluesky, Mastodon, and, naturally, Threads, the fact that these are different services makes it impossible for everyone to engage with them simultaneously. I argue that such simultaneity was a distinct and important feature of the Twitter thread and made it useful as an academic form. The emergence of the form in its particular location, academic Twitter, means it took on not only the structural limitations and possibilities of the site, but also the communitiy’s mixture of researched expertise and learned joviality. While the thread has become unbound from its origin, it carries these with it as it maps onto new and emerging social media platforms.

Biography

Torsten Kathke is a lecturer at Johannes Gutenberg-Universität in Mainz, specializing in the history of the United States and Germany during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the history of the U.S. West, capitalism, media history, and the history of popular culture. He received his doctorate from Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich. The resulting book, *Wires That Bind: Nation, Region and Technology in the American Southwest, 1854–1920* (transcript, 2017), is a study of the effects improved communication had on power relations among local elites in Arizona and New Mexico. His second book project analyzes the market for popular non-fiction books in the United States and West Germany during the 1970s and 1980s. In 2023, he was a fellow of the German Institute for Global and Area Studies's Digital Transformation Lab (DigiTraL) on Digital Diplomacy and Statecraft funded by the German Foreign Office, where he researched the nexus of social media, politics, and the historical ideologies embedded in networking technologies.

Teaching

“The Forms of Literary Criticism – Classrooms, Publics, Context Collapse“

Patricia McManus

This paper will use a brief exploration of the concept of ‘context collapse’ to sketch a sense of the problems involved in teaching literature to undergraduates in the third decade of the twenty-first century. To do so, it will use the forms of literary criticism as both material and object – material in the sense that the history of these forms enters into our seminar rooms in multiple ways, and object in the sense that if we are to produce more generative, democratic and engaged seminar discussions, we need to revisit the forms of literary criticism we rely on.

We use literary criticism in our teaching of literature but do we teach literary criticism? I will argue that it is through the careful practical teaching of literary criticism that we can provide students with critical rationales for their own reading practices and, in doing so, combat the ‘context collapse’ which is unravelling the pedagogic modes which would enable the formal study of literature. This argument opens a question, however: what are the forms most conducive to the teaching of literary criticism?

There has been a turn towards literary criticism across the first two decades of the twentieth century. This could also be cast as a turn away from literary theory. I will argue that the potency of this turn is – at least in part – an articulation of anxieties about the reading practices of undergraduate students in literary studies. Arguably initially mediated by the academic interest in affect, this turn took its most demagogic form in the post-critique movement. That movement’s reliance on the figure of the ‘common reader’ or the ‘ordinary reader’ attempts to guide literary criticism towards the ordinariness of aesthetic experience. The democratic appeal of this gesture to the ordinary is tempting but it involves an unmaking or undoing of the specialised form of reading we ask undergraduates to do. In place of building a collective experience, a context, from and for their study of literature, the post-critique method throws students back on a private engagement with literature.

Academic forms of literary criticism have always co-existed with (in easy and less easy relationships) non-academic forms of literary criticism, and these latter are entangled with a multiplicity of forms of cultural criticism – of video-games, television, digital texts, film and music. This existence of a vast and deep reservoir of writing on literature and on culture - for which academic forms of literary criticism are but a hinterland - is both a challenge and an opportunity for us. Can we use these latter to create academic forms of literary criticism which might bridge our broken present with a better future.

Biography

Patricia McManus is a senior lecturer in the Humanities Program at the University of Brighton until September 2024 when she will be moving to the Literature Department at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. Her research interests centre on the history of the Anglophone novel and the concept of the reading public. Her most recent publication is *Dystopia and Critical Theory* (Manchester University Press, 2022)

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Peer Review

“The Form of Peer Review“

Larissa Schindler

Increasingly, scientific careers depend on journal publications that include peer-reviewing into the editor’s process of decision making. These reviews are not only meant to assist the decision making in excluding weak manuscripts. Rather, they should help to improve good ones at the same time. On rare occasions only, a reviewer opts for publication without any revision. Receiving and writing peer reviews thus shapes academic writing in different ways: as helpful comments and suggestions reviews may inspire the flow of thinking and writing (cf. Schindler/Schäfer 2021), as a critique they may inspire, intimidate, or provoke dissent, as a vote for rejection they may hinder the chance of publication or urge for an alternative publication site. Peer reviews not only shape academic writing in their actual commenting, they already do so already earlier, in authors anticipation of reviewers, editors and readers estimates.

Academic research on peer reviewing has long tried to evaluate the quality of peer reviews in regard of reviewers biases and other aspects of their “reliability” (cf Hirschauer 2004). In contrast to such evaluations, several studies in the last decade have begun to research peer review as a social process (e.g. Hirschauer 2009, 2014; Greiffenhagen 2023, 2024). In this field, Pontille and Torney (2014) present an impressive variety of forms in scientific reviewing, which – at least for researchers in social sciences and humanities – might be best illustrated by the form of “quick opinions” in mathematical peer reviewing (Greiffenhagen 2024). Hirschauer (2004: 76f.) states that reviews – despite of their character as a written document – should be seen as a comment within a triangular relationship among (manuscript) author, reviewer(s), and editor(s).

Based on this line of research, our paper is concerned with the form of the peer review in sociological academic work. We present first insights from the empirical corpus of an ongoing study on reviews of qualitative research in sociological journals. Particularly, we draw attention to remarks on methodology and methods. Going beyond the prevalent concern with reliability, our analytical focus is twofold: First, we will reveal which criteria of evaluation are used in the form of peer review, distinguishing, for criteria referring to originality, relevance, or rigor. Second, we will examine how the form mobilizes these criteria, which will allow us to shed light on rhetorics of plausibility, quality, or excellence. Our contribution will also provide insights into the broader work of the DFG-Netzwerk “Textual Performance in Qualitative Social Research”.

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Biography

Larissa Schindler is professor for Methods of Empirical Social Research at Bayreuth University, Germany. In her research, she focusses on mobilities, borders, sports, and learning with a particular interest in the perspective of practices theories. Related to this, she conducts research on (qualitative) research methods, suitable for analyzing methodological research designs as well as the practice of researching as a social practice. Larissa Schindler is a member of the DFG-Network „Textual Performance in Qualitative Social Research". Together with Julian Hamann (Berlin) and Nils Kumkar (Bremen), she currently researches on the communication of decision on the quality of manuscripts as part of (double blind) peer-review process.

Summary

“What Are Condensed Texts, and Why Are They Saying Such Terrible Things about Them?”
Carlos Spoerhase

Artificial intelligence now allows us to summarize long texts at the push of a button. But the desire for shorter versions of complex works is ancient. Literary summaries were already being produced and valued in antiquity, especially in education. This practice, however, has always been controversial. Critics accused summaries of distorting, simplifying, and robbing works of their essence. I want to shed light on the genre of the summary, examine its diverse forms, and use current examples to show why it has a right to exist despite all the criticism.

Biography
Carlos Spoerhase holds the Chair of Modern German Literature at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. He studied German Literature, Philosophy, and Political Theory. After graduate studies at the Humboldt University of Berlin and Johns Hopkins University, he received his doctorate in Berlin in 2006. Spoerhase has held visiting professorships at the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University, among others, and was a Fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin.

the / an

Article

"The Article as Form."

André Cúnico Volpato (with Fabio Akcelrud Durão)

In literary studies, the form of what we now call the article has changed significantly in the last decades. It has departed from the essay and has progressively approached the ideal of the hard sciences. In this presentation, which hopefully will later become an article, we claim that the article today is a fixed, anti-mimetic form that hampers the work of critical imagination and in-depth interpretation. In order to validate this, we proceed by analyzing the article's constitutive parts: 1. titles, by means of the colon, very often join general and imaginative elements with very specific contents; 2. the abstract offers a spoiler of the argument; 3. the keywords encourage redundancy; 4. the dates of reception and acceptance lead one to logically think of an expiration date for the writing; 5. the article encourages a well-organized kind of exposition: a. the introduction must introduce the topic (the article can't begin in medias res), b. the argument has to be clear and linear (no false starts, no dead ends), c. the conclusion must point to something substantial the reader can take home (it can't be the movement of the text itself); 6. the article should develop one single idea only, which ought to be a contribution to the field. The article thus fosters, and is in turn fed by, a process of institutionalization of areas, which directly influences the article's bibliography. The latter must comprise the area's state of the art, it must show that the author is well acquainted with the current debate, regardless of the quality of such debate, for the field justifies itself. Even though literature cannot be simply studied as a single entity, no single fragmentation is strictly speaking defensible; by naturalizing discreet areas of literary inquiry, the article is a vehicle of bureaucratization. 7. in terms of style, the article favors a direct form of language, abundant passive voice, repetition of nouns and proper names, and it easily gives prominence to key terms to be advertised in the text, which furthermore, with around 5,000-6,000 words, is normally short. But the article also has an invisible component, insofar as it is preceded by reviews, which more often than not leave a mark in it. The more institutionalized the journal, the more formal the peer-review process. In the article form, excluding becomes a matter of honor; such evaluative comportment is antithetical to the mimetic impulse required both in the process of interpreting a literary text and reading such an interpretation. As a way of corroborating all this, we will compare an article from the 1940s to a current one. Finally, we must say that are well aware of the ambiguity of writing a paper about the article. An interesting textual effect in this experiment is that we will mimetize the anti-mimetic spirit of the article, from its broader formal traits to its verbal specificities, probably with just a footnote signaling the fact.

Biography

André Cúnico Volpato is a PhD candidate in the Department of Theory and History of Literature at the State University of Campinas (Unicamp). His Master's thesis discussed the work of Franz Kafka, and his current research deals primarily with 20th century English language literature.

Book

"Thinking about the Academic Books of the Future."
Jane Winters

Books are a key form of publication for many humanities disciplines, providing space to think through complex arguments and build narratives. This presentation will discuss how academic books might be transformed by digital technologies, and by the practices and requirements of humanities researchers engaged in digital scholarship. It will discuss two potential directions of travel for digital books. The first envisages books as multimedia networked objects, characterised by a high degree of functionality, customisation and enhancement. A historical monograph, for example, might not just link to but integrate some of the archival material that it references. Extracts from oral history interviews might be included not just as transcriptions but as embedded audio. We could go further and extend the idea of the executable research article to the executable book, which allows the reader to rerun the same processes as the author, to see how they built their code or processed their data.

The second scenario adopts some of the ethos of minimal computing and involves what might seem like a counterintuitive stripping back of what is technically possible. Perhaps we might prefer digital books that are relatively lightweight in terms of their underlying technology, and consequently easier to develop, easier to access (whatever the technology and bandwidth available to you), easier to sustain and maintain – and, crucially, have a reduced environmental footprint. Removing complexity may sometimes be the most appropriate option, allowing us to step back from the precipitous rate of technological change to slow down and simplify.

I will argue that we should not assume that there is only one way forward for the digital academic book of the future, that there is a binary choice to be made between the minimal and the expansive. One of the advantages of the digital book is precisely that there are many different paths that can be followed, and the same content can be presented in multiple different ways for different audiences - including, of course, in print.

The presentation will conclude with a brief discussion of the need for a much more inclusive and imaginative approach to what we as a sector consider to be, and have value as, a publication. Data, code, interactive visualisations, 3D models - these and other forms of digital output can be the most significant results from a research project, yet they are rarely thought about as publications that embody innovative research. They can and should be allowed to stand as publications in their own right, not just as supporting evidence for a book or journal article. Collapsing them into textual description is doing a disservice to some of the most innovative forms of scholarly communication being created today. There is space for all of this in a thriving humanities publishing ecosystem.

Biography

Jane Winters is Professor of Digital Humanities and Director of the Digital Humanities Research Hub at the School of Advanced Study, University of London. She has led or co-directed a range of digital projects, including the Congruence Engine and Heritage Connector projects; the UK-Ireland Digital Humanities Association network; Big UK

Domain Data for the Arts and Humanities; and Traces through Time: Prosopography in Practice across Big Data. She is currently Chair of the Digital Preservation Coalition and Vice-President (Publications) of the Royal Historical Society. Jane‘s research interests include digital history, born-digital archives and open access publishing. She has published most recently on web archives and researcher access, Non-Print Legal Deposit, and born-digital archives and the problem of search.

Aphorism

"Powers of Ten – A Reappraisal of the Aphorism as an 'Eternal' Form."

Florian Zappe

> Someone who can write aphorisms should
> not fritter away his time writing essays.
> —Karl Kraus[1]

Given the fact that the aphorism has – in the Western intellectual tradition at least since Heraclitus – been a canonical form of expressing intellectual work for centuries, one is tempted to agree with Friedrich Nietzsche that "aphorisms are the forms of 'eternity'."[2] And yet, aphoristic writing seems to be non-existent as a scholarly practice in current academic culture despite its historical gravitas. While classical aphorisms by figures such as Lichtenberg, Nietzsche or Adorno may occasionally find their way onto reading lists and syllabi of humanities classes, the idea of building an academic career on aphoristic work – regardless of how brilliant it might be intellectually – seems to be an absurdity that equates professional suicide. In short, aphorisms are – at best – read but not written in the contemporary university.

The first part of my paper will reflect on the de-canonisation of the aphorism in the university context. Here, I will argue that the decline of the aphoristic form is rooted in the institutional hegemony of more 'marketable' academic forms – the book, the journal article, the conference paper – that has established itself especially since the second half of the 20th century. It is certainly quite telling that the few recent attempts to theorise and historicise the role the aphorism in intellectual history such as Andrew Hui's A *Theory of the Aphorism: From Confucius to Twitter* (Princeton UP 2019), Ben Grant's *The Aphorism and Other Short Forms* (Routledge 2016) or James Geary's popular *The World in a Phrase. A Brief History of the Aphorism* (Bloomsbury 2005) use the holistic format of the book length study to pursue their endeavour.

In the second part, I want to call for a revival of the aphorism as an accepted genre to express our intellectual work – specifically in the institutional context of the university – by highlighting the epistemological potentials of this distinctly amorphous and fragmentary form. Aphoristic writing has always had a liminal character. As a practice which, in its hybrid status between academic and literary writing and in its inherent skepticism towards systematic (i.e. ideological) models of explaining the world, it allows us "to say in ten sentences what everyone else says in a book [and] what everyone else does not say in a book."[3]

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1 Karl Kraus, *Half-Truths and One-and-a-Half Truths. Selected Aphorisms*, ed. and trans. by Harry Zohn, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 66.

2 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols,* trans. by Judith Norman, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, p. 223.

3 Ibid. (emphasis in the original).

Biography

Florian Zappe is a Berlin-based scholar and academic who works in the interdisciplinary borderland between literary studies, cultural studies and philosophy. Currently, he is a Post-Doc Researcher in the ERC project "The Arts of Autonomy: Pamphleteering, Popular Philology, and the Public Sphere" at LMU Munich.

Florian is the author of books on Kathy Acker (*Das Zwischen schreiben—Transgression und avantgardistisches Erbe bei Kathy Acker,* transcript, 2013) and William S. Burroughs (*'Control Machines' und 'Dispositive'—Eine foucaultsche Analyse der Machtstrukturen im Romanwerk von William S. Burroughs zwischen 1959 und 1968*, Peter Lang, 2008), as well as the editor of *ReFocus: The Films of Abel Ferrara* (Edinburgh University Press, 2024) and the co-editor of the essay collections *The American Weird: Concept & Medium* (Bloomsbury, 2020), *Surveillance|Society|Culture* (Peter Lang, 2020) and *Spaces and Fictions of the Weird and the Fantastic: Ecologies, Geographies, Oddities* (Palgrave, 2019). In addition to that, he has published widely on literary and visual culture.

For Speakers and Invitees

Travel to Munich and…

If you travel to Germany **by plane**, the easiest airport to go to is Munich (Franz-Josef-Strauß Airport). Munich airport is located to the northeast of Munich and can be reached by public transports on the suburban trains S1 and S8. Travel downtown (where both the conference venue and the hotels are) takes about 40 minutes. Either train takes you to Marienplatz station in the city center, where you need to change to the underground/subway trains U3 (direction Moosach or Olympiazentrum) and U6 (direction Garching Forschungszentrum or Fröttmaning) to "Münchener Freiheit" station, on Leopoldstraße.

If you travel to Munich **by rail**, you will arrive at Hauptbahnhof near the city center. It's about a 4.5km walk from there to the hotels. Alternatively, take a suburban train (any suburban train) to Marienplatz station in the city center, and follow directions as above. Your train ticket may already include a city ticket for Munich, in which case you will not need to purchase anything additional.

We recommend installing the MVV-App for public transport (see: https://www.mvv-muenchen.de/) on your phone to buy the cheapest tickets—simply enter your destination ("Münchener Freiheit") and follow the connections indicated; this will let you pay with your credit card as well, and allow you to purchase further tickets during your stay in Munich. Alternatively, individual paper tickets may be bought off the vending machines in the stations. Please make sure you have bought a ticket before you get to the platforms—while it's not likely, you may run afoul of a ticket check even on the platform.

…the hotels and…

We have booked a set of rooms in two hotels for the duration of the conference, from **Wednesday night through Friday night** (arriving October 9 and leaving October 12). These rooms will be paid by the conference organizers directly; you don't need to do anything except sign in. If you want to arrive earlier or stay later, please let us know and we will see if an extended stay can be arranged, but the costs of these additional nights will have to be paid by you.

You are staying at either the

Fleming's Hotel München-Schwabing, Leopoldstr. 130-132, 80804 München

or the

Mercure Hotel München-Schwabing, Leopoldstr. 120, 80804 München

Both of these hotels are located about half a kilometer north of “Münchner Freiheit” subway station, and about 1km from the Center for Advanced Studies. As you exit the subway station, head north on Leopoldstraße (you’re heading north if the road bends ever so slightly to the left); both hotels are on the right side of the road.

…to the Conference Venue

The conference venue is the **Center for Advanced Studies** of Ludwig-Maximilians-University, located at Seestraße 13 (about 1km walk from the hotels). A map is at the back of this brochure, but the easiest way is to walk down Leopoldstraße back to Münchener Freiheit, then turn left into Feilitzstraße and walk until you find Werneckstraße on your right. Turn into Werneckstraße and walk until Seestraße appears on your left. CAS is on the left side as you walk down Seestraße.

Maps can be found on the inside front and inside rear cover of this brochure.

The conference will pay for your flight and hotel. Hotel costs will be paid directly by the conference organizers; your flights and rail tickets, unless you've been advised otherwise, will have to be booked by you and reimbursed after the conference.

If you do not already have one, you will have to apply for a German tax ID number in order to get your reimbursement. We have put the unfortunately extensive details on this process on the Academic Forms website (https://keyforms.bham.ac.uk/).

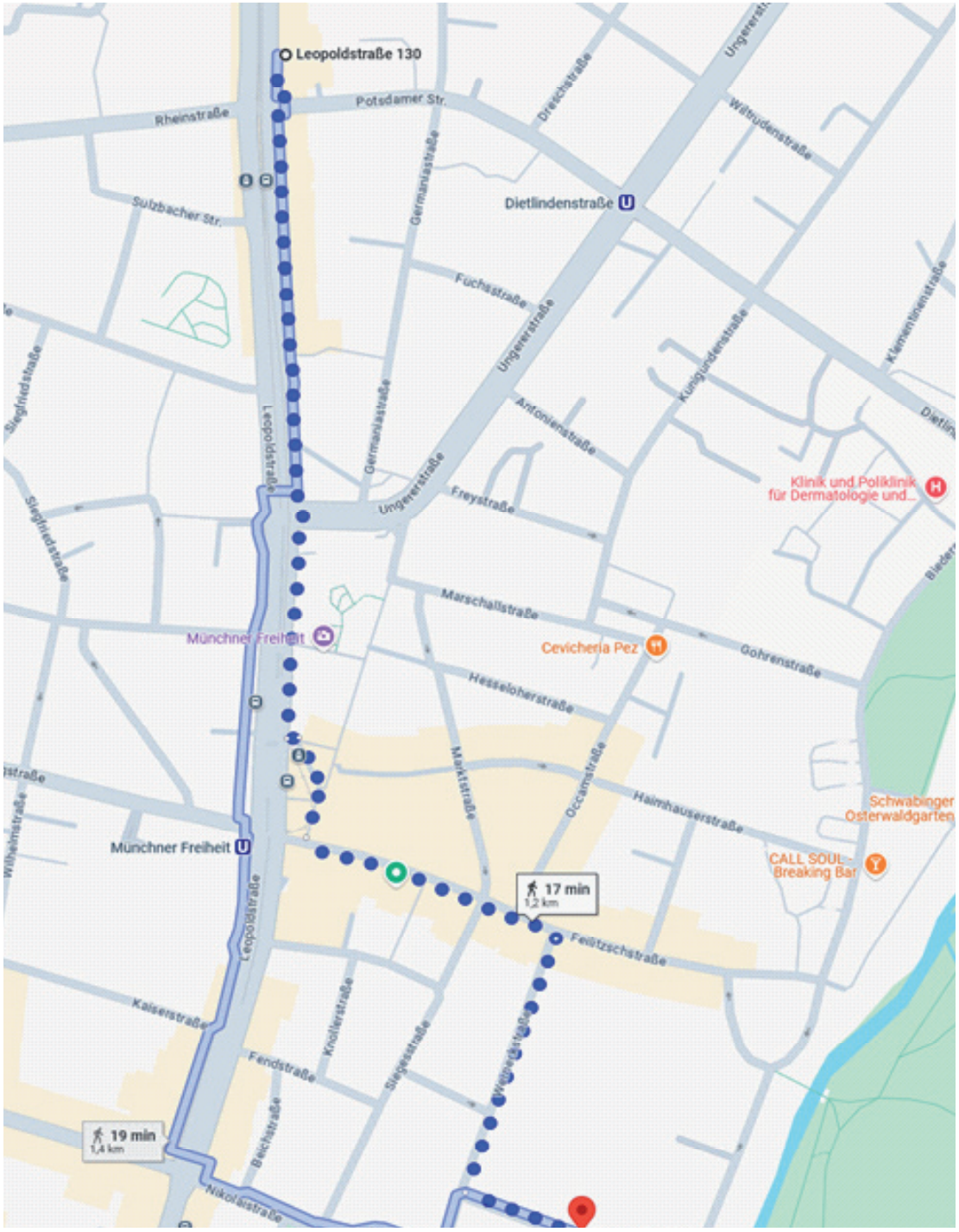
The Benediktenwand, with Brauneck mountain on the left.
Courtesy of Wikipedia.

The official program for the conference ends with a conference dinner on October 11, but there is an optional offer of a conference hike on Saturday. This hike is dependent on stable weather, but will not require gear.

We depart at 10 a.m. from Munich central station for Bad Tölz (RB 56 to Lenggries; €15.40, via MVV App), arriving at 11 a.m. We then undertake a short hike to Lenggries along the river Isar to Lenggries and Brauneck mountain (about a 3h walk, with a short, steep uphill at Lenggries with alternative cable car routes) for a late lunch. We return from Lenggries station around 4:45 (RB 56 to Munich; €17.10) to be back in Munich by 6 p.m.

Optional returns to Munich are from Lenggries before the ascent to Brauneck mountain, anytime after about 2 p.m.

We'll undertake this program if we can assemble five hikers or more—please let us know as soon as possible if you want to join us on this lovely hike into the foothills of the Alps.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