

CRITICAL TIMES 2024
UN/SEEN
SUMMER SCHOOL
UNIVERSITY OF LUCERNE
3-7 JUNE 2024



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Un/Seen

Summer School

University of Lucerne, 3-7 June 2024

In his 2011 book *The Right to Look*, Nicholas Mirzoeff offers a compelling account of visuality as an “old word for an old practice”, whereby “domination imposes the sensible evidence of its legitimacy” (Mirzoeff 2011). As an exertion of authority over ‘looking’, visuality is not just about images and their meanings, or about the circuits of their production, circulation and consumption. It also refers to the intersection of power with representation, and to the rules and resources that govern the very limits of the visible and the invisible.

In this critical spirit, the 2024 summer school *Un/Seen* invites postdocs, ECRs and graduate students from a range of disciplines and backgrounds to join together for a week of critical discussion on the interplay between law, politics and visuality. We aim to open a space for exploring the relations between modes of visual authority and what Mirzoeff terms “countervisualities” that endeavour to challenge dominant regimes of the sensible – legal, political or aesthetic. Traversing diverse contexts and theoretical frameworks, our goal is to spark reflection and new thinking on the dynamics of presence and absence, visibility and invisibility, and on the conditions of seeing and not seeing, of being seen and unseen.

Issues to be considered may include:

- What visual forms and resources are central to the imaginaries that modalise and valorise power?
- What counter-imaginaries challenge or provide new readings of the institutionalised visual histories of modernity?
- How do contemporary technologies and visual media facilitate new forms of in/visibility? In what ways do they sustain, extend, or destabilise the workings of state power and governmentality?
- How are practices of surveillance and control shored up by architectural and spatial frames? How do they perpetuate the divisions between the seen and unseen?
- How do visual regimes (re)shape our affective relations to concepts such as citizenship and belonging, identity and selfhood, rights and responsibilities?
- How do countervisual practices interrupt the power of visuality and assert the right to look?
- In what ways are contemporary forms of activism, protest, resistance and refusal implicated in visuality and the aesthetic?
- In what ways and in which contexts is the question of visuality and countervisuality urgent in the fast-ramifying crises of the twenty-first century?

Walter Benjamin pronounced that “history decays into images not stories” (Benjamin 1999). Octavio Paz took a different view: “We must oppose ... *not* with another image – all images have the fatal tendency to become petrified – but with *criticism*, the acid that dissolves images” (Paz 1970). A joint venture of six partner institutions on five continents, the 2024 Critical Times summer school offers the perfect environment for thinking through and responding to these and other provocations.

Programme & Activities

This year's summer school will follow the model developed for last year's successful event. In the morning, interdisciplinary seminars will be delivered by expert faculty from our partner institutions. In the afternoon, research colloquia will allow participants to present and develop their own work in a diverse and supportive environment. The evenings will be given over to a mixture of special events and social activities. The summer school thus offers a memorable opportunity to join a community of scholars and writers from around the world, and to establish lasting contacts, networks, and friendships.

We are pleased to confirm the following sessions:

Morning Seminars

- Law, Time, Image
Desmond Manderson, The Australian National University
- The Imagination, Imaginings, and Images of Judges
Julen Etxabe, University of British Columbia
- Metaphors of Visibility in Law, Politics, and the Economy: From the Invisible Hand to the Black Box of Technology, from Misframing Justice to Getting Framed
Scott Veitch, University of Hong Kong
- Visualizing Legality: A Methodology for Unpacking Multimodal Legal Texts
Greta Olson, University of Giessen

Evening Events

- Film screening and conversation with Mieke Bal, University of Amsterdam
- Seeing through the Unseen: How the Invisible Makes Understandable the Visible
Talk by Emanuele Conte, University of Roma Tre
- The Eye of History
Talk by Shane Chalmers, University of Hong Kong

Full programme details will be constantly updated [here](#) as more information becomes available.

Applications

Applications are invited from postdocs, ECRs and graduate students – of all disciplinary backgrounds – with research interests across law, critical theory and the humanities. Full application details [here](#).

Deadline: **29 February 2024**

Registration

The registration fee for the full week is **CHF 400.-**. This includes tuition, materials, lunches, coffee breaks and social events.

Please note that the fee does **not** include accommodation. Participants are required to make their own arrangements. A list of possible accommodation options is available on request.

Contact

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