

University of Cambridge
The 2018 Cambridge AHRC DTP International Conference
17-19 September 2018
'Space and Surface'
Call for Papers

The Organising Committee of the third AHRC DTP International Conference at the University of Cambridge invites 250-word proposals for 20-minute papers exploring the theme of 'Space and Surface' in any sphere of arts and humanities research.

'The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein.'

(Foucault, *Des Espaces Autres*, 1967)

Within the Arts and Humanities, we are constantly navigating space. We uncover and analyse the manifold categories of space which exist in the physical world, but we also steer on the intellectual plane, encountering ideas and concepts built through centuries of research and discourse.

But space is no longer solid, reliable, three-dimensional – physically or conceptually. The digital revolution and globalisation mean that we are networked now across the surface of the Earth in a way which challenges us to rethink what space and surface are and how we inhabit them.

Surfaces are ubiquitous as the objects of arts and humanities research. Faces and screens, archaeological and historical layers, manuscript palimpsests, all provide the surfaces which our research traverses. Space and surface are indeed forms to which we respond in our work, but we must also consider how human agency sculpts its spaces and draws its surfaces, with inequitable or empowering results.

Conceptions of space and surface have traditionally been couched in binary thinking (public and private, inside and outside, above and below, here and there, near and far). Yet they also offer us an opportunity to embrace multidimensional approaches and theories. Can we embrace each new 'surface', each new approach and understand the new spaces which they will forge? Indeed, can we relinquish the intellectual architecture of 'surface' and 'depth' entirely? If we can, should we?

This conference seeks to understand what space and surface mean in the Arts and Humanities, whether now, in the past, or in the future. A humanistic approach to spaces and

the surfaces we project onto them can be a powerful tool for better understanding our species and our place in the world.

Potential topics for papers can include, but are not limited to:

- philosophical and intellectual spaces, such as how intellectual traditions have viewed and dealt with spaces, real, virtual and conceptual;
- space and surface in the law, for instance how borders, land, the environment, and ownership of all of these, should be regulated;
- religious space and questions around religious diasporas and sacred spaces;
- political questions of ownership of space, of the interactions of space, place and culture, and of new rhetorics and spaces of political thought, influence and action;
- historical and archaeological enquiry into how humans have engaged with, reacted to, and even shaped their spaces; as well as interrogation of how thinking about surfaces of time, or layers of history, might shape our understanding of the past, the present and the future;
- exploration of the spaces and surfaces of literature and other creative media including film, television and games, including analysing what kinds of surfaces and spaces are presented in textual and other traditions, what kinds of spaces are inhabited by stories, and how scholarly practices are determined by different spatial theories and methodologies;
- linguistic enquiry into how geographical space shapes the linguistic landscape, how we might consider the surface of what we are reading philologically as a reflection of something deeper underneath, how languages consider and express space;
- how spaces are inhabited, conceptualised, reacted to, formed or informed by and in music and the visual and performing arts;
- interdisciplinary questions of methodology and approach, such as best practices in creating interdisciplinary spaces for interaction and collaboration and approaches examining the study of space and surface across and beyond the traditional boundaries of the Arts and Humanities.

The above simply constitute a series of prompts, which is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. The Conference Committee warmly encourages a diversity of applicants, approaches and themes.

Proposals will be rewarded for direct relevance to the Conference's theme of 'Space and Surface', clear relevance to current research contexts, and the potential for wide interdisciplinary interest. Collaborative papers are welcome.

Cambridge University PhD students are invited to submit abstracts of 200-300 words via email to submissions.cambridgeahrc@gmail.com by **Monday 19 March 2018**.