

“CRISIS AND CRITIQUE”

An interdisciplinary, graduate student conference hosted by THE INSTITUTE FOR COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND SOCIETY at CASA HISPÁNICA, Columbia University, New York.

OPENING:
FRIDAY, APRIL 3RD, 2015
19:00–21:00
SCHERMERHORN HALL

CONFERENCE:
SATURDAY, APRIL 4TH, 2015
9:00–18:30
CASA HISPÁNICA

Keynote Speaker: CESARE CASARINO
(Professor and Chair of the Department of Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature at the University of Minnesota)

Keynote Lecture Title: “BEYOND CRITIQUE: SPINOZA, GRAMSCI, BERGSON”

What are the links between methods of critique today and moments of historical and disciplinary crisis?

Languages of critique often arise at moments of simultaneous semantic and material vulnerability. Words coined in times of crisis are often themselves symptoms of the disturbances they explicate. Distress produces language, and our language is likewise fraught with distress.

This Conference is an occasion to reflect upon the artillery of concepts and techniques that our respective disciplines today offer us, as scholars, in the practice of critique. Disciplines always have their crises; they are likewise compelled to respond to crises. In our training, we inherit grammars premised on abstraction—when are they faulty, when do they support us, and when do they break down?

Featuring a variety of presenters and respondents from a broad range of disciplinary fields, we will attempt to articulate the requirements and limits for a method of critique that belongs to this second decade of the 21st century.



FRIDAY, APRIL 3RD, 2015 (SCHERMERHORN HALL)

19:00 WELCOME & REGISTRATION + DRINKS (STRONACH CNTR, RM 826)

19:30–21:00 Film Screening: “WHEN THE DOGS TALKED” (2014), 33:53 min. (RM 612)
KARRABING FILM COLLECTIVE

Followed by a discussion with Professor Elizabeth A. Povinelli, Member of Karrabing Film Collective and Franz Boas Professor of Anthropology and Gender Studies at Columbia University.

SATURDAY, APRIL 4TH, 2015 (CASA HISPÁNICA)

9:00–9:15 BREAKFAST & COFFEE

9:15–9:30 FORMAL WELCOME

9:30–11:30 PANEL 1: “PRACTICES OF CRITIQUE”
Moderator: GAYATRI SPIVAK (University Professor, ICLS Founding Director)

ABBE SCHRIBER
“NOAH PURIFOY AND THE MATERIAL EPHEMERA OF CRISIS”

By examining the presentation of rubble from the Watts Rebellion in Los Angeles, assembled by artist and director of the Watts Towers Arts Center Noah Purifoy in 1966, this paper posits that the material ephemera left in the wake of protest serve as a crucial metonymic device that operates where the symbolic register is doomed to fail. Furthermore, the amassed objects garner a syntactic, communicative aspect facilitated only by and through their archival ordering (or non-ordering), testifying to the careful strategizing that underlies perceived randomness—and the implications of this for black struggles for freedom, too often characterized as “explosions of disorder without justification or clear intention.”

ERIK BORDELEAU
“DESTITUENT POWER AND THE PROPHETIC ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNDERCOMMONS”

This paper seeks to rethink the commons and collective organization, confronted as they are by the onslaught of neoliberalism. Examined are two recently published books—*The Undercommons* (Harney/Moten, 2013) and *À nos amis* (Invisible Committee, 2014)—that both present a radically anti-representational conception of politics and insist, in their own way, on developing a “wild common”: a politics of emancipation based upon immanent attention and powers of collective that escape privatization.

MARC HANNAFORD
“IMPROVISATION AS POLITICAL POWER”

This paper will investigate the force and limits to improvisation, theorised both in terms of music and as a mode of being the world, as a political force. To critically examine improvisation as a tool for political critique, this paper examines conceptions of the culture industry, history, story-telling, temporality, and sacrifice, as presented in the writings of Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno.

IAN ALAN PAUL
“THE ENDURANT”

What does it mean when we increasingly figure political and ethical demands in terms of survival, perseverance, and endurance? Or alternatively, how do we frame our shared vulnerability, interdependency, and fragility as grounds for new kinds of politics and ethics? From contemporary theorizations of precarity to queer-feminist writings on failure, in the era of accelerating climate crisis and sharpening global inequalities, how do we imagine ‘the endurant’ as a generative figure of critique?

11:30–11:45 BREAK

11:45–1:30 PANEL 2: “SPACES OF CRITIQUE”
Moderator: **REINHOLD MARTIN** (Professor of Architecture, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation)

PETER MINOSH
“ARCHITECTURAL AVATARS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY CITY”

This paper examines a set of radical architectural and urbanistic projects in the wake of the Paris Commune of 1871, arguing that the anarchic conditions of the Commune render an anarchic capacity of architecture legible; specifically, the dissolution of Second Empire institutions and space relations practiced by the Commune foretell a dissolution of Beaux-Arts classicism in the subsequent decade, with architecture serving to continue the project of the Commune by articulating a political territory exterior to the state.

ANA MONTGOMERY & SAM LAW
“BORDER AS CRISIS: SOVEREIGNTY AND BOUNDARY-MAKING PRACTICES IN THE AMERICAN IMMIGRATION CRISIS OF 2014”

This paper explores how the invocation of crisis—such as during the “surge” of unauthorized, unaccompanied minors crossing the U.S.-Mexico border in 2014—is itself a technique of bordering, an affirmation of an always-aspirational sovereignty. At the same time, the concept of crisis naturalizes the structure of a territorial border. Therefore, while the bordering practice of “crisis” figures the border as an imperiled yet concrete and pre-existing boundary, in actuality the coherence of the border as such cannot be understood without this element of peril. There is no border crisis; the border is crisis.

NINA HORISAKI-CHRISTENS
“TOWARD THE VILLAGE: SANRIZUKA AS A RECONSIDERATION OF THE TERMS OF JAPANESE PROTEST AROUND 1970”

Through examining photographs of the Sanrizuka protests in Japan against the construction of Narita airport in 1966, this paper seeks to draw upon intellectual discourses of the late 1960s—including landscape discourse (fukei-ron), debates regarding photographic subjectivity, and the reinvestigation of the village by Minshūshi (people’s history) writers—to elucidate how the image of the village is able to take on a new valence as an alternative site of resistance.

13:30–14:30 LUNCH

14:45–16:45 PANEL 3: “SITUATIONS OF CRISIS”
Moderator: **NADIA URBINATI** (Kyriakos Tsakopoulos Professor of Political Theory and Hellenic Studies, Department of Political Science)

GRZEGORZ SOKOL
“WORKING THROUGH WHAT IS: DEPRESSION AS CRISIS AND CRITIQUE”

The meaning of depression, which emerged in Poland concurrently with the expansion of the market economy, has shifted over time: from a problem born of the inability to adapt to reality, to a healthy response to new reality that is the problem itself. This paper argues that depression has come to hold a critical potential, though it also looks at how it falls short. Ultimately, drawing on Foucault’s notion of veridiction, Barthes’ “reality effect” and Lukács’ analysis of realism, the paper offers a discussion of political and economic transformations in terms of changing modes of producing realness.

EVA BOODMAN
“IMMANENT CRITIQUE AND THE RACE, GENDER AND CLASS VIOLENCE OF MASS INCARCERATION”

This paper looks at how the intersection of gender, race and class violence could be a place from which we can critique mass incarceration in the US, and asks how Marxian immanent critique can help us to think through the structural forces at work in the crisis of the “prison nation.”

EVA VELASCO PEÑA
“BROADCASTING THE CRISIS: SPANISH TELEVISION AS CRITIQUE”

This paper contests understandings of television as a totalizing mass medium by analyzing two sides of contemporary Spanish TV—fiction and politics—and will explore the way that certain programs alternately catalyze critical thought and actions or enable spectators to (following John Ellis) “work through” traumatic events.

16:45–17:00 BREAK

17:00–18:30 Keynote Lecture: CESARE CASARINO
“BEYOND CRITIQUE: SPINOZA, GRAMSCI, BERGSON”
Introduction: **Stathis Gourgouris**

19:30 Dinner for Conference Moderators & Presenters:
BETTONA, 143 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, NY 10027

BIOGRAPHIES

EVA BOODMAN is a PhD student in the Philosophy Department at Stony Brook University, New York.

ERIK BORDELEAU received his PhD in comparative literature at Université de Montréal.

CESARE CASARINO is Professor and Chair of the Department of Cultural Studies and Comparative Literature at the University of Minnesota. He is co-author, with Antonio Negri, of *In Praise of the Common* (2008), author of *Modernity at Sea: Melville, Marx, Conrad in Crisis* (2002), co-editor of *Marxism beyond Marxism* (1996), as well as author of numerous essays on literature, cinema, and philosophy. He is also co-editor of the journal *Cultural Critique*. At present, he is at work on several book projects, on Spinoza and Marx, on Pasolini and Gramsci, on the relation between cinema and biopolitics in Deleuze and in HIV/AIDS artwork, and on an edited volume of contemporary Italian feminist philosophy.

MARC HANNAFORD is a PhD student in Music Theory at the Department of Music at Columbia University, New York.

NINA HORISAKI-CHRISTENS is a PhD student in the Art History & Archaeology at Columbia University, New York.

REINHOLD MARTIN is Professor of Architecture in the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation at Columbia University, New York, where he directs the PhD program in architecture and the Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture. He is a member of Columbia's Institute for Comparative Literature and Society as well as the Committee on Global Thought. Martin is a founding co-editor of the journal *Grey Room*, and has published widely on the history and theory of modern and contemporary architecture. He is the author of: *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space* (Cambridge,

MA: MIT Press, 2003), and *Utopia's Ghost: Architecture and Postmodernism, Again* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), as well as the co-author, with Kadambari Baxi, of *Multi-National City: Architectural Itineraries* (Barcelona: Actar Press, 2007). Currently, Martin is working on two books: a history of the nineteenth century American university as a media complex, and a study of the contemporary city at the intersection of aesthetics and politics.

PETER MINOSH is a PhD student in Architectural History and Theory at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation.

ANA MONTGOMERY & SAM LAW recently received BA's in Anthropology from Reed College, Portland.

IAN ALAN PAUL is a PhD student in Film and Digital Media at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

ABBE SCHRIBER is a PhD student in the Art History & Archaeology at Columbia University, New York.

GRZEGORZ SOKOL is a PhD student in the Department of Anthropology at the New School for Social Research, New York.

GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK is University Professor, and a founding member of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society at Columbia University. Spivak is a leading thinker in the fields of 19th- and 20th-century literature, Marxism, feminism, deconstruction, poststructuralism and globalization. Her numerous influential writings include: *Of Grammatology* (translation with critical introduction of Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, 1976), *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1987; Routledge Classic 2002), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (ed., 1988), *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (1990), *Thinking Academic Freedom in Gendered Post-Coloniality* (1993; 2d ed forthcoming), *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (1993; Routledge classic 2003), *Imaginary Maps*

(translation with critical introduction of three stories by Mahasweta Devi, 1994), *The Spivak Reader* (1995), *Breast Stories* (translation with critical introduction of three stories by Mahasweta Devi, 1997), *Old Women* (translation with critical introduction of two stories by Mahasweta Devi, 1999), *Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet / Imperative zur Neuerfindung des Planeten* (ed. Willi Goetschel, 1999; 2d ed. forthcoming), *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999), *Song for Kali: A Cycle* (translation with introduction of Ramproshad Sen, 2000), *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* (translation with critical introduction of a novel by Mahasweta Devi, 2002), *Death of a Discipline* (2003), *Other Asias* (2005), *An Aesthetic Education in the Age of Globalization* (2012), *Readings* (2014), *Du Bois and the General Strike* (forthcoming). Significant articles include: "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" (1985), "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985), "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), "The Politics of Translation" (1992), "Moving Devi" (1999), "Righting Wrongs" (2003), "Ethics and Politics in Tagore, Coetzee, and Certain Scenes of Teaching" (2004), "Translating into English" (2005), "Rethinking Comparativism" (2010), "A Borderless World" (2011), "General Strike" (2012), "Crimes of Identity" (2014), "Our World" (2014). Spivak is also an activist in rural education and feminist and ecological social movements since 1986.

NADIA URBINATI is the Kyriakos Tsakopoulos Professor of Political Theory and Hellenic Studies in the Department of Political Science at Columbia University. Urbinati is a political theorist in modern and contemporary political thought and the democratic and anti-democratic traditions. She co-chaired the Columbia University Faculty Seminar on Political and Social Thought and founded and chaired the Workshop on Politics, Religion and Human Rights. She is co-editor with Andrew Arato of the journal *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory*. Professor Urbinati is the author of *Representative Democracy: Principles and Genealogy*, and

of *Mill on Democracy: From the Athenian Polis to Representative Government*. She has edited *Carlo Rosselli, Liberal Socialism* and *Piero Gobetti, On Liberal Revolution*. She co-edited with Monique Canto-Sperber *Le socialisme libéral: Une anthologie; Europe-États-Unis*; with Alex Zakaras, *John Stuart Mill's Political Thought: A Bicentennial Reassessment*, and, with Stefano Recchia, *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's Writings on Democracy, Nation Building, and International Relations*. She is co-editing with Steven Lukes *Condorcet's Political Writing*. In addition to book chapters, she has published articles and book reviews in several international scholarly journals, including: *Political Theory*, *Ethics*, *Constellations*, *Philosophical Forum*, *Dissent*, and *Review of Metaphysics* among others. She is currently completing a monograph on the ideology of the anti-political and the critics of democracy.

EVA VELASCO PEÑA is a PhD student in Hispanic and Luso-Brazilian Literatures at CUNY Graduate Center, New York.

COLOPHON

This program has been published on the occasion of: “CRISIS AND CRITIQUE,” an interdisciplinary, graduate student conference hosted by THE INSTITUTE FOR COMPARATIVE LITERATURE AND SOCIETY, held at Columbia University, New York, on April 3–4, 2015.

Moderated by ICLS Faculty: Gayatri Spivak (University Professor, ICLS Founding Director), Reinhold Martin (Professor of Architecture, Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation) and Nadia Urbinati (Kyriakos Tsakopoulos Professor of Political Theory and Hellenic Studies, Department of Political Science).

Presenters: Eva Boodman, Erik Bordeleau, Cesare Casarino, Marc Hannaford, Nina Horisaki-Christens, Peter Minosh, Ana Montgomery & Sam Law, Ian Alan Paul, Abbe Schriber, Grzegorz Sokol and Eva Velasco Peña.

Organizing Committee: Carlo Arrigoni, Sandra Chiritescu, Nicholas Richard Francis Croggon, Irina Denischenko, Tiana Alexandra Reid, Eliza Cushman Rose, Roberto Valdovinos, Manuel Shvartzberg and Amy Zhang.

The Organizing Committee would like to thank: Stathis Gourgouris, Cesare Casarino, Gayatri Spivak, Nadia Urbinati, Souleymane Bachir Diagne, Reinhold Martin and especially Catherine LaSota.

Sponsored by: The Institute for Comparative Literature and Society; Graduate School of Arts and Sciences; Department of English and Comparative Literature; Department of Germanic Languages; Department of Italian; Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures; Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies; Department of Slavic Languages; Center for Contemporary Critical Thought; Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation; Department of Art History and Archaeology; and the Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture.

Design: Robert Milne, Rainoff
Typeface: Bauer Folio, Fabian Harb

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