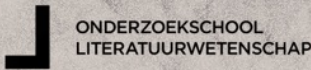


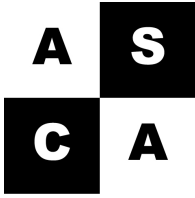
# (UN)TIMELY CRISES

Chronotopes  
and critique

Supported by  
Netherlands Research School for Literary Studies  
Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM



ONDERZOEKSCHOOL  
LITERATUURWETENSCHAP

## Description

This 2-day workshop will probe contemporary crisis-scapes in order to explore the ways ‘crisis narratives’ structure experiences and representations of *time* and *space*, i.e., the ways ‘crisis’ as a framework, concept, rhetoric, affective or discursive structure forms or taps into specific *chronotopes*.

Historically, the term ‘crisis’ has denoted choice, decision, judgment or critique; it can signal a turning point but also a perpetual state without prospect of resolution. Discursive uses and experiences of ‘crisis’ may involve a sense of disconnection and disorientation, collapsing linear temporality. Crisis can also function as an immobilizing framework for regions deemed to be in chronic crisis. ‘Crisis’ in Europe and elsewhere today often becomes an instrument of rule in neoliberal governmentality, legitimizing ‘states of emergency’ that limit people’s rights and access to public space. Crisis-scapes, however, can also trigger a heightened awareness of the present and foster critical or creative practices that question received notions of the past, initiate different conceptions of history and futurity or form alternative communities and infrastructures.

By approaching crises as *chronotopes*—what Mikhail Bakhtin termed the enmeshing of temporal and spatial experience into a common condition of a given era—we seek to explore questions of crisis, time and space, as experienced, imagined and represented across a range of contexts, and particularly in Europe and its margins. Chronotopes of crisis partake in complex constellations of meanings, discourses, and affective structures that call for interdisciplinary engagement. The workshop will thus combine perspectives from literary and cultural studies with sociology, cultural anthropology, memory studies, migration studies, post- and decolonial studies, and the energy and environmental humanities, to consider how recent and contemporary crises—economic, environmental, social, political, humanitarian—trigger memories of earlier historical narratives, traumas or practices of resistance, and how they foster or foreclose specific visions of the future.

We are also interested in the ways alternative narratives—what Janet Roitman has called “noncrisis” narratives (2013)—that sidestep ‘crisis rhetoric’ may form alternative chronotopes in the present. Through exploring crises as chronotopes, the workshop also aims to revisit the relation of “crisis” with its cognate, *critique*, in order to ask which narratives or practices could effectively address problematic

mobilizations of 'crisis' today and shape other, more inclusive, chronotopic structures. To that end, emphasis will be laid on literary narrativizations of 'crisis' as a means of disrupting or reconfiguring the chronotopic structures involved in contemporary crisis-scapes.

The workshop will thus 'think through' how the study of crises as chronotopes can take shape across diverse disciplinary contexts and critical debates (e.g., in the context of debt and economic crises; in rethinking infrastructures and repair; in (re)tracing and conceptualizing memory-scapes emerging in crisis-situations); and how crisis figures or disfigures the ongoing question mark about the fate of critique in a postcritical world.

The talks, discussion, and writing that will take place during the workshop will be organized around the **following thematic streams:**

- **Crisis Rhetoric and Alternative Grammars:** Dominant representations of subjects of/in crisis (e.g. the tropes of the "victim" or "threatening agent" in the 'migrant crisis') often fall short of accounting for dispossessed individuals and their experiences. Which 'grammars' can help articulate alternative subjectivities and accounts of agency? Which expressive forms, narrative structures, and reading practices can articulate alternatives to the "slow cancellation of the future" (Berardi, Fisher) and disrupt restrictive or violent chronotopes of crisis?
- **Crisis and Memory:** How are the periods of revolution and eventful socio-political transformation remembered in current times? This stream will address the ways in which 20<sup>th</sup>-century global historical junctures are recollected in political rhetoric, projects of memorialization, critical discourses, and artistic productions. It will explore the temporalities and cultural sensibilities shaped through these interpretations of turning points. How can past crises be imagined beyond narratives of traumatization which have spread globally, producing subject positions of victimhood and moral superiority? Which critical approaches to remembering crises could foster 'redistribution of the sensible'?
- **Critique Under Duress:** What is the role of critique and radical critical theory in times of crisis? Rather than decrying an "end of theory", the theme aims to rigorously engage with the Frankfurt School, opening it up to the concerns of postcolonial, decolonial (Allen 2016), and environmental theory and its theorizations of the present in crisis. If critique aims to historicize the present, which periodizing schemes have helped bring the contemporary into relief, such as Ernst Mandel's "late capitalism," Elizabeth Povinelli's "late liberalism," or Eugene Stoermer and Paul Crutzen's "the Anthropocene"? And which no longer bring descriptive or diagnostic weight to the structures of feeling folding in on the changing climate of crises (and crisis of climate) today? In this context, we will take up the task of trying to 'think otherwise'

and challenge, in Ann Stoler’s gloss, some of the “ready-made concepts on which we rely and [the] work we call on them to do.” As such, the theme, among others, aims to work across meanings of duress (Stoler 2016)—as “a relation to a condition, a pressure exerted, a troubled condition borne in the body, a force exercised on muscles and mind”—and conceptualize what can critique *be* and *do* across shared, yet asynchronous, crises.

- **Chronic Crisis:** This theme addresses instances where crisis becomes chronic. It asks how the duration and integration of the disruptive and the normal reorient our engagement with past, present, and future as it affects modes of anticipation, waiting, and endurance. Crisis and uncertainty can produce what Rebecca Bryant (2016) has termed the ‘uncanny present’, disrupting the possibility of imagining and acting upon the future. When and how do crises, including illness and economic and environmental crises, fade into chronicity and normality, and what futures does this enable or foreclose? How do we continue living in the face of chronic disruption and finitude?

## Workshop format

The format for this event aims to facilitate collaboratively generated output. Instead of sharing finalized research in a traditional conference format, our primary aim is to establish key concepts, questions, and frames for interdisciplinary research on crisis across the humanities and social sciences. This will unfold across the following structures during the 2 days of the workshop:

### Day One (October 17)

#### Plenary Talks and discussion

The program of Day 1 is open to a wide academic public.

#### Speakers

- **Rebecca Bryant** (Utrecht University)
- **Nick Nesbitt** (Princeton University)
- **Dimitris Papanikolaou** (University of Oxford)
- **Oxana Timofeeva** (European University in St. Petersburg)

### Day Two (October 18)

This part of the workshop will involve the plenary speakers as well as a group of **invited scholars that will form reading and writing groups**. The main objective will be to start co-writing a collective text on the present and future of crisis research, focused on the thematic lines of the workshop, to be submitted to an open access journal.

The **reading groups** on Day 2 will discuss selected pre-circulated articles and set

the ground for moving to the writing groups with a shared sense of the major positions, debates, and findings brought together under each thematic heading.

**In the second part of the day**, the groups will engage in **collaborative writing**: each group will start composing a document on each thematic stream.

This workshop is organized by members of the following networks: the [ASCA Cities project](#) and its “Repairing Infrastructures” seminar, the ASCA research group “[Crisis, Critique and Futurity](#),” the “[Memory and Identity](#)” reading group at the Leiden University Centre for the Arts in Society (LUCAS), and the “Anthropology of Health, Care and the Body” program group of the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences at the UvA.

### **Registration and credits**

The lectures on the **first day of the workshop** are open to anyone who wishes to attend. Research Ma students and PhD candidates who wish to earn 1 EC by participating in this workshop should register through OSL. Those who wish to attend the lectures without earning EC credits are welcome to do so and do not have to register through OSL. OSL members will have first access.

*NB: It is not possible to register for the second day of the workshop, which will only involve a smaller group of invited scholars.*

OSL RMA and PhD students can acquire 1 EC by:

- Attending the first day of the workshop and participating actively in discussions
- Reading a set of theoretical texts related to the workshop theme that will be circulated in advance
- Writing a 600- to 800-word response to one of the discussion questions or topics that will be circulated in advance

**For more information, see**

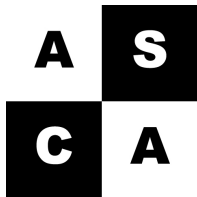
<https://www.oslit.nl/%E2%80%AAuntimely-crises-in-europe-and-beyond/>

OR

<https://aihr.uva.nl/content/events/events/2019/10/untimely-crises.html>

or contact the organizers





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## Workshop Program

### (Un)timely Crises: Chronotopes and Critique

October 17-18, 2019

#### Locations

Day 1: Oudemanhuispoort (Oudemanhuispoort 4-6; 1012 CN, Amsterdam)

Day 2: Belle van Zuylenzaal (UB=University Library)

Vondelzaal (UB)

Potgieterzaal (UB)

All rooms for day 2 are at the University Library:

University Library Singel

Singel 425; 1012 WP Amsterdam

#### Supported by

**OSL** (Netherlands Research School for Literary Studies)

**ASCA** (Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis)

#### Organized by

**Maria Boletsi** (Leiden University and University of Amsterdam)

**Natashe Lemos-Dekker** (University of Amsterdam)

**Kasia Mika** (Queen Mary, University of London)

**Ksenia Robbe** (University of Groningen)

### Day 1: October 17

**Venues:** 9:30 – 12:00: D0.08 (Oudemanhuispoort)  
12:00 – 17:10: D1.08 (Oudemanhuispoort)

9:30 – 10:00 **Registration and Coffee**

10:00 – 10:20 **Welcome by OSL director and introduction by organizers**

10:20 - 11:30 Lecture by Rebecca Bryant & discussion  
(location: D0.08)

Chair: Natashe Lemos Dekker

11:30 - 12:00 **Coffee break**

12:00 - 13:10 **Dimitris Papanikolaou, “Past Continuous, Archival Present, Queer Future: Rethinking Our Critical Grammars”**

(location: D1.08)

Chair: Maria Boletsi

13:10 - 14:10 **Lunch** (at the hall of Oudemanhuispoort)

14:10 - 15:20 **Nick Nesbitt, “Crisis and Critique”**

(location: D1.08)

Chair: Kasia Mika

15:20 - 15:40 **Coffee break**

15: 40 - 16:50      **Oxana Timofeeva, “The Time of Catastrophe”**  
(location: D1.08)  
Chair: Ksenia Robbe

16: 50 - 17:10      **Closing remarks**

## Day 2: October 18

(NB: Day 2 is only open for a small number of invited participants; it is not open to the public or to those registered through OSL)

The parallel group meetings will take place in the University Library, in the following rooms:

Belle van Zuylenzaal  
Vondelzaal  
Potgieterzaal

### Theme groups

10:00 - 12:00      **Theme group meetings I: Discussion of readings**

12:00 - 13:30      **Lunch break (at Belle van Zuylenzaal)**

13:30 -15:30      **Theme group meetings II: Collaborative writing**

16:00-17:00      **Final discussion & next steps**

### Additional Information

Google Directions

Day 1:

-from Amsterdam Centraal Station to Oudemanhuispoort (15min walk):

<https://goo.gl/maps/MAUb3FTZy5oBRHGY6>

Day 2:



-from Amsterdam Centraal Station to the University Library (20 min walk):  
<https://goo.gl/maps/vKvHTckb55NGj4qX6>

## Abstracts

**Rebecca Bryant**

### **Ignoring Crisis: Willful Blindness and Climate Change**

What does climate change denial tell us about what we understand as crisis? What does it tell us about the ways that certain moments emerge as, or are constructed as, crisis? What can the idea of chronotopes tell us about the lives of those who view climate change as a crisis and those who deny it? The presentation will focus on what many of us view as an undeniable crisis to think about the ways that chronotopes shape action.

**Nick Nesbitt**

### **Crisis and Critique**

If Hegel tells us that the owl of Minerva flies at dusk, and, in any case, perhaps only hindsight is 20/20, how to orient oneself in the moment of crisis, to sustain critique in the face of the siren songs of ideology and disinformation?

**Dimitris Papanikolaou**

### **Past continuous, archival present, queer future: Rethinking our Critical Grammars**

With two examples in mind: the ten years of “the Greek Crisis”, and the sociocultural mnemonics of the HIV/Aids crisis, this paper returns to the question of non-normative and queer time, and traces its potential articulation as a genealogical, cultural and political project

**Oxana Timofeeva**

### **The Time of Catastrophy**

The paper discusses the structure of time that is different from the one that moves from the past to the future, from the beginning to the end. One may call this time the time of the end, or the time of apocalypse, but also the time of desire, or dialectical time (retroaction).