



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

Call for Papers

Critical Perspectives and the Perspective of Critique

First biennial post-graduate symposium on Europe at LSE

26-28 April 2023

The European Institute (EI) at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) is delighted to announce the workshop-based conference “**Critical Perspectives and the Perspective of Critique**”. A post-graduate symposium open to PhD candidates and early-career researchers (ECRs), it will take place on the LSE campus in London from 26 to 28 April 2023.

The conference builds on the EI’s and LSE’s enduring engagement with questions of Eurocentrism and its potential ‘beyond’. We encourage submissions that engage with (any part of) ‘Europe’ in a broadly critical vein.

Conference theme

The European continent in many ways remains insecure of its past, present, and future. A succession of (self-diagnosed) financial, migratory, political, and military ‘crises’ over the past decade has led to a European emergency politics that has depicted ‘Europe’ as both deeply desirable and profoundly under threat: In the words of the EU’s foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, it figures as an idyllic “garden”, set against an extra-European “jungle” – and the latter is poised to encroach over the garden walls.

At the same time, decolonial literatures have drawn attention to the ways in which the ‘gardener Europe’ has constituted its own image through the construction of the ‘jungle’. Critical scholarship not only continues to scrutinise the bordering practices that are necessary to uphold the garden walls, it also analyses the techniques of cultivation used to weed out harmful plants and maintain the enclosed garden in its pristine and orderly state.

This symposium invites contributions that engage with any or all aspects of this metaphor: the ‘garden’, the ‘jungle’, or their fertile and messy meeting points at the walls of enclosure. We thus welcome submissions that engage with ‘Europe’ as the *site* of imagined political communities and their attendant patterns of inclusion, exclusion, and contestation; as a *trope* undergirding historical imaginaries and phantasms of progress, or as a *resource* deployed for particular political projects of (dis)empowerment.

Target group and conference format

We invite submissions from PhD candidates and early-career researchers (ECRs). The conference will be divided into three workshops: “**Violence and the politics of memory**”, “**Neoliberalism and the political economy of precarity**”, and “**Secularism and the racialisation of religion.**” Applicants are encouraged to tailor their applications to one of these workshops.

Composed of roughly 10 participants each, these workshops provide attendees with the possibility for a deeper and more sustained engagement with one another’s work. To this end, workshop participants will read each other’s work before the conference; research notes of **2,000-2,500 words** will be circulated among workshop participants no less than two weeks before the conference. During the workshop, each participant will have a chance to present their work for 20 minutes, followed by 40 minutes of feedback from the other attendees.

An accompanying public lecture, as well as informal receptions and an activist forum provide the opportunity for exchange across the three workshops.

Workshop 1: Violence and the politics of memory

National and transnational European politics has come to define the remembrance of past atrocities as a hallmark of progress: with post-Holocaust *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* stylised as the benchmark of a European project of peace and prosperity, calls to memorialise other atrocities – ranging from the Armenian genocide to colonialism – have gained ground and legitimacy in European public spheres. While basing itself on a self-conscious project of *critique*, the resultant politics of recognition and memorialisation also holds out an affirmative promise of a Europe redeemed and re-affirmed in its exceptionality through memory work.

This workshop scrutinises practices of memorialisation and the associated discourses of victimhood, remembrance, and redemption. What – if any – critical potential do these practices (still) hold, as they become part of national and European identity-building projects? Whose experience of violence gets memorialised by whom – and what are the discontents of such a politics of recognition?

Workshop 2: Neoliberalism and the political economy of precarity

Recent literatures have discussed the morphing of neoliberal capitalism of a post-Fordist age into a ‘precarity capitalism’ of the ‘gig economy’ – a generalised socio-economic condition more cross-cutting than previous formations of capitalism founded on more delimited stratifications of class, race, and gender; what Achille Mbembe has referred to as ‘a becoming black of the world’.

This workshop probes this socio-economic formation from an empirical and/or theoretical vantage point. In particular, we encourage submissions that engage the much-posed split between socio-economic and identity-based critique: The workshop provides space to discuss new approaches that bring into conversation critiques of capitalism and of white supremacy. Finally, we also ask what this might imply for the place of ‘Europe’ as an imperial centre in the global political economy.

Workshop 3: Secularism and the racialisation of religion

Recent years have seen a vigorous discussion of interrelated topics on European religion – ranging from the intellectual history of secularism and its rootedness in (Protestant) Christianity, to the dominant role of Christian Democracy in shaping post-WWII European domestic and EU-level institutions and politics, to the contemporary salience of Christianity in anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim identity politics.

This workshop invites submissions that examine aspects and sites of the formative role of religion for contemporary European political landscapes. What is the status of political Christianity in ostensibly ‘secular’ European orders? How, in particular, does religion figure in delineations of whiteness and patterns of racialisation surrounding Islam? And what do these questions imply regarding the critical potential of theology on the one hand – or of critique that is inherently secular on the other hand?

Submission of proposals

Please submit your application by email to critical.europe.conference@gmail.com, attaching your abstract (max. 500 words) as a PDF file. The abstract will outline the research you are planning to present, including your research question, methodology, and (preliminary) conclusions. We encourage the submission of work in progress as well as concluded research projects. Your email should also include the title of your presentation as well as your full name and institutional affiliation.

Application deadline: **Friday, 17th February**

Applicants informed of submission outcome: **Thursday, February 23rd**

Research note deadline for successful applicants: **Monday, 10th April**

Financial support

We welcome applications from outside of London. Limited financial support for travel and accommodation is available through the LSE’s European Institute. To ensure that these funds can be made available to those who require them most, we kindly ask applicants to check with their own institutions regarding possible financial support for travel and conference attendance. If you require financial support from the European Institute, indicate this on your application. Please note that if more financial support is requested than there is available, we will allocate funding on a first-applied-first-funded basis.

We can reimburse up to GBP 150 for second-class/economy travel, as well as up to GBP 100/night for 2 nights’ accommodation in London. Please note that this is an in-person event, and participation via Zoom will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.