

Winter
Academy

2—12 Dec
2015
Berlin

Call for Applications

Beyond History and Identity:

New Perspectives on Aesthetics, Politics, and Society in Eastern Europe

Deadline: 10 July 2015

The Forum Transregionale Studien and the Max Weber Stiftung - Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland in cooperation with the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and the Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder) cordially invite doctoral and postdoctoral scholars from the fields of History, Political Science, Literature, Arts, Cultural Anthropology, Geography, and Sociology to apply for an international Winter Academy that will be convened from **2 — 12 Dec 2015** in **Berlin** titled: “Beyond History and Identity: New Perspectives on Aesthetics, Politics, and Society in Eastern Europe”.

Forum
Transregionale
Studien

Max Weber
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Deutsche
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EUROPA-UNIVERSITÄT
VIADRINA
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International Winter Academy “Beyond History and Identity: New Perspectives on Aesthetics, Politics, and Society in Eastern Europe”

The “Euromaidan”, the Russian annexation of Crimea, and the ongoing war in the Ukrainian-Russian border region of Donbas placed Ukraine, Russia, and all of Eastern Europe at the center of the world’s attention. It also posed new challenges for the interdisciplinary field of East European studies, especially, in light of the continuing strength of the rhetoric of ethnic nationalism and the resort taken to historical explanations of the regional conflicts. Infused with agency, history and identity figure as principle factors in the explanations of the conflict, both in political and academic circles. Yet, we ask whether history and identity bear agency on their own and can be understood and grasped apart from political and economic structural dynamics.

In an attempt to overcome simplifying categories and explanations, we ask how much their essentialization obliterates crucial societal transformations, multiple forms of belonging, and trajectories of social change. Rather than simply discussing the role of history and identity, we would like to reflect upon the complexity and ambiguous nature of entanglements in historically grown condensed spaces of multinational (post-) imperial border regions and search for new vocabularies and insights to grasp diverse trajectories of their political and cultural developments.

The Winter Academy is conducted in support of the Berlin-Brandenburg Ukrainian Initiative, a new project initiated by Andriy Portnov (Forum Transregionale Studien, Berlin) to proliferate and re-think the current debates in the field of East European Studies. The Academy is chaired by a group of scholars that includes **Rory Finnin** (University of Cambridge), **Susanne Frank** (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin), **Ilia Gerashimov** (Ab Imperio), **Olena Haleta** (Ivan Franko Lviv University), **Anna Colin Lebedev** (Sciences Po Paris), **Magdalena Marszalek** (Universität Potsdam), **Andriy Portnov** (ZZF Potsdam/Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin), and **Annette Werberger** (Europa-Universität Viadrina).

The Winter Academy will gather up to 21 doctoral and postdoctoral scholars from different countries and academic backgrounds to present and discuss their current research in an international and multi-disciplinary context. The Academy is designed to support scholarly networks and contribute to closer ties among research activities in and outside of Europe. The program will focus on the following themes: 1) aesthetics and politics, 2) fragmentation and violence, and 3) translation and (un)translatability.

Aesthetics and Politics: The crisis of political systems and the growing mistrust in contemporary practices of governance and rhetoric spark an interest in cultural expression and politics. Artistic interventions often combine local and global symbols and signifiers as to affect and to produce effect. This is why it is necessary to ask what kind of opportunities and limits the languages of art, poetry, film, and other forms of aesthetic expression entail, especially in times of political upheaval and social crisis. Do new forms of expression create a new understanding of the public sphere or the public good? How do popular art and social media change the role and perception of individual artists and intellectuals?

In what ways do cultural forms inflect the political imaginary, and what might be the role of the state, the public, individuals, corporate foundations, and the market in cultural production and its dissemination?

Fragmentation and Violence: Fragmentation, pluralism and violence are often understood as imperial legacies and are presented as the basis, goal, or key challenges for modern state formations. Rarely, however, is the normative basis and relation between them historically evaluated or analyzed in relation to the present. When and how does one discursively and conceptually lead to the other, and what does it mean for political, economic and societal transformations? In relation to historical explanations, how and why should we investigate, search for, and understand the relationship between imperial diversity and the new forms of post-imperial nationalisms and their effects? When do individual agents, power, and economic relations reformulate the processes of identifications and group dynamics? What role does violence play for societal self-organization and grass-roots activism?

Translation and (Un)Translatability: Concepts of history, identity, the nation, and other notions of authenticity often emerge in processes of translation. This why there is a fresh urgency to question the ethics of translation in the context of cultural and political re-orientations. How does translation take place in a globalized world that is based upon references to “local”, “global”, “post-colonial”, or “post-imperial” to derive legitimacies for particular moments and contexts? What are the limits of translation and when does translation take its own form and content? Does the process of translation entail a process of definition, simplification, and distortion that subverts, for example, an intended untranslatability? How do we accommodate untranslatability and negotiate the question of difference in a historical or a present-day context?

Winter Academy Format

The Winter Academy promotes intensive peer-to-peer debates and encourages new perspectives grown from debates in small discussion groups. Participants take active part in contributing to the program structure and content. They present their individual research, co-design thematic discussion groups and are involved in organization of workshops. While most of the intensive work is conducted in intense small-group atmosphere, the Winter Academy also presents its work to the public through general lectures and open panel discussions.

Conditions and Procedure of Application

Participants receive a stipend covering travel and accommodation. The program targets doctoral and postdoctoral researchers who wish to present their ongoing projects in a comparative perspective in relation to the questions raised above. The researchers' work should be clearly relevant to the themes of the Winter Academy. While the focus of the Winter Academy will be the reconsiderations in East European approaches, comparative perspectives on the relation of fragmentation and violence, aesthetics and politics, translation and (un)translatability from other regions are welcome, transregional comparative approaches being especially encouraged.

The working language is English. The application should likewise be in English and consist of:

- a curriculum vitae;
- a three- to five-page outline of the project the applicant is currently working on, with a brief introductory summary thereof;
- a suggestion of two readings relevant for the Winter Academy that you would like to discuss with other participants (please provide bibliographical data only, no copies required);
- the names of two university faculty members who can serve as referees (no letters of recommendation required).

SENT BY EMAIL as ONE PDF FILE by July 10th 2015 to academies@trafo-berlin.de

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The Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien is a research organization that promotes the internationalization of research in the humanities and social sciences. It is dedicated to a research agenda that systematically links disciplinary approaches and the expertise of area studies, by focusing on entanglements and interactions across national, cultural or regional borders. The Forum is supported by the Berlin Senate.

The Max Weber Stiftung - Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland promotes global research, concentrated around the areas of social sciences, cultural studies, and the humanities. Research is conducted at ten institutes in various countries worldwide with distinctive and independent focal points. Through its globally operating institutes, the Foundation is able to contribute to the communication and networking between Germany and the host countries or regions of its establishments.

For more information please see:

www.forum-transregionale-studien.de

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