Call for Contributions

**What’s happening to cultural studies?**

**Centre for Memory, Narrative and Histories (CMNH) -** University of Brighton

14-16th September, 2022

This conference intends to promote a conversation about cultural studies: its current shape, the forces that have shaped it, and its possible futures.  It will be a hybrid conference, with in-person and remote participation.

Rather than assuming a singular proper form of cultural studies operating globally, the conference will try to balance the task of recognizing the multiplicities of cultural studies with that of understanding the changing and increasingly contradictory place of cultural studies in the academic world.  One might think of this as an effort to begin a cultural studies analysis of cultural studies itself in the present conjuncture.

This does not mean that we want to treat cultural studies as an isolated and purely academic object. Rather, we wish to find ways of recognising and reckoning with the constitution and role of the university in cultural studies work today, in teaching, in employment practices, in research and in (scholarly) publishing.

Consequently, we are keen to provide a space for people to step back from the specificities of their own research to take a broader look at intellectual work in cultural studies, and at what is happening to it. We want to generate a conversation about cultural studies *per se*. We welcome contributions from those who want to present their own work in ways which serve to open up the larger questions of the state of cultural studies. We want to explore the contextuality of cultural studies as a multifarious discipline, its variations and affordances. We are interested in critically exploring the conditions of its various possibilities, impossibilities, and transformations with an eye to figuring out what works, what does not and why.

As a whole, the conference aims at building critical perspectives to understand the institutional and political conditions of cultural studies today. It will explore the cultural studies project in its practical and theoretical heterogeneity. Finally, it will work to imagine the possibility of a creative and productive future for the project.

In order to promote conversation and collective thinking, we will not follow a traditional conference format. We have instead designed a structure governed by three themes, each of which will be addressed on one of the conference’s three days. Each of these days will begin with an opening panel which identifies fundamental questions and struggles. These will be followed by further contributions devoted to the theme broached in that panel. To avoid ending up with a de facto separation within the larger conversation of the whole, we will avoid parallel panels.

Amongst those who have already agreed to participate are Lawrence Grossberg, Shakuntala Banaji and Jeremy Gilbert. We are particularly keen to hear also from those at the start of or at an early stage in their scholarly work on cultural studies.

The three overarching themes, and the three corresponding days of the conference, are as follows:

**Day 1: What is cultural studies?**

* Is there a shared project of cultural studies – e.g., conjunctural analysis – manifested in its many different formations?
* If so, is this project still providing some defining and unifying sense of what differentiates cultural studies from other intellectual/political projects?
* Is there a differential geography to these discussions, changes and challenges?
* What are the challenges of new theoretical resources for cultural studies?
* Where is cultural studies flourishing and what are the conditions of possibility?

**Day 2.  What are the institutional conditions of the current state of cultural studies?**

* The changing economies, structures and priorities of the academy in the contemporary cultural and political landscape – with a particular focus on:
  + Disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity
  + Employment opportunities (who gets employed/where do they get employed)
  + What gets published as cultural studies
  + What gets taught as cultural studies.

**Day 3: Does cultural studies still matter? What is it good for today?**

* What might the future of cultural studies look like? What can be done?
* How are the groups – and respective cultures – that practice cultural studies constructed, composed, maintained, challenged, changed, and even replaced? Who are their real actors and which powers do they impose and consent to?
* Has cultural studies lost its way or is it flourishing by transforming itself in response to the specificity of the contemporary conjunctures, and the increasing demand for academic specialisation?

If you would like to be involved, please contact culturalstudies@brighton.ac.uk **by May the 31st 2022,** with an indication of which ‘theme’ you would like to participate in, and an abstract (of up to 300 words) for how you will do so. We welcome various forms and media of contributions.

When sending your abstract, please express a preference for either in-person or remote participation. Please also append a short bio to your abstract.

Following the conference, participants will be invited to contribute to edited publications exploring arguments about the state of cultural studies today and its possible futures.



The conference organizing committee:

Cristina Moreno Almeida (King’s), Maria Manuel Baptista (Aveiro), Tom Bunyard (Brighton), Lawrence Grossberg (UNC), Suzanne Leonard (Simmons), Toby Lovat (Brighton), Patricia McManus (Brighton), Marco Solaroli (Bologna), Anna Zsubori (Loughborough)