

2nd **CORE** Conceptualizing **O**ppression-Related **E**motions **W**orkshop
29th, 30th, 31st May 2024, Brock University

Interdisciplinary Feminist Theory and Emotions

Abstracts

This workshop is supported by funding from the **Vice-President Research Office** and the **Humanities Research Institute**



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under the **Marie Skłodowska-Curie** grant agreement No **101066941**



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA



**The Possibility of Transcendental Phenomenology as Radical Critique of the Present:
Imagination as Self- and Lifeworld-Constituting**

Andreea Smaranda Aldea
DePaul University

The paper makes the case for transcendental phenomenology understood as radical critique of the present. One of the main goals of the paper is to tease out what 'radical' and 'critique' refer to here – both in terms of clarifying these methodological dimensions and of unpacking how the methodological apparatus of phenomenology functions. Another central goal of the paper is to clarify in what sense phenomenology as radical critique involves both diagnostic and prescriptive work (and how the two efforts are interconnected). To accomplish this methodological account, I turn to an analysis of what makes possible this critical work, namely, what I refer to as 'critical imagination.' While not a sufficient condition for phenomenology as critique, critical imagination nevertheless plays a central role as a necessary condition for the possibility of all phenomenological investigations. The import of this methodological task is to shed light on the distinctive and invaluable critical resources transcendental phenomenology can provide – resources we could, beyond field boundaries, put to good use in tackling timely and pressing issues of social injustice in a variety of registers such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, or disability. To make this case, I show that the imagination is both self- and lifeworld-constituting. I argue that the freedom of the imagination lies in its distinctive ability to 'distance' itself from everyday commitments while nevertheless remaining orientationally 'anchored' in them. Here I stress the modal and temporal dimensions of imagining consciousness as qualitatively different from the positional (everyday) expectational modes of relating to possibilities and the otherwise. To showcase these structural differences, I perform an analysis of the (seemingly) unimaginable – my/our 'I/We cannot' – in its socio-cultural, historical, and institutional situatedness.

Oppression-Related Emotions: A Conceptual Proposal and Some Methodological Issues (with a Hopeful Coda about Insights)

Valentina Bortolami

Università di Padova - Brock University

What are oppression-related emotions and how should we study them?

In my talk, I will outline my project "Conceptualizing Oppression-Related Emotions," describing what Oppression-Related Emotions are, why we should care about them, and how we should study them.

After giving an overview of the project, I will focus on three aspects.

The first is the contribution of feminist epistemologies - especially standpoint theory and new materialism - to my research. From this, I will share my tentative proposal about how to conceptualize oppression-related emotions. The second, which is related to the first, is a short tale of the interdisciplinary work with psychology that has gone into my research so far. I will show how this interdisciplinary work has highlighted some issues about the ontological and methodological framework and share some ideas about how to tackle these issues in the near future. The last - the coda - is devoted to a reflection on the role of emotions (especially oppression-related emotions) in knowledge (intra-)actions and the idea of "insight" in feminist theory and psychology.

A phenomenology of the voice with and beyond lived experience

Athena V Colman

Brock University

My talk embraces the ethos of this gathering of thinkers whose energy and work questions the systematic oppression and sustained violence against others in complex ways that comprise both its visible and often invisible manifestations. I will begin with a discussion of the rise in popularity of the Dilthey-cum-phenomenology meaning of lived experience (Erlebnis/Erlebnisse), which has in part contributed to 'critical phenomenology,' an emerging field that marks itself off from what it calls 'traditional phenomenology.' Without undermining the important intuition or empowerment that oppressed persons may gain from the use of the claim of lived experience, I nonetheless wish to question the claim of the political hopes it offers. In order to situate this sensitive topic, I turn to – perhaps surprisingly – a consideration of voice.

I disrupt certain phenomenological accounts of the voice that argue its political promise as a signal of singularity, of the location of lived-experience. For example, Adriana Cavarero's ontological "vocal phenomenology of uniqueness," holds the voice secures a unique, situatedness or locatedness; an account that assumes the problem of politics is one of recognition and inclusion. While not rejecting the important impetus of this insight, I argue a phenomenology of the voice through "traditional phenomenology," i.e., Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, etc, shows voice resists singularity and discloses an opacity from which moments of singularity slip out from a generality from which it emerges. In this way, voice shows us the "inextricability of the imaginary and real" (Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind") and is thusly figurative in the sense Merleau-Ponty is seeking in *The Visible and the Invisible*. In providing this account I read Merleau-Ponty with the psychiatrist/philosopher/activist Frantz Fanon and the Barbadian poet and academic, Kamau Brathwaite in order to concretize this thought and suggest a phenomenology of voice that is illuminative of resistance – ontologically and politically, wherein the figurative eschews their assumed divide. The voice read in this way, resists contemporary rigidifications of lived-experience into assertions of self-identical transparencies. I argue this is a better sense of the voice for the political, which does not produce a disciplinary literalism wherein one must cut off their imaginary to negotiate their oppression or marginalization. I want to suggest this account resists any turn toward inclusivity in advance of grappling with the ongoing and historical legacies of exclusion and excision that are sedimented in the generality or anonymity of singularity.

Joyful Disruptive Feminist Interventions

Christine Daigle

Brock University

Critical posthumanist feminists such as Rosi Braidotti, Donna Haraway, and myself, posit that we need new ways of thinking ourselves and the world if we are to be successful in tackling the multiple crises we are faced with. Disruptive feminist interventions—such as those put forward by the posthumanities and postdisciplinarity—enacted in a joyful mode have the potential to open up this new thinking. I start by examining Michèle Le Doeuff's and Nancy Tuana's proposals on the philosophical project and what place it makes for women. I also muse on the philosophical canon and a politics of citation to tackle it. Thinking what it means to philosophize as a woman and potentially as a feminist raises the question of methods and points to the inevitability of crossing, perhaps eliminating, disciplinary lines. I also challenge posturing as "lone expert" and invite humility and an acknowledgment of how collaborative our thinking always is. I consider Katherine McKittrick's discussion of unknowing and its key role in developing ideas as well as Tomas Pernecky's postdisciplinarity as rhizomatic disobedience. I propose that defiantly engaging in collaborative and postdisciplinary "weird research" in the mode of playfulness, as proposed by María Lugones, is likely to yield the new thoughts we so urgently need.

Microbiomes, mood, and mastering the self

Jane Dryden

Mount Allison University

In this presentation, I explore how the discourse of gut health becomes drawn into existing societal tendencies of healthism and the medicalization of human experience, particularly where it affects mood. Gut microbiome research is fascinating, but it regularly gets taken up into familiar normalizing discourses that assume personal responsibility for health. Can we explore the possibilities of our growing understanding of the effect of the microbiome on mood without falling into healthist patterns? With the expanding discourse around microbiome therapies, will there be an increasing public expectation of managing our moods? On the other hand, can we take up this research as a provocation to have greater appreciation for the significant interrelation of mind and body? What space is there for play and exploration with our complex relationship to microbes?

**Women's experiences of distress:
Understandings from feminist psychology**

Michelle N Lafrance
St Thomas University

Women's distress has been individualised and pathologized throughout history. Today, women are twice as likely to be depressed or anxious than men and predominate amongst those who receive psychological services. Using the example of depression, I will explore some ways that mainstream psychology has conceptualised women's suffering. I will then discuss the contributions of feminist psychologists who have highlighted the material and discursive conditions in which women suffer. Drawing on my own research on women's experiences of recovery from depression, I will explore the tensions between mainstream and feminist approaches and their implications for women's subjectivity.

Feminist Receptivity and 'Staying with the Trouble'

Anna Mudde

University of Regina

This talk brings together some related but not yet fully integrated lines in my current work – it is truly workshoppable work! A great deal of philosophical work attends to things like responsible and ethical epistemological practices. Yet very little of this work tells us about practices of receptivity and responsiveness. To begin, I consider the affective and structural experience of the “blank stare” (e.g., in medical offices, classrooms, conferences, social life, etc.) in response to the expressions of women and other Others. While I am curious about what alternatives feminist practice might offer in place of the blank stare, I am also curious about feminist uses of the blank stare, and in noticing how they often highlight oppressive structures within feminist communities. In particular, I ask, how might “we” feminists best respond when, for example, matters of accessibility and ablism, racism, transphobia, fat-exclusion, and classism are raised in our spaces, and how do we “stay with [this] trouble” (Haraway) in receptive, responsible, and responsive ways? My current answer draws on work I have been doing to understand the affective features of material craftwork, which include detailed, deep care and materially embodied metaphysics and epistemology. What can we learn from common strategies of responding to craftwork that is troubling us that we might apply to a practice of feminist responsiveness?

Feeling Rule Enforcement: Emotion Policing as Emotional Injustice

Arina Pismenny

University of Florida

Emotion policing is a form of emotional injustice that occurs when efforts are made to distort the nature of the emotions that an individual or a social group is disposed to have, or the ways those emotions are expressed. It is often an attempt to establish or maintain an oppressive emotion norm, i.e., when specific people are expected to have specific emotions in specific circumstances. Emotion policing can take several forms, including Emotion Stereotyping, Emotion Display Suppression, and Emotion Hegemonizing. The talk will analyze these forms of emotional injustice, delineating their application to marginalized groups, as well as sketch possible paths to resisting these forms of oppression.

