SciencesPo
ECOLE DOCTORALE
CEVIPOF

7th GRADUATE CONFERENCE
POLITICAL THEORY

CROSSROADS OF CRITIQUE

AXEL HONNETH AND THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL PROJECT

Keynote address
AXEL HONNETH

Plenary Speakers
Katia Genel
Daniel Loick

6-8 June, 2019
Paris, France

Initial painting: Paul Klee
Horizon, Zenith and Atmosphere

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SCIENCES PO 7TH GRADUATE POLITICAL THEORY CONFERENCE

Crossroads of Critique: Axel Honneth and the Frankfurt School Project

We are happy to announce that the **Seventh Sciences Po Graduate Conference in Political Theory is going to take place at Sciences Po, Paris, 6-8 June, 2019.**

We welcome contributions from graduate students of political theory across the board and intend to accommodate various approaches (analytical, historical, normative, and critical) as well as contributions from related disciplines (philosophy, social theory, etc.). We also aim at geographic diversity, in that we shall try to foster a substantial academic dialogue between young political theorists from Europe and their peers across the world. Over recent years, the Sciences Po Graduate Conference has established itself as one of Europe's foremost venues for an international exchange of ideas among graduate students in political theory.

The 2019 Conference will be dedicated to the work of **Axel Honneth (Frankfurt/Columbia University, director of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt)** as well as to a reappraisal of the "Frankfurt School project" of critical theory at today's political juncture. Professor Honneth will be present to deliver the keynote address and join participants for discussion.

Katia Genel (Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne / Centre Marc Bloch Berlin) and **Daniel Loick** (Center for Humanities and Social Change, HU Berlin), two prominent scholars from within the Frankfurt School tradition, will attend the conference as plenary speakers and can offer feedback on papers.

Over the last three decades, Axel Honneth has played a crucial role in giving new life to the post-Kantian tradition. As the leading voice of the Frankfurt School after Habermas, his work has been responsible for renewed interest in critical theory. His early engagement with Foucault, followed by his turn to Hegel's notion of recognition for a new social theory, his reworking of the concept of reification, as well as more recent recent works on the institutional conditions of a "democratic ethical life" following Hegel and, finally, Honneth's reappraisal of "social freedom" as the normative idea of the socialist tradition

constitute only some of the most remarkable contributions he has made to contemporary theorizing.

The conference panels will hence be built around the following themes (subject to modification on the basis of submissions):

- The reception of Axel Honneth's work in France and elsewhere
- Recognition vs. redistribution, engagement with the Frankfurt School's Marxist heritage, the role of social classes, the concept of reification
- Recognition and difference, recognition and power, feminist interventions, queer critiques of recognition, decolonial theory, critical race theory and the Frankfurt School
- Normative foundations of critical theory
- Futures of the Frankfurt School: critical potential of the Frankfurt School project for the 21st century, recent work from within the Frankfurt School tradition

I. In light of Honneth's rich philosophical *parcours*, the Graduate Conference sets itself four primary objectives. First, it is intended to bring together young theorists from around the world whose research touches upon the themes of critical theory, giving graduate students the opportunity to present their work. The conference calls upon graduate students to reflect on the "Frankfurt School project" as still central to contemporary modes of a critical theory that aim to be "not merely an expression of the concrete historical situation but also a force within it to stimulate change." (Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," 1937). We therefore welcome papers that confront the **philosophical foundations of normative political theory** as "a human activity which has society itself for its object." (Horkheimer)

In the spirit of Axel Honneth's work, we hope to contribute to a renewed interest in the Frankfurt School project as a mode of theorizing that is normatively committed to autonomy as social freedom, while building on conversations with other traditions that either seek different routes of grounding normativity (from Kantian liberalism to social psychology) or question the need for such a normative foundation altogether (e.g. French Theory, postfoundationalist theory). Simultaneously, taking up the Frankfurt School project should entail a reflective engagement with empirical research; hence, we encourage contributions that discuss theory in the context of practical experiences, and vice versa.

II. Secondly, the conference is designed to **critically respond to Axel Honneth's work** in the presence of the author. What changes has Honneth's thinking undergone over the last three decades? Can different periods of his work be brought into conversation (e.g. early work on the notion of power with his most recent writings on socialism)? What political conclusions or creative appropriations does Honneth's *The Struggle for Recognition* (1992) permit today? How does Honneth's position vis-à-vis other generations of the Frankfurt

School speak to the larger project of critical theory? What limitations does Honneth's thought have to confront, conceptually and politically?

III. Thirdly, we would like to especially welcome papers that engage with the **French and, more generally, international reception of the Frankfurt School and the work of Axel Honneth** in particular. What are the routes by which it has travelled? What dialogues have taken place in different geographical and political spaces? We would be interested in subjects such as the French exile of members of the Frankfurt School's first generation as well as theoretical engagements with prominent French contributions and/or critical responses to Frankfurt School theory (by scholars such as Miguel Abensour, Catherine Colliot-Thélène, Jean-François Kervégan, Yves Sintomer, Franck Fischbach, Emmanuel Renault, or Estelle Ferrarese). Finally, we are hoping to build on the most recent debate between the thought of Axel Honneth and that of Jacques Rancière: an encounter that one of the conference plenary speakers, Katia Genel, has helped to bring about and greatly contributed to, together with Jean-Philippe Deranty (*Recognition or Disagreement*, 2018)

IV. As a fourth axis of reflection, we invite engagements with the critics of Axel Honneth's work in light of the ongoing **debate on the future of the Frankfurt School project**. The critical engagement with Honneth's thought includes itself some of the most important contributions of contemporary political theory. Beginning with the groundbreaking debates with Nancy Fraser (*Recognition or Redistribution?*, 2003), Honneth has had the chance to grapple with sophisticated challenges, sometimes significantly reworking his thought in response. We would highlight the work of Fraser, Judith Butler, Charles Taylor, and Seyla Benhabib as well as recent contributions from within the Frankfurt School in Germany, such as those by Rahel Jaeggi, Hartmut Rosa, Rainer Forst, Christoph Menke, or Daniel Loick, who will be present as plenary speaker at the conference and respond to papers. Finally, we are particularly interested in a dialogue with the perspectives of decolonial and critical race theory, Marxism, as well as queer theory, including but certainly not limited to the important contributions by Patchen Markell (*Bound by Recognition*, 2003) and Amy Allen (*The End of Progress*, 2016).

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Information for Participants

Only graduate students who have not defended their PhD are eligible. Each two hours-long session of the conference will concentrate on two to three papers and will be chaired by a Sciences Po doctoral student. Presentations will be followed by a Q&A session open to the public.

Breakfast, lunch, and refreshments will also be provided for the duration of the conference. Unfortunately, Sciences Po will not be able to provide funds for housing and transportation.

The organizing team intends to submit a collection of select papers for publication in an edited volume following the conference.

Submission Information

Please send us:

- An abstract of your proposal in PDF format, prepared for blind review (maximum 500 words)
- A separate document, mentioning your name, the title of your proposal, and your institutional affiliation.

Please note:

- **The submission deadline for proposals is March 18, 2019**
- All proposals should be sent to graduateconference@sciencespo.fr.
- Proposals and final papers should be written in English or French, which are the two working languages of the graduate conference.

Selection procedure

- Political theory students from Sciences Po Doctoral School will select approximately 20 proposals on a blind basis.
- The selected participants will be notified of their acceptance by April 20, 2019. All the other proposals will be acknowledged.

Organizing Committee: Juliette Faure, Niklas Plätzer, Léna Silberzahn

For any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at:
graduateconference@sciencespo.fr