

The Centre for the Study of Theory & Criticism at Western University
2024 Annual Theory Conference
**Reapproaching Walter Benjamin:
The Task of Theory Today**
CALL FOR PAPERS

Submission Deadline: January 15th, 2024

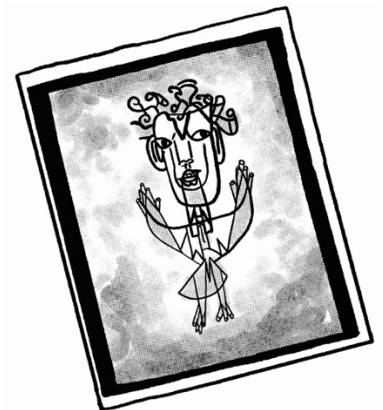
We are pleased to announce the in-person 2024 Annual Theory Conference, hosted by The Centre for the Study of Theory & Criticism at Western University from **Friday, 19 April – Saturday, 20 April 2024**.

The historian capable of fanning the spark of hope, for Walter Benjamin, is a historical materialist. Distinguishing between Materialist historiography and historicism, Benjamin praises the former, as it ruptures the continuity of history and dares to redeem both past and future. If historicism is in the service of the victor, the task of the historical materialist is to uncover forgotten traditions of the oppressed. However, this work is not simply remembering the past; it is critically reconstructing and arranging the given in the "Jetztzeit," thus creating and producing meanings and, finally, newly experiencing. In this context, Benjamin unfolds his theory from the position of a historian, a philosopher, a critic, a creator, or none of the above. With these thoughts in mind and many more, this graduate conference re-visits Benjamin, re-approaching his legacy through the vexed questions of contemporary theory. *Namely, what is the task of theorists today?* How has theory changed under late capitalism since Benjamin's own critiques? Do Benjamin's writings (or those inspired by him) offer ways to overcome the atomization and alienation of the neoliberal subject? In a nutshell, what is the applicability of Benjamin for a new generation of theory?

Benjamin offers a historically situated form of critique that produces experience as a "multiplicity of knowledges" to critically address our present. In keeping with the task to engage our present moment from a multiplicity of knowledges, we invite papers and presentations, regardless of discipline, that engage Benjamin and contemporary theory.

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Benjamin's concept of Messianic violence in contemporary debates
- "Aura" and its relevance today
- De- and post-colonial applications of Benjamin's thought
- Benjamin's creativity of the melancholic state
- The work of art and the art of work
- Literary Criticism and the poetics of translation
- Theology and Jewish mysticism
- Radical figures today: "The destructive, the collector, or the flaneur"
- Benjamin's special brand of Marxism
- The philosophy of History
- Benjamin's continued relation to the Frankfurt School
- The Arcades Project, architecture & the metropolis
- Capitalism and the Culture Industry
- Alienation and Redemption today



- The legacy of Modernism
- Developments/Reproduction in Film and Media compared to the 20th Century

The Annual Theory Conference endeavours to cultivate a forum for diverse engagement from graduate students and scholars with a broad range of backgrounds and approaches. This year we are seeking work that contributes to Benjamin's heritage and participates in critical debate across philosophy, politics, media, arts, literature and all other relevant disciplines.

Submission Instructions:

Submissions will undergo anonymous review. Please submit proposals as a .docx or .pdf file to cstc-conference@uwo.ca. Accepted candidates will be notified by email. Please submit:

1. A cover page that includes: the title of your proposed presentation, your name, affiliation(s), email address, a brief (150-200 word) bio, and 3-5 keywords for your presentation
2. A *separate* document that includes: the title of your presentation and an abstract of 150-200 words describing the intentions of your presentation.

All selected presenters will be additionally invited to revise and submit their paper, post-conference, to be considered for publication in a Special Issue of the CSTC's international journal, *Chiasma: A Site for Thought*.

Thank you to all who apply!



Conference Committee
2024 Annual Theory Conference
cstc-conference@uwo.ca

The Centre for the Study of Theory & Criticism
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We acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabek (Ab-nish-in-a-bek), Haudenosaunee (Ho-den-no-show-nee), Linaapéewak (Len-abpay-wuk) and Chonnonton (Chun-onk-ton) Nations, on lands connected with the London Township and Sombra Treaties of 1796 and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This land continues to be home to diverse Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) whom we recognize as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors of our society.