

# London Conference in Critical Thought 2013

Royal Holloway, University of London

6-7 June 2013

## CALL FOR PAPERS

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

The conference is divided into thematic streams, each coordinated by different researchers and with separate calls for papers, included in this document. We welcome paper proposals that respond to the particular streams below, as well as papers for inclusion in a general stream.

Concerning Bodies

Futures of Deconstruction

Pragmatism and Political Criticism

Feedback Loops of Feminist Thought and Activism

Beyond Identity *and* Critique

Spinozan Politics

The Soul at Work and in Debt

New Sensibilities in the Everyday

Sociocultural Criticism After Lehman Brothers

Critical Theory and Psychoanalysis

Critique, Action, Ethics

On Representation/Non-representation

The New Amateur

New Materialisms

Three Questions for the Emancipation of Latin America

Jean-Luc Nancy in Fragments

Higher Education in Crisis

Touching on broad themes – including the relevance of historical theories today, responses to the crisis, the body, subjectivities, and praxis and action – these streams provide the impetus for new points of dialogue. Central to the vision of the conference is an inter-institutional, non-hierarchical, and accessible event that makes a particular effort to embrace emergent thought and the participation of emerging academics, fostering new avenues for critically orientated scholarship and collaboration.

Please send papers/presentations proposals with the relevant stream indicated in the subject line to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com). Submissions should be no more than 250 words and be received by the **25<sup>th</sup> March 2013**.

<http://londonconferenceincriticalthought.wordpress.com> / twitter: @LondonCritical



## CONCERNING BODIES

Stream organisers: Angela Bartram, Mary O'Neill,  
Becky McLaughlin & Eric Daffron

This stream has two points of focus: firstly, the representation, and ethical implications, of bodies (both human and animal) in visual cultures and, secondly, the account of the body (and body parts) in Lacan and Foucault. Papers are invited that address any of the concerns detailed under these two headings:

### **The Body and Ethics – Dead or Alive**

The body is an important site for analysis of the physical and the social condition. Whether human or animal, the body provides information and experience that communicates what it is to be alive – even in death. This has made the body a source material to be analyzed, scrutinized, dissected, and surveyed in the pursuit of knowledge. The human and animal body has historically been used in medical studies, art education, as a donor material, for reference, and creative practice. The appropriateness of the use of bodies in medical enquiry has historically been sanctioned because it has educational benefit. Could the same level of permission be applied to artistic enquiry? What legislates the appropriate use of the dead body in anatomy and biomedical classes and procedures? What informs the decision that the life room is a place for studies of the live human body only? What ethics govern artistic studies of the socio-physical body in art education and creative practice? We seek papers that discuss the role of critical theory in our understanding of the use of the body in visual culture both historical and contemporary, including, but not limited to:

- somatophobia
- scopophilia
- scopophobia
- dissection
- necrophobia
- taxidermy

### **Body Parts and Partial Bodies; Body Cuts and Cut Up Bodies: Lacanian and Foucaultian Approaches**

Both Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault took the body as an object of critical inquiry but explored it in divergent ways. This panel will bring together scholars working from Lacanian and/or Foucaultian perspectives to interrogate not simply the body but, more specifically, parts of the body. Collectively, the papers selected for this panel will aspire to answer, among other questions: How do Lacan and Foucault cut up the body, what new forms of subjectivity emerge when we pay attention to particular body parts, and how can we bring Lacanian and Foucaultian theory to bear on ethical concerns about the body? Topics for paper proposals include but are not limited to:

- fragmented bodies and bodily decomposition
- mirror stage and self reflection
- self-abuse and body cutting
- disciplined and "docile" bodies
- torture and punishment
- "subindividuals"
- sexuality, sexuation, and oversexed bodies
- "technologies of the self"
- the voice, the gaze, and the fetish
- spanking and other sex games
- amputation and disability
- addiction and obsession, medicine and therapy

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with either 'Body and Ethics submission' or 'Body Parts and Partial Bodies submission' in the subject line.



## THE FUTURES OF DECONSTRUCTION

Stream organisers:

Roberto Yamato & Daniel Matthews

Derrida suggests that to inherit responsibly is to reckon with a certain *irresponsibility*. Inheritance will not have been responsible without the admission of its necessarily partial and compromised nature. Our heritage thus calls for, not only a certain openness but also, interruption and disruption. This stream invites papers that confront the inheritance of Derrida's work and deconstruction more generally. We welcome papers that innovatively engage with Derrida's own work, suggesting new avenues that emerge from a return to deconstruction, as well as papers that assess thinkers that have taken up deconstructive themes and strategies: Catherine Malabou, Jean-Luc Nancy, Bernard Stiegler, Homi Bhabha, Martin Hägglund, Judith Butler *et al*. Furthermore, we warmly encourage papers that are explicitly critical of deconstructive thinking, hoping to stimulate a productive debate about the ongoing significance, dangers and difficulties of deconstruction.

How does deconstruction remain relevant to philosophy, politics and literature today? In a time of (political, economic) crisis what efficacy remains in deconstructive strategies of thought? In what ways might deconstruction be radicalised or transformed to adequately address contemporary concerns? What might be the futures of deconstruction?

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with the subject 'Deconstruction submission'.



## PRAGMATISM AND POLITICAL CRITICISM

Stream organisers:  
Michael Bacon & Clayton Chin

While critical thought, broadly construed, enquires into the nature and limits of political critique, the critical capacities of philosophical pragmatism have yet to be clarified. Is pragmatism a critical philosophy? Or, is it, as some have charged, an “apologetic for the present”?

While pragmatism famously enjoyed a revival in the “neo-pragmatism” of Richard Rorty and Hilary Putnam in the 1980s and 1990s, the early years of this century have seen a second return to the tradition. This more recent turn has witnessed an explicit politicization of pragmatism. Thinkers such as Cheryl Misak and Robert Talisse have offered an “epistemic democracy”, arguing that Charles Sanders Peirce’s account of enquiry as an epistemic process of reasoning provides a model for democratic thought. Conversely, those such as John Stuhr and Colin Koopman have returned to the work of William James and John Dewey to offer an understanding of democracy as a reflective mode of thinking. The imperative here is to understand democracy as an explicitly critical political approach, rather than a merely aggregative mechanism. Thus, in one manner or another, pragmatism is understood to have an intimate connection with democracy as both a political institution and an intellectual and social disposition. Here, pragmatic thinking is democratic and democracy is pragmatic.

This stream seeks to question the critical capacities and political relevance of both this re-revival of pragmatism and of the tradition in general. Is pragmatism critical? If so, of what nature and to what extent? How does it relate to other, self-declared, critical traditions? Further, what is pragmatism’s connection to democracy? Does one entail the other? Finally, to connect these two, how can democracy be construed as an explicitly critical form of thinking?

We invite papers broadly addressing any of these questions. Analyses that engage pragmatism with other traditions (e.g. Continental philosophy, analytic theory, Marxism, etc.) are also very welcome.

**Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with the subject ‘Pragmatism submission’.**



## FEEDBACK LOOPS OF FEMINIST THOUGHT AND ACTIVISM

Stream organiser: Victoria Browne

Over the last few years within feminist theory, there has been growing criticism of what has become the 'hegemonic' model of feminist history (Sandoval 2000). The hegemonic model presents the history of feminism as a progressive series of successive 'phases' or 'waves', with each superseding the former. This severely curtails the ways in which diverse feminist histories and trajectories can be mapped, understood and related to one another, as it implies that only one approach is possible at a time, and moreover, that older forms of theory and practice necessarily become obsolete and must always be overtaken by those more recent. A result of this sequentialist, progressivist logic is that feminist ideas and approaches of even the very recent past are frequently dismissed without being fully considered or explored, as they are presumed to be out-of-date, and thus of no possible use or pertinence to the present or future (Hemmings 2005; 2011).

Accordingly, the aim of the stream will be to try and stage productive encounters, conversations and exchanges between past and present feminisms. The stream will be guided by the Kierkegaardian notion of 'recollecting forwards' and of historical 'feedback loops', echoes and resurfacings (Battersby 1998). Within this framework, the past is understood as unsettled, restive, and persistent, rather than as a closed, completed 'stage' which has given way to an inevitably improved, superior present. This opens up a transformative, strategic historiographical practice, which works through re-activating and re-working forgotten, neglected or disregarded texts, practices and ideas, allowing them to re-emerge, interrupt and inspire current and future discourses and movements.

The call for papers seeks scholars who are re-considering the temporality of feminism, and conducting re-readings of feminist texts and practices from earlier times in light of contemporary philosophical and political problematics: for example, eighteenth and nineteenth-century texts by authors and orators such as Mary Wollstonecraft or Maria Stewart, or movements and texts associated with the so-called 'second wave', by authors and activists like Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, Kate Millett, or Alice Walker. The point is to go back in order to bring some of the insights and ideas from earlier times and places forwards (Weeks 2011); to unblock feminist thought in the present by 'looping back' through the feminist past (Battersby 1989).

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## BEYOND IDENTITY AND CRITIQUE: AN EMERGING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Stream organiser:  
Riccardo Baldissoni

In the course of the last fifty years, Nietzsche's construction of Western thought as a series of recastings of Platonic metaphysics oriented the theoretical work of key authors such as Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida and Latour. On the one hand, this construction questions the logic of identity and it reframes conceptual entities in terms of processes and differential relations. On the other hand, these Nietzsche-inspired approaches do not simply replace rigid conceptual structures with more flexible ones, but they challenge the very framework of representation. Hence, they exceed the horizon of modern thought, both as objective naturalism, and as the Kantian reformulation of theological universality (and predetermination) in terms of transcendental conditions of possibility.

By going beyond the boundaries of representation, these authors allow us to expose modern philosophical and scientific naturalism as the last metaphysical attempt to reveal how things stand. On the contrary, theoretical operators such as Simondon's disparation, Deleuze's difference, Derrida's difference, Latour's irreduction and the more specific Foucauldian subjectification, all provide us with tools for temporarily ordering reality, without recurring to a predetermined set of conditions, structures or schemes.

In more general terms, the ongoing neo-Nietzschean shift from Being to Becoming does not only invite us to radically transform the objects of theoretical activities from entities to processes: it also acknowledges that these very objects, however construed, should not be severed from the practices of their production. As this acknowledgment also shifts the theoretical focus from the objects of knowledge to their processes of production, it bypasses critique's claim of a less obstructed view of its objects, and it opens towards a multiplicity of theoretical practices, which do not necessarily have to converge towards the best possible representation of things.

In turn, the recognition of the performative power of enunciations (and *not* classical idealism's imaginary priority of theory) blurs the boundary between words and things, and grounds the political claim of the engagement of theoretical practices in the manufacturing of reality.

Papers in this stream would ideally focus on last fifty years' theoretical attempts to overcome the constraints of metaphysics in its modern recasting.

Contributors may want to address the work of authors such as Serres, Simondon, Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari, Derrida, Latour, Stiegler and Agamben as the expression of an emerging theoretical framework beyond the horizon of identity and critique. In particular, papers could compare the negative stance of critique with affirmative and propositional approaches such as Latour's composition and Stiegler's positive pharmacology.

Papers may also explore the influence of Nietzsche on recent and contemporary theoretical perspectives. Genealogical contributions to the overturning of Platonism would be welcome.

**Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with the subject 'Identity submission'.**



## SPINOZAN POLITICS

Stream organisers: Filippo Del Lucchese  
& Dimitris Vardoulakis

There is perhaps no philosopher other than Spinoza whose political ideas have given rise to such diverse interpretations. On the one hand he has been heralded as a proponent of the natural law tradition at the foundation of liberalism, and on the other he has been celebrated as *the* philosopher of immanence whose stringent opposition to transcendence does away with a politics of sovereignty.

Despite such diverse interpretation – or maybe because of them – Spinoza’s position in the development of the political structures of modernity remains elusive, even opaque. At best he is argued to exemplify a different modernity or an alternative Enlightenment, and at worst he is ignored from an account of the development of political theory altogether.

In response to these aporias that characterize Spinoza’s political project, the papers in the stream will primarily seek to address two primary problematics:

How can we conceive Spinoza’s position at the foundations and development of modern political thought?

Is a Spinozan politics relevant today? And if so, what would it look like?

In order to address these problematic, the papers may consider some of the following questions, amongst others:

- What is Spinoza’s conception of power?
- How is Spinoza related to other foundational political thinkers of modernity?
- What is the value of the post-Marxist interpretation of Spinoza today?
- Is a politics of pure immanence possible?
- Is it possible to forge a rapprochement between the liberal and post-Marxist readings of Spinoza?

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with the subject ‘Spinoza submission’.



## THE SOUL AT WORK AND IN DEBT

Stream organiser:  
Gregory J. Seigworth

Deleuze, following Spinoza, remarks that one should be concerned not with saving the soul but, rather, finding ways that a soul might live, finding ways that souls might gather up connections and encounters that come to compose a larger movement in common. What pathways and new combinations exist for the soul in this current moment? How are particular pathways being thwarted while others are opened up? In an age where the social field is saturated by brutally economizing logics of every sort, this stream attempts to address how two of the more dominant modes of subjectivation (soul-jection) have come to bleed into each other in intricately complex ways: namely, labor and debt.

As Marx foresaw in his *Grundrisse*, these shifting ontologies around debt and labor have largely transpired through the rise of new forms of technology or machinery and through the mobilization the 'general intellect'. Further, as Marx knew too, the workings of finance capital and the extension of credit serve the interests of social capital so well that they are always poised to exploit the deep-seated moralities that swirl around conditions of indebtedness. Recently, Maurizio Lazzarato, in his *Making of the Indebted Man*, notes that "debt is an economic relation which, in order to exist, implies the molding and control of subjectivity such that 'labor' becomes indistinguishable from 'work on the self'" (p.33). Drawing then from this combination of forces and factors – the role of the technological and machinic, the pathologies and pathways of the collective brain and subjectified soul, and the mobilization of moralities and sensibilities, the presentations of this stream will, with varying emphases, engage with the contemporary matter of the soul caught up in (or caught out of) work and otherwise subsumed in credit-debt relationships.

Papers submitted to this stream could touch upon any of the following topics & questions:

- Debt and finance capital
- Labor (especially with the advent of affective/immaterial labor) and the problem of work
- Moralization and economization
- Machines and/of human-nonhuman relationalities around debt and labor practices
- Subjectivation and formal/real subsumption of life processes
- The affective visceralities of flourishing and austerity that shape potential counteractions
- How does the evolution of ubiquitous and pervasive technologies transform the ways we think of resistance (to the present), especially as regards subjectivity, collectivity, etc?

Finally, consider that Deleuze's brief remarks on 'control society' are now more than twenty years old. Among a host of things, he talks about the brain and new 'cerebral pathways' (in the interview 'Control and Becoming' with Antonio Negri) and, in his 'Postscript' essay, about the fate of trade unions and 'man in debt' (no longer man confined). What has changed about the status of labor and/or debt in such a conceptualization today (now 20 years down the road)? What might critical attention to the brain and/or some notion of the soul bring to such discussions?

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with the subject 'Soul at Work submission'.



## NEW SENSIBILITIES IN THE EVERYDAY?

Stream organisers: Liz Haines,  
Aileen Robinson & Mat Paskins

Art and science are traditionally considered to be activities that allow us to access the sublime, a transcendental state that shifts subjectivities through radical transformation. These journeys and transformations are often aestheticised as heroic.

Although we agree that both art and science can be transformative, we'd like propose a stream that reconsiders the relationship between the everyday and the sublime in that transformational process. Rancière suggests that aesthetics might be "the invention of sensible forms and material structures for a life to come" (*Politics of Aesthetics*, 29). *Proletarian Nights* elaborates an account of how this more usually happens as a re-working of our existing sensible forms and material structures- an amalgamation of working patterns, environmental conditions, and guided practices.

We'd like to invite participants to join us in thinking about subjective transformation in their own practice of everyday life (as de Certeau): seeing the everyday life as a source for the sensible forms of their research, and thinking of research as a form of the everyday. As such we'd like to prompt papers or sessions that think closely about the interaction between the aesthetics of theory and practice, and the material conditions of the development of new sensibilities. **Proposals might take the form of abstracts**, but we would also be delighted to consider to proposals that are **curated film, technical demonstrations, or performance-based**.

- What narratives of the sublime shape research and/or everyday experiences?
- What trajectories of transformation are hoped for- in yourself or in others?
- What kinds of gradual or incremental subjective shifts are possible?
- Are these necessarily political?
- In what ways does the materiality of working practices limit or prompt the possibilities for new political subjectivities?
- How can these new sensibilities best be shared?
- What roles do affect or intellect play in these process of constructing or distributing those sensibilities?

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with the subject 'Everyday submission'.



## SOCIOCULTURAL CRITICISM AFTER LEHMAN BROTHERS

Stream organiser:  
Juan Jose Jimenez-Anca

The bankruptcy in 2008 of the investment bank Lehman Brothers Holdings, sent shockwaves throughout the globe. Its fall is today one of the symbols of a new time of crisis, protest and of tectonic changes in the global economic and political landscape. The financial crisis which started then and the Great Recession which followed have led to heated debates within the discipline of economics about their causes, but also about the accountability of academic practices which facilitated the dispersion of hegemonic economic discourses.

Since 2008, however, some have also started to question the 'economicist' approach to the Great Recession to argue that the financial crisis is part of a wider polymorphic conjuncture. From epistemology to cultural artefacts, from the financialisation of everyday life to political institutions in a neoliberal world, the current global economic crisis has the potential to bring about a paradigmatic shift of priorities and research themes in the humanities and social sciences.

This panel will explore how scholars in the Humanities and Social Sciences have seen their work affected by the implosion of the economic crisis. Topics to discuss may include, but are not limited to:

- Financialisation of Higher Education (with special attention to its impact in the Humanities and Social Sciences)
- Patterns in research funding before and after the financial crisis
- From unthinkable to unavoidable: new/recuperated research themes after the financial crisis
- The place of radical criticism in knowledge economies
- Academic relations between the disciplines: economics, cultural studies, sociology, etc.
- Theoretical frameworks developed in response to economic crises
- Occupy/*Indignados* movements and the Academy
- Political, economic, and sociocultural re-configurations of centre(s) and peripheries

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with the subject 'Lehman Brothers submission'.



## CRITICAL THEORY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Stream organiser:  
Natalia Baeza

Since its inception in the early twentieth century, critical theory has had a close and complex relationship with psychoanalysis. The early Frankfurt School used psychoanalytic theory to supplement Marxian theory with an account of how the ideological superstructure and the socio-economic base of society are mediated, and thus to elucidate how ideology works in advanced capitalism.

The deployment of psychoanalytic and Marxian categories together gave rise to some of the most important ideas of early critical theory: Erich Fromm's defense of a philosophical anthropology in *Marx's Concept of Man*, Herbert Marcuse's attempt to integrate Marxism and Psychoanalysis in a new theory of revolution in *Eros and Civilization*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's critique of Western modernity in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and the Frankfurt Institute's studies on fascism and the authoritarian personality. After Adorno, the deployment of psychoanalytic categories in critical theory has become less common and more controversial. Habermas's early *Knowledge and Human Interest* still looked to an integration of psychoanalysis and Marxism in order to explain the relation between the economy, society, and ideology, but Habermas's later work never returns to psychoanalysis.

More recent works in critical theory have been influenced by Foucault's famous critique of psychoanalysis as itself a tool for the exertion of power in his *History of Sexuality* (vol. 1). Such works use psychoanalytic concepts more to understand how power and domination enter into processes of subjectivation (both in theories that take domination to be inescapable, as in Julia Kristeva's and Judith Butler's work, and in theories that aspire to a society based on reciprocal recognition or love, as in Axel Honneth's and Jessica Benjamin's work). Still, other theorists (e.g., Deleuze and Guattari), while critical of orthodox psychoanalytic theory, nonetheless continue to deploy psychoanalytic categories for a re-conception of how the economic system shapes the individual psyche. So, while the integration of psychoanalysis in critical theory began with an attempt to explain how the *economy* mediates the subject, there has been a trend to move away from a discussion of capitalism to a discussion of power relations – with the exception of Deleuze and Guattari – and yet, in all of these vicissitudes, the intersection between psychoanalysis and critical theory remains both pregnant with possibilities and extremely controversial. The thematic stream on psychoanalysis and critical theory invites reflection on the interaction between these fields. Possible areas of discussion include:

- An interpretation and critique of the impact of psychoanalytic categories on important works of critical theory. Are these interpretations still pertinent today?
- A historical analysis of the relation between critical theory and psychoanalysis. How has the impact of psychoanalysis on critical theory changed over time, and is this a felicitous or a misguided change?
- A critical analysis of the relation between psychoanalysis and political theory: Is psychoanalysis necessary, or even fruitful, for a theory of ideology? Can and should psychoanalysis be reinvigorated in spite of recent critiques (e.g. in Foucault or in feminist theory)?

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with the subject 'Psychoanalysis submission'.



## CRITIQUE, ACTION, ETHICS

Stream organisers:  
Andrea Rossi & Diana Stypinska

In the last century, critique has often been polarized around two diverging ways of conceiving the relation between thought and political change. Whereas a tradition originating in Marx's philosophy has insistently posited the necessity for resistance to be secured upon some form of normative ground, 'post-structuralism' (by which one might understand, generally speaking, a range of approaches inspired by Nietzsche's philosophy) would seem to deny the desirability of pre-ordained plans, privileging instead deconstructive strategies meant to undo the very cultural schemes by which we have come to understand politics and normativity. This stream proposes to frame this well-rehearsed debate by focusing on the relation between 'thought' and 'action' it implicitly articulates. In this respect, the contention between post-marxism and post-structuralism might be conceived of as revolving around the problem of how political ideas might effectively be 'operationalized'. Whereas the former would maintain that critique should be subjected, *ab initio*, to the test and exigencies of social change, the latter would rejoin that only a preliminary problematization of thought could bring about actual transformation. Yet, while the two approaches visibly differ in the question of *how* to bridge the gap between critique and politics, a certain distance or heterogeneity between these two 'spheres' seems to be taken for granted: thought is not action but, at most, a (prescriptive) representation of it. What 'reality', 'action' or 'effectiveness' here stand for, however, often remains unspecified; and so does the relation these conceptual domains entertain with theory.

Starting from these presuppositions, this stream aims at questioning the way in which 'thought' and 'action' have come to be conceptualized, in their mutual relation, as the necessary principles of intelligibility of critique; it further asks what the ethical implications of this conceptualization are or might be. More specifically, it attempts do so by exploring the following kind of questions:

- Is there an unsurpassable incompatibility between post-marxist and post-structuralist conceptions of political change? Could a middle ground be established?
- How have different traditions thought of, posited and operationalized normative principles?
- What is the task of ethics after the 'end of grand narratives'? What has the relation between ethics and normativity become?
- Does the (alleged) post-modern transvaluation of ethics ensue from a reconceptualization of the relation between critique and politics, thought and action? How might such relation be conceived of? Is critique the necessary instrument for action to come into being, or does the former merely re-articulate a field of pre-existing social forces?
- Is there an originary cleft between theory and practice – a gap which critique should be tasked to bridge? Or is the positing of such a gap part of a metaphysics responsible for political closure? Could critique be understood without reference to this dichotomy?
- What constitutes the 'activity' of critique? What, conversely, is said to be the 'criticality' of action?
- Could critique be said to contain – positively, and 'in itself' – a political ethos, regardless of its 'actual' enactment? Is action, conversely, always traversed or permeated by thought?
- How do contemporary forms of political activism reflect the issues posed by the cleft between theory and practice? What modalities of critique (if any) might emerge on the grounds of the new forms of political activism and how do they shape our understanding of ethics?

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with the subject 'Critique Action Ethics submission'.



## ON REPRESENTATION/NON-REPRESENTATION

Stream organisers:  
Matt Mahon & Sam Wilson

The centrality of representation to critical thought – both in terms of representational practices and claims to unrepresentability – is well documented. Its embedding in critical theory permits the branching of representation as a concept-metaphor into aesthetic, philosophical, theoretical and political practices. Representation is a transdisciplinary concept and, as such, thinking through these practices can allow us to address issues of power and criticality. The historical, material and technological conditions by which representation is problematised is a pertinent issue.

What does it mean to be against or beyond representation? We might think of how we ascribe unspeakability and unrepresentability to spaces – spaces uncaptured by cartography, or figurative ‘places’ such as the intangible and immediate aspects of aesthetic experiences, the Lacanian Real or Kristeva’s *chora*. What is permitted to be represented – in an identitarian sense (Butler’s *Precarious Life*) as well as in ontological or sensible terms – can lead us to think the power implications of such circumscriptions.

We should also ask how we might engage in work that aims to operate, practise and perform without representation. Object-oriented and speculative ontology which rejects the primacy of human access to objects; Deleuzian critique of representation as recognition and identity; non-representational artistic practices; DeLanda’s critique of extensive relations between concepts; the non-representational theory of Tarde and Thrift: all are attempts to go beyond representation in practice as well as to define the terms of unrepresentability. The problem of *writing* theory with an aim to move beyond correlation and access is also a pressing concern for this stream.

• Papers which engage with these problems of representation and non-representation are welcomed, including (but not limited to) the following topics:

- The history of non- and un-representational thought
- The historical, material, or technological conditions through which representation is problematised
- Critiques of representation through unspeakability and unrepresentability
- Non-representation and empiricism
- Defence of representational thought
- Power and the political implications of non-representation
- Language and unspeakability
- Performing or practising against representation

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with the subject ‘Representation submission’.



## THE NEW AMATEUR

Stream organiser:  
Lucia Vodanovic

The contemporary financial crisis has given renewed strength to the debates about alternative ways of working, being and making. The notion of ‘autoproduction’ –explored by Patricia Ribault through her work at the Ecole Supérieure des Arts et Design of Reims—for instance, presents a model that brings together design and production (stressing the collaboration with the users –or the co-production—for the creation of singular products); or the global network *Transition* –born in response to the interlinked issues of global warming, lack of financial stability and growing oil prices—works to reintroduce manual work and self-reliance, training different communities to develop more sustainable and local economies. This context has also given a new spin to the discussion about amateur practices, their increasing relevance in the production of material and immaterial goods and their latent challenge to traditional industrial models, yet a straightforward welcoming of ‘amateurism’, DIY culture or ‘pro-ams’ (professional amateurs) as the professional ‘other’ might miss a potentially more fruitful rethinking of modes of production and subjectivity.

This stream invites submissions of papers that address amateur practices in all forms –from garage biology to ‘grassroots’ journalism, from the fictions created by outsider art and amateur photography (which has always ‘happened’ outside the professional) to community endeavours of self-organization—but particularly those which rethink and problematize issues of participation and equality within cultural production, interrogating the apparent position of exteriority usually claimed by some of those practices. Themes and questions might include:

- To what extent and how the contemporary financial crisis has shaped the contemporary discussion of amateurism?
- Amateur practices and economies in all their forms.
- Critiques of ‘amateurism’.
- How do the contemporary practices of ‘amateurism’ stand in relation to the professional realm?
- New ways of thinking industries and models of production as a direct or indirect result of amateur economies.
- Political and corporate appropriation of amateur spaces.
- Collaboration between professional and amateur.
- The potential emancipatory aspects of amateur practices.

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with the subject ‘New Amateur submission’.



## QUESTIONS FOR THE EMANCIPATION OF LATIN AMERICA: THE WORKING CLASS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, THEIR (IN)EXISTENCE AND (NON)PARTICIPATION IN THE COUNTER-HEGEMONIC RECOMPOSITION OF SOCIAL RESISTANCE

Stream organisers: Dasten Julián Vejar  
& Hugo Romero Toledo

In the last two decades the political reality of Latin America has been shaken. The emergence of a structural crisis of global capitalism and the decline of U.S. hegemony, coupled with the action of new actors and social movements, and various political processes that have culminated with reformist governments in the region, have placed into question three decades of economic, political, social and cultural hegemony of the neoliberalism model in the region.

We are calling for papers from researchers interested in the relevance of the working class and social movements in its heterogeneity, history and praxis, as (not) part of these counter-hegemonic processes, their (non) relationship with other social actors, their perspectives and their (non) strategic importance in the development and construction of socio-political alternatives in the region. We want to explore the differences and similarities in the political processes between Latin American countries according to the conditions of social mobilization, the structural discipline, the role of trade unionism, grassroots organizations, civil society organizations and the state institutionalization of social conflict.

The aim is to interpret the trade unions, students, indigenous, environmental, regional movements, among others; to understand their political, economic, labour, productive, cultural and environmental contexts from where they emerge, the possibilities to share a political agenda, their strategies of struggle and negotiation and possible linkages with region and the world.

From these, we want to debate the question of reform or revolution, as part of the Latin American scenario, using frameworks and proposing theoretical challenges to Marxist theory, critical theory, postcolonial theory, political ecology (Peet and Watts, 2004; Robbins, 2012; Gezon and Paulson, 2005), feminist theory (Haraway, 1992; Rose, 2003), ecological economy (Martinez-Alier, among others). But, overall to get to know and to integrate Latin American scholars who are analyzing these political processes from Latin America in order to contribute to the decolonization discussion.

Papers on the following topics, as well as related areas, are welcomed:

- Social movements, social resistances and political system.
- Mega projects, ecological political economy and society.
- Working class, Unions and Labor and political parties in Latin America.
- Neoliberalism, Postneoliberalism and Capitalism Crises in Latin America.
- Identities, culture(s) and the Postcolonial approach.
- Critical Social Theory from Latin America? A New agenda.
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Papers and presentations will be accepted in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with the subject 'Latin America submission'.



## JEAN-LUC NANCY IN FRAGMENTS

Stream organisers: Leda Channer,  
Martin Kratz & Eileen Pollard

Jean-Luc Nancy's body of work is known for its extreme diversity, attracting comment and interest across many disciplines, making a consideration of his body of work particularly effective in generating interdisciplinary discussion.

In order therefore to explore Nancy's diversity and to appeal across disciplines, abstracts for papers for this stream are not requested on a particular problematic but in the broadly defined areas of Community/Politics and Art/Sense, with suggestions for themes for consideration within these.

It is anticipated that these themes will help form the panels, however, due to the scope of Nancy's thought, emergent alternative themes may suggest other possible panel organisations and we will willingly respond to this. With this in mind, we also welcome more general abstracts in response to the stream title of 'Jean-Luc Nancy in Fragments'. Suggestions for themes within the two areas as well as the stream title are as follows:

### Community/Politics

- Nancy's insistence on a distinction between politics and the political.
- The inoperative nature of Nancy's notion of community.
- Nancy's distinctive take on globalization.

### Art/Sense

- Nancy's relation of materiality and sense in the notions of touch and excription
- Nancy's notion of exposition
- Nancy's notion of the plurality of the arts

### Nancy in Fragments

- Reading Nancy outside Philosophy
- Nancy and Deconstruction
- Nancy's interlocutors

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with the subject 'Nancy submission'.



## HIGHER EDUCATION IN CRISIS: CRITIQUING ALTERNATIVES TO THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

Stream organiser:  
Joyce Canaan

Numerous critical authors have recently observed that higher education is: in 'crisis' (Thorpe 2008); under 'assault' (Bailey and Freedman 2011); at its 'end' (Vernon 2010) or 'in ruins' (Readings 1996). These observations capture critical academics' efforts to evaluate how processes of privatisation, marketisation and financialisation have impacted northern and southern university systems during the past 40 years and have led to a nearly 'complete subordination of intellectual life to instrumental values and, most brutally, to the measure of money' (Thorpe 2008).

Recent resistance to government policies on university has taken two forms: student-led demonstrations, occupations and actions and the emergence of 'free' or 'alternative' universities. This stream seeks to explore the latter, less explored alternatives, guided by Brown's (2005:5) observation that the concept of critique comes from the Greek word 'krisis', used to explain the processes of 'judging and rectifying an alleged disorder in or of the democracy'. The contemporary meaning of critique as 'temporal rupture and repair' (2005:7) contains elements of this earlier meaning; it entails and presumes a certain urgency to reconsider and rebuild, or to create an alternative to, that which has been torn asunder. Critique might also benefit from insights from historical materialism. Brown (2005:13), building on Benjamin, notes that the historical materialist reroutes 'by rethinking the work of history in the present, stilling time to open time'. Stilling the seeming inevitability of the trajectory from past to present opens up the present and past to: 'act[s] of reclamation', re-viewing and thereby potentially reworking for a more emancipatory future.

Papers for this stream are thus asked to explore how emergent alternative universities today can be seen to operate as acts of reclamation—and might do so more effectively in future. Questions for consideration include:

- What perceived limits of the public university impel a group to build an alternative?
- Which theoretical and activist traditions inform their project?
- What vision(s) of critical theory and/or historical materialism guide them?
- What understandings of critical education shape their efforts to overcome/avoid perceived limits to the public university?
- What theories of radical pedagogy inform their practices?
- To what degree do insights from social movement theories and practices inform their theories/practices? Contribute to the social movement literature?
- What kinds of spaces do they seek to meet, teach and act in? Why?
- How do they negotiate problems? What theories and practices inform these negotiations?
- What are their strategies for reaching others as teaching and/or researching partners and how effective are they?
- How central is praxis to their project? Why?

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with the subject 'Higher Education submission'.



## NEW MATERIALISMS

Stream organisers:  
Caroline Williams & Edwina Attlee

How might we think creatively about the relationship between body, brain, culture and politics? How can we understand the genesis of the subjective in the context of the complex production of material forms? We welcome papers under two overarching headings – *morphologies of becoming*, and *topologies* – that work at the seam between the material and the immaterial; ideas that take their roots in the uprooting of roots themselves. Handled things, felt substances, the pressed upon and the pressing on. We are interested in tracing the movement across disciplinary boundaries which link the divergent developments in biopolitics and contemporary neuroscience, philosophy and topology. Diverse developments in these fields have led, in recent years, to a series of dialogues which is transforming and transformative. This series of panels will investigate some of the stakes and challenges posed by this new field which is in fact a meeting of fields. It will trace some of the connections between new scientific and mathematic theories and creative modes of thought.

### Morphologies of Becoming

Diverse developments across political and cultural theory, contemporary continental philosophy, and the humanities generally, have led, in recent years, to a fascinating series of dialogues with the transforming, and transformative, field of the natural and life sciences. This cannot simply be characterised as a ‘biological turn’ since the many questions thrown up by this new intra-disciplinary field entail much more than recourse to biology. Already in *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari identified the brain as the junction of three planes: art, science and philosophy. More recently, in *What Should We Do with Our Brain?* Catherine Malabou places developments in neuroscience firmly within the sphere of politics, and emphasises the plasticity of cerebral functioning, whilst Adrian Johnston’s shared philosophical project ties these developments to a psychoanalytic politics and a radical materialism. Works by Bill Connolly, Brian Massumi, John Protevi, and others, have also pushed political thinking towards the realms of neuroscience and complexity theory demanding a new ontology of emergence, and a new series of concepts, for political thinking.

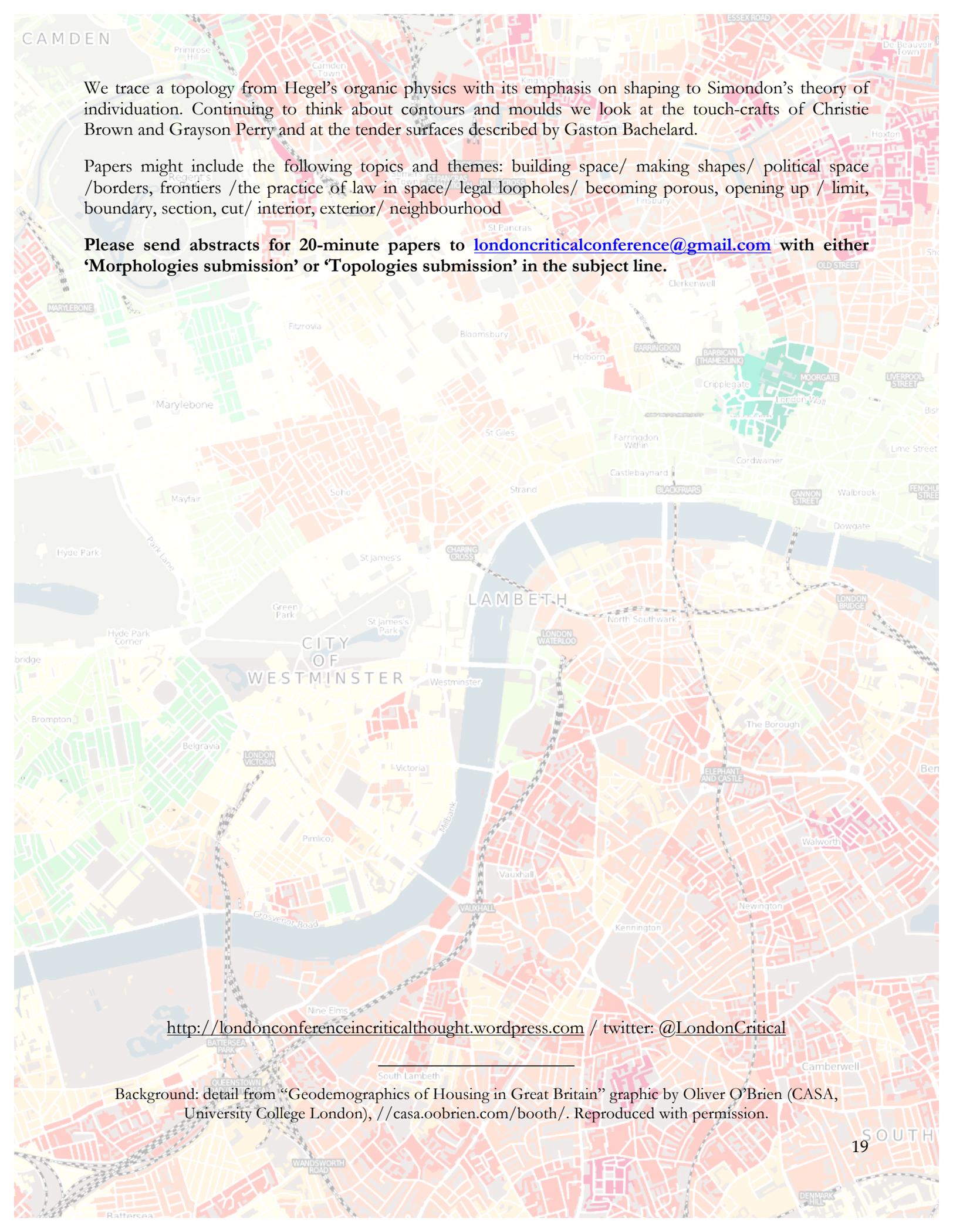
Papers might include the following topics and themes: genealogies of life and the history of (political) philosophy; dialogues between humanities and the life sciences; bodies and the body-politic; plasticity and politics; ideology and affect; the politics of neuroscience; genesis of the subjective; theories of complexity and politics; neuroscience and psychoanalysis. To express an interest in another related topic please contact the stream convener.

### Topologies

“In recent years the application of topological concepts and methods to the study of dynamic systems has led to important advancements in our understanding of some basic aspects of the behaviour of complex phenomena appearing in different domains – material structures, living organisations and cognitive processes.”

– Luis Alberto Oliviera

Topology asks ‘where does the outside commence?’ This mathematical theory of space, the science of continuous formation, has far reaching influences across philosophy, psychoanalysis, architecture and art. It raises questions and troubles definitions of space, connectedness, invariance and transformation. This panel welcomes responses to intrinsic topological scientific issues as well as the implications of these issues for other disciplines. We are interested in the ways in which practical endeavours might attempt to make sense of abstract questions.



We trace a topology from Hegel's organic physics with its emphasis on shaping to Simondon's theory of individuation. Continuing to think about contours and moulds we look at the touch-crafts of Christie Brown and Grayson Perry and at the tender surfaces described by Gaston Bachelard.

Papers might include the following topics and themes: building space/ making shapes/ political space /borders, frontiers /the practice of law in space/ legal loopholes/ becoming porous, opening up / limit, boundary, section, cut/ interior, exterior/ neighbourhood

Please send abstracts for 20-minute papers to [londoncriticalconference@gmail.com](mailto:londoncriticalconference@gmail.com) with either 'Morphologies submission' or 'Topologies submission' in the subject line.

<http://londonconferenceincriticalthought.wordpress.com> / twitter: @LondonCritical

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