

Call for Applications

International Summer Academy for Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Researchers in Beirut 11–19 September 2014

Closing Date: 15 April 2014

As a member-institute of the Max Weber Foundation – German Humanities Institutes Abroad, the Orient-Institut Beirut along with the Forum Transregionale Studien would like to invite scholars from the fields of Literature, Philology, History, Art History, Cultural Anthropology, History of Science and Musicology to apply for an international Summer Academy that will convene from 11 to 19 September 2014 in Beirut on the topic:

Language, Science and Aesthetics – Articulations of Subjectivity and Objectivity in the Modern Middle East, North Africa, South and Southeast Asia

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PROGRAMME

This Summer Academy offers early-career scholars an opportunity to follow up on the debates about modernity, its preconditions and its aftermath by focusing on the multifarious processes and often unique ways in which societies outside Europe have adopted, translated, rejected or produced the global, the modern and tradition since the seventeenth century. It places a specific focus on the notions of subjectivity and objectivity, the individual and the subject, as key notions of modernity, and addresses systems and practices of knowledge production, communication and authority as they developed in the region that extends from Morocco to Indonesia. The Summer Academy engages with the debates on the writing of a more global history by paying particular attention to changing textual and aesthetic practices and language policies.

Subjectivity and objectivity are to be approached as discursive practices which are intrinsically linked to each other: subjective formations (individual reason, freedom, choice, affect, etc.) are inseparable from the supposedly objective categories (science, knowledge, law etc.) through which the world is constructed and experienced. These notions are closely related to the question of how we perceive and look at things. The distinction of both notions and their co-constitutive relationship is reflected in both science – with its strong connotations of rationality and objectivity – and aesthetics/art, which is associated with intuition and subjectivity. Along with language – which is as much a medium as it is an autonomous domain of linguistic and aesthetic study – these three interrelated domains describe a broad range of possible intellectual and sensory activities and thus reflect a part of social reality which can be cognitively grasped.

The Summer Academy aims to provide a framework for research investigating the discursive processes through which the subjective and objective appear as separate and separable categories, emerging from textual practices or from analytical approaches to them. It thereby examines the actors/agents, the content, nature and sites of such articulations as well as the ways in which they become institutionalized, i.e. 'canonized'. This dynamic field of inquiry has an inherent political dimension, as it questions the institutional frameworks, policies and interests which inform these discursive practices and thereby examines conventional ascriptions of agency within modern state formations such as (colonial) empires or nation-states.

The Summer Academy therefore aims to adopt a transregional perspective by looking at transfers and translations, resistances and counter-movements of linguistic, scientific and aesthetic practices, and the circulation of concepts and ideas within the region stretching from

contemporary Morocco to Indonesia as well as between these societies and “the West”.

The Summer Academy revolves around three main axes of debate:

Language

While in the regions under investigation language has long been a primary field of scholarly inquiry, it has emerged as a central trope for the remaking of the self in the name of modernity. The project of ordering, collecting and reshaping language was undertaken in many language communities. In which way did the work on language and translation relate to the emergence of modern identitarian categories? What kinds of new boundaries were created by processes of canonization, and what kind of texts were rendered ‘homeless’ by the choice of a particular tradition? We think it is important to link research on these fields of intellectual production to their socio-historical contexts for a comparative study of the emergence of language as an object of pioneering scientific inquiry and a renewed medium of articulation. Potential themes of inquiry are, for example:

- The opposition between orality and literacy, vernaculars and written languages
- The ‘grammatization’ of language and the collection of lexicons as well as modern encyclopedias and pedagogic texts
- The evolution of new concepts as well as neologies and phrases

Science

Modernity and science are intractably linked in multiple constitutive ways, and both notions are connected to the emergence of the autonomous subject and its historical becoming. In recent years, the history of science has developed and refined a genealogical approach of embodied practices, whereby science is not a transparent concept but one imbricated in its discursive, institutional and social sites of production, transmission and consumption. It might therefore be interesting to explore continuities and losses in the modes of knowledge production. Attention will thus be given to the multitudinous and always-situated understanding of the concepts and practices of knowledge production itself. Broad questions for exploration include:

- Which institutional sites (laboratories, universities, archives etc.) gave scientific discourses their authority? And how did they compete with, transform or supersede other spaces of scientific production?
- How are different conjunctions of science’s empirical, methodological and theoretical dimensions generative of modern knowledge?
- Under what conditions did particular theories and disciplines become institutionalized, and with what social and political consequences?

Aesthetics

Aesthetics in this context is understood as a configuration of aesthetic practices extending to the reception of art works and evolving theoretical reflection. This section is concerned with the question of whether the transformations that took place from the seventeenth century onwards led to an 'aesthetic turn' that resulted in new perceptions, practices and social realities constitutive of an increasingly educated middle class. It is thus an enquiry into the actors of change, into concepts and modes of articulation together with their institutional and technical prerequisites. To what extent do subjective approaches (i.e. gaze, perception, taste, interest, aesthetic experience) and the emergence of new artistic forms and practices as well as perceptions of reality affect the development of categories (i.e. history of art, canonization of knowledge) and of institutional sites in terms of academies or art schools? Possible questions researchers may engage with are:

- What are the aesthetic and linguistic references used for the description of artistic practices and aesthetic experience?
- What are the parameters for the forming of individual taste and an aesthetic self and how are they related to the notion of the subject?
- What is the relationship between art and culture?

CONDITIONS OF APPLICATION AND PROCEDURE

21 doctoral and postdoctoral scholars from different countries and academic backgrounds will be given the opportunity to present and discuss their current research in an international and multidisciplinary context. Participants will receive a stipend covering travel and accommodation. The programme is aimed at doctoral and postdoctoral researchers in Literature, Philology, History, Art History, Cultural Anthropology, History of Science and Musicology who wish to present their ongoing projects in a comparative perspective in relation to the questions raised above. The researchers' work should be clearly relevant to the themes of the Summer Academy; transregional comparative approaches are especially encouraged. The working language will be English. The application should likewise be in English and consist of

- a curriculum vitae
- a three to five-page outline of the project the applicant is currently working on, with a brief summary thereof
- the names of two university faculty members who can serve as referees (no letters of recommendation required)

sent by e-mail as one pdf file or in one word document.

The application should be received no later than **April 15** and should be addressed to:

summeracademy@orient-institut.org

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INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The Summer Academy forms part of the strategic cooperation between the Forum Transregionale Studien and the Max Weber Foundation – German Humanities Institutes Abroad. It is supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung, BMBF).

The Berlin-based Forum Transregionale Studien is a research organization that promotes the internationalization of research in the humanities and social sciences. The Forum provides scope for collaboration among researchers with different regional and disciplinary perspectives and appoints researchers from all over the world as Fellows.

The Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB) is a German academic research institute focusing on the Arab world and the wider Middle East. Based in Beirut since the 1960s, it conducts and supports research in the humanities and social sciences. The systematic study of primary sources and cooperation with regional actors and institutions provides a common conceptual framework for the institute's research activities.

For more information please visit:
www.forum-transregionale-studien.de
www.orient-institut.org
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