

Conceptualizing Difference

Conference (8-9 June 2020) and PhD Summer School (10-11 June 2020)

University of Aberdeen, Centre for Citizenship, Civil Society and Rule of Law

Deadline for submission: 7 February 2020

The idea of 'difference' governs today's political thinking. Struggles for equality and justice are generally concerned with recognizing and protecting differences, not least because varieties of difference, including gender, sexuality, race, religion and language are used to justify political oppression, discrimination and exclusion. Difference has become axiomatic to political debate and therefore requires further reflection and analysis.

This conference aims to explore and interrogate 'difference' as a political category. First, we aim to map categories of difference structuring political life, in past and present, and across and beyond the global North. How and to what effect have categories of 'difference' been fostered historically, debated philosophically and in politics, fought over by social movements, codified in law, transmitted through education and the media, and lived out in everyday life?

Second, we aim to explore more meta-level questions about what 'difference' means in the first place. How did our modern thinking about 'difference' come about? What roads of political thinking does it facilitate, and which does it close off? And can we think beyond 'difference'?

In seeking answers to these questions, we intend to facilitate dialogue between a range of approaches, including but not limited to liberalism, republicanism, Marxism, de- and postcolonial, feminist and queer theories. We invite papers on a wide variety of topics, approaches and disciplines.

Keynotes will include

- Lewis Gordon (University of Connecticut)
- Sabine Hark (TU Berlin)
- Gurpreet Mahajan (Jawaharlal Nehru University)
- Anya Topolski (Radboud University Nijmegen)

The conference at the University of Aberdeen will be followed by a PhD Summer School at a country house in Aberdeenshire. We will discuss PhD work in progress as well as foundational texts on difference. Participants are encouraged to attend both events.

- Prospective conference speakers will normally have a PhD in hand, and are invited to register [here](#) with an abstract of around 200-400 words.
- Applicants for the PhD Summer School should submit their motivation and a short thesis outline via the registration form [here](#).

Accommodation, lunch and dinners are included for all participants. Travel funding up to 200€ is included for PhDs participating in the summer school. Speakers can apply for travel funding up to 250€.

More information can be found on the [CISRUL website](#), on [Facebook](#) and on [Twitter](#).

If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact the organisers, Anna Sophie Lauwers (sophie.lauwers@abdn.ac.uk) and Fredericke Weiner (fredericke.weiner@abdn.ac.uk).

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