

**SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL
DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIP
SPRING 2012 WORKSHOP AGENDA**

MEDIATED FUTURES

Spring Workshop, May 30 – June 3, 2012
Chaska, Minnesota

This is the first of two workshops designed to help students prepare useful dissertation proposals in their field of choice. The goals of the first workshop are 1) to map the research field with respect to contributing disciplines, methods, sources, and area knowledge; and 2) to help prepare fellows for their pre-dissertation summer research. The two goals are connected: through a sustained and structured discussion of student proposals, we hope to illuminate the potential contours of the research field itself.

The main premise of our workshop “Mediated Futures” is two-fold. Firstly, following Reinhart Koselleck, we view attempts at modernization as making increasing demands on the future, and therefore as changing the relative weight of experience vis-à-vis expectation; specifically, expectations tend to grow ever more distant from previous experience. Secondly, experience and expectation are both, increasingly, technologically mediated. Communication technologies thus exercise an ever-greater influence in mediating the ways in which past and future are relocated with respect to each other. While communications media continue to be treated by planners and policy-makers as indispensable tools of market expansion and popular participation, and hence as means of modernization, social scientists’ treatment of media (as foci of research) is constantly being revised, without a sense of theoretical closure being imminent, and without being able to generate a wide degree of scholarly consensus on research protocols. In Mediated Futures, we are primarily concerned with theorizing the place of media and the mediatic in modernity.

The 20th century bore witness to the propagation of mass utopian futures by governments, notably the US and the USSR, and to the birth of new kinds of political actors such as the partisan and the terrorist who embraced alternative futures and/or refused the tyranny imposed by extant futures. In the post Cold War era we witness a great weakening of the earlier tendency to invest in long term projects, whether of infrastructure, empire or nation building; meanwhile the contrast between historical and geological time has perhaps never been more widely felt, as climate change has become more noticeable. The continued acceleration of media growth alongside this process might suggest that modernization is a more divergent process than had earlier been conceived, but also that the future-orientations previously assumed to be promoted through communications media are far from assured, and that the spatio-temporal relationships media help generate are as yet not well understood.

In this field, we are interested in identifying and understanding the range of mediatic practices, the discarded and new futures that these practices helped to make and unmake, and their connections to nationalist, post-imperial and post-Cold War social and political projects. In the process, we seek to understand what kinds of emergent spatio-temporal

practices and relatedly, what socio-political projects may be taking shape via a range of media understood broadly, from language to built space, and from print to the internet. Our interest is in initiating a mapping of the non-isomorphic relations prevailing between mediatic practice and socio-political projects, understanding that the two no longer correlate as predictably as they were assumed to in the past. Our geographical areas of concern touch upon almost every continent, and our disciplinary strengths include Anthropology, Art History, Geography, History, Literary and Media Studies, and Urban Studies. Our readings too are drawn from an array of disciplines, and we have selected them to lend the workshop a strongly inter-disciplinary as well as transregional thrust.

Workshop Structure (see detailed syllabus below):

Each of our three full workshop days (Thursday, Friday, Saturday) will be divided into a morning seminar session, in which we will map out the conceptual contours of the research field vis-à-vis assigned readings (see below), and an afternoon session, which will be devoted to workshopping participant proposals. Friday morning's seminar session features a special presentation by Dr. On Barak (Princeton Society of Fellows) on the media as archive/archives as media.

Each three-hour afternoon workshop session is divided into four 45-minute segments, each of which will be dedicated to discussion of one fellow's proposal. We have assigned one fellow to be the primary discussant for each proposal, trying, as far as possible, to generate interesting inter-disciplinary and inter-topical pairings. **All fellows should, however, read all proposals before the beginning of the workshop. In order to facilitate this, we ask that each fellow upload a 3 to 5-page précis/summary of their research proposal to the DPDF online workspace by May 28.**

We expect each 45-minute segment to proceed as follows: The presenting participant will speak about their proposal for 10 minutes, outlining its major premises, problems, and challenges. The primary discussant will then respond for 10 minutes, addressing and assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal as currently formulated: Are there ways in which the research question could be clarified? Are there alternative conceptual framings of the research question that might be productive? To what extent are the methods, as described, adequate to the research question? **We ask that both presenter and primary respondent make sure not to exceed 10 minutes.** These two 10-minute presentations should be oriented toward facilitating a more open-ended 25-minute collective discussion of each proposal.

Advance reading assignments:

General background

All participants should read the following text as general conceptual background for the workshop:

- Reinhart Koselleck, "'Spaces of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation': Two

Historical Categories,' *Futures Past: on the semantics of historical time*, pp. 255-275.

Time permitting, we also recommend (but do not require) the following by way of background:

- Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Three New Deals: Reflections on Roosevelt's America, Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany, 1933-39*. New York: Picador, 2007. Introduction, Chapters 1-3 and Epilogue (104 pp + notes).

Seminar readings

See the syllabus below for readings that are intended to set the stage for our collective seminar discussions on the Thursday, Friday, and Saturday morning sessions. **These readings are required. We strongly recommend that participants get a head start on them before arriving at the workshop.**

All readings are available in pdf form on the DPDF online workspace.

Advance writing assignment:

We ask students to submit, ahead of the workshop, a short note (around 500 words) on one or two historical artifacts, events, or series of events, that conveys something interesting vis-à-vis their project about the relationship between experience and expectation (see Koselleck reading), and the work of material and symbolic mediation in this relationship. Toward this end, images and/or other media artifacts (sound clips, films, web links) would be welcome additions to the word portraits and short analyses you provide. Discussion of these assignments will be taken up during the first morning session, and we expect it to inform subsequent conversations. If the exercise is successful, we will utilize it in directing the students' summer research projects. **Please upload your 500-word notes and any related images and/or links onto the DPDF online workspace by May 26.**

Our interest in this exercise is to track the discarded futures that accumulate in the course of modernization, and to highlight the lessons to be learnt from historical failures. We know that success is the main focus of conventional scholarship, although it is often scarce, while failures are usually glossed over. Students may want to inquire along the lines of Bruce Sterling's Dead Media Project (<http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=208>) to consider devices and material supports that disappear or are retrofitted into new projects, as one possible avenue of exploration.

More broadly, *discarded futures* refers to: a) social anticipations, developmental plans and modernization projects that may shift or become effaced in ways that are not necessarily widely noticed; b) older understandings, intentions, expectations, and/or materials and practices that become unfashionable or gradually fall out of circulation, for reasons that may themselves be worth inquiring into; c) shifts in the relationship between multiple temporalities that are internal to a given social project, phenomenon, or situation; and d) how the passage of historical time is registered in a given context.

This writing exercise is meant to start us thinking about the complex

interrelationships between such explicit/implicit, approved/discarded futures in any large-scale project of mediation, and the protocols, latent and patent, used in managing the shifting relationship between expectation and historical experience. The aim is to provide a set of snapshots from across the projects that can afford a convenient basis of comparison and cross-referencing.

Wednesday

Evening reception

Thursday

Morning seminar session (9am – 12pm)

Discussion of writing assignments (9-10 am)

Media and National Propaganda (10-12 pm)

- Susan Buck-Morss, 'Common Sense' and 'Culture for the Masses' from *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*
- Timothy Mitchell, 'Carbon Democracy,' *Economy and Society* 38 (3)
- Kathleen Woodward, 'Statistical Panic,' *differences* 11(2)

Afternoon workshop session (2pm – 5pm):

Media, Modernization and Knowledge

Proposals:

- **Good** (Communication Studies): The World in Our Hands: Grassroots Media and Global Engagement in Interwar American Education, 1915-1950
 - Discussant: **Vicario**
- **Hirsch** (Anthropology): The Public Life of Indigeneity and Development: Mediating Investments in Culture in Andean Peru
 - Discussant: **Peake**
- **Nair** (Anthropology): A Billion "Unique" Identities: Understanding India's National Experiment with Biometric Identification Technologies
 - Discussant: **Brandel**
- **Platzer** (Anthropology): Neurological Publicity: Autistic Futures in the Global Age
 - Discussant: **Dell**

Friday

Morning seminar session (9am – 12pm)

Media as Infrastructure and Archive

- Bruno Latour, Preface, Prologue and Chapter 1 (ix-50) from *Aramis, or the Love of Technology*
- Ariella Azoulay, 'Archive,' *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon* <<http://www.politicalconcepts.org/2011/archive>>
- Brian Larkin, 'Colonialism and the Built Space of Cinema' from *Signal and Noise*

Presentation by **On Barak**: "Re-Collected Futures: Archives and/as Media, Media and/as Archives"

Afternoon workshop session (2pm – 5pm)

Media as Live Archive

Proposals:

- **Brandel** (Anthropology): The Romantic Life of Books: Reading Publics, Literary Communities and the Making of "Germany"
 - Discussant: **Good**
- **Dell** (History): The Varieties of Reading Experience: Towards a History of Textual Practice in the Western Sahel
 - Discussant: **Stainova**
- **Schilling** (STS): British Columbia Mapped: Geology, Indigeneity, and Landscape in the Age of Digital Cartography
 - Discussant: **Jones**
- **Shearer** (Anthropology): The Kigali City Master Plan and the Production of Urban Futures
 - Discussant: **Hirsch**

Saturday

Morning seminar session (9am – 12pm)

Scenes of Media: Ethics, Performance, Aesthetics

- Charles Hirschkind, 'The Ethics of Listening,' from *The Ethical Soundscape*
- William Egginton, 'Actors, Agents and Avatars' from *How the World Became a Stage*

- Vivian Sobchack, ‘The Scene of the Screen: Envisioning Photographic, Cinematic and Electronic ‘Presence’ from *Carnal Thoughts*

Afternoon workshop session (2pm – 5pm)

Media as Technologies of Sense and Sensibility

Proposals:

- **Jones** (Anthropology): Youth Cultural Politics and Technologies of Sociality in Urban Peru
 - Discussant: **Schilling**
- **Peake** (Culture and Communication): Listening as technology in British Gibraltar
 - Discussant: **Platzer**
- **Stainova** (Anthropology): Music in the Time of Precariousness: Dreaming of Utopia in the Youth Orchestras of Venezuela’s El Sistema
 - Discussant: **Nair**
- **Vicario** (Art History/Architecture): In and out of Santiago: Artistic Practice between Pan-Americanism and Global Citizenship, 1940-1990
 - Discussant: **Shearer**

Sunday (9am – 12pm)

Looking ahead

- Summarizing insights of Spring Workshop, vis-à-vis the proposals presented and discussed
- Plans for communication during summer pilot research; summer assignments
- Discussing ideas for Autumn Workshop

**SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL
DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT FELLOWSHIP
Radisson Warwick Hotel, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Wednesday, September 12th to Sunday, September 16th, 2012
FALL 2012 WORKSHOP AGENDA**

Mediated Futures

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This is the second of two annual Mediated Futures workshops designed to help graduate student fellows prepare cogent and fundable dissertation proposals. The two goals of the second workshop are 1) to help fellows synthesize their summer research; and 2) to develop revised drafts of dissertation proposals, either for committee or funding purposes. The workshop challenges fellows to consider their summer research and proposal development within the context of contributions to their research fields. In this, the goals of the fall workshop are closely related to the project of mapping a research field that began during the spring workshop in Minnesota.

Fellows will come out of the second workshop with supportive networks, consisting of both mentors and cohorts of new scholars carrying out research in their fields, as well as intellectually mature dissertation proposals.

WORKSHOP ASSIGNMENTS

- **PRIOR TO THE WORKSHOP**

All assignments should be uploaded on the DPDF online workspace unless otherwise noted:

- **2-3 page field report. Deadline: August 15.** This document should be a reflection on how your summer research turned out/is turning out, with special emphasis on any surprises, difficulties, insights vis-a-vis how you imagined your project in the spring.
- **Full proposal draft. Deadline: August 31.** Make sure to include the following sections:
 1. Introduction, including statement of the research problem/hypothesis and a quick summary of the field site, methods, and more general significance of the project (1-2 pages)
 2. Historical/ethnographic context (about 2 pages)
 3. Theoretical parameters/contribution/lit review (about 2 pages)
 4. Methods/methodological considerations (about 2 pages)
 5. Broader significance and plans for dissemination (about 2 pages)

- **DURING THE WORKSHOP**

The “alternative first paragraph.” Each participant will be assigned a primary discussant. For their presentation, the primary discussant will prepare an alternative version of the first paragraph of the proposal they’re discussing. The point is not to substitute for the original, but rather to give a sense of how someone else might set up the key points and the ‘hook’ for what is indubitably the most

important part of any proposal. It would be useful if each primary discussant could bring 15 hard copies of their alternative first paragraphs to their sessions, as handouts. Or they might choose to use the computer/projector set-up for this purpose.

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

Wednesday, September 12th

6 p.m.: **Registration and welcome reception**
Workshop materials will be distributed at registration.
Dinner on your own

Thursday, September 13th

9 a.m. to 12 p.m.: **Plenary Session on Funding and DPDF Alumni Experiences**

This session, in which all 2012 fellows will attend, includes a roundtable discussion with representatives from major funding sources in the humanities and social sciences. The discussion will involve trends in dissertation funding, best practices in preparing proposals for various funders, and making the transition from dissertation to postdoc opportunities. The plenary will also include a discussion with DPDF alumni about career trajectories following the DPDF fellowship.

2 to 5 p.m.: **Workshop Session #1: Summer Research – “What’s New?”**

This will be our collective opportunity to reflect on how our summer research experiences may have changed our thinking about our projects. What was surprising? What was difficult? What (if anything) was weirdly easy? Pulling in responses to the morning plenary session, we might also think, during this session, about the relation between the internal pragmatics of thinking through a research project and the external requirements of funding agencies.

Taking off from our precirculated field reports, each participant will have a chance to speak for 5 minutes, followed by 10 minutes of group discussion.

Friday, September 14th

9 a.m. to 12 p.m.: **Workshop Session #2: On Barak presentation and Proposal Workshopping**

9 a.m. to 10 a.m. – On Barak will speak on the proposal considered retrospectively as a utopian text, looking back at the many different proposals that enable the progress and development of a project now concluded.

10.10 a.m. to 12.00 p.m. – We begin workshopping proposals.

Throughout these workshop sessions, we will use the following format. Each presenter will speak for 5 minutes, clarifying how their proposal has evolved/grown since the spring session. This will be followed by 10 minutes of discussion from a primary discussant, including presentation of the alternative first paragraph. After this, we will have 15 minutes of open discussion, during which the presenter will stay relatively silent. Each segment will then conclude with a 5-minute slot during

which the presenter will have an opportunity to respond to and reflect on the discussion. There will be 5 minutes for follow-up questions at the end of sessions 2 and 3. Tom Schilling will be making a presentation followed by a general discussion, and 20 minutes will be assigned to this segment of the proposal workshop.

10:10-10:45	Presenter: Yana Stainova	Primary discussant: Samuel Shearer
10:45-11:20	Presenter: Bryce Peake	Primary discussant: Eric Hirsch
11:20-11:55	Presenter: David Platzer	Primary discussant: Katie Day Good

LUNCH: 12:00 - 2pm

2 to 5 p.m.: Workshop Session #3: Proposal Workshopping

2:00-2:35	Presenter: Andrew Brandel	Primary discussant: Yana Stainova
2:35-3:05	Presenter: Eric Hirsch	Primary discussant: Jeremy Dell
3:05-3:35	Presenter: Vijayanka Nair	Primary discussant: Niko Vicario
3:35-4:05	Presenter: Samuel Shearer	Primary discussant: Kyle Jones
4:05-4:40	Presenter: Jeremy Dell	Primary discussant: David Platzer
4:40-5:00	Presenter: Tom Schilling	General discussion

Saturday, September 15th

9 a.m. to 10:40am: Workshop Session #4: Proposal Workshopping

9:00-9:35	Presenter: Niko Vicario	Primary discussant: Vijayanka Nair
9:35-10:05	Presenter: Katie Day Good	Primary discussant: Bryce Peake
10:05-10:40	Presenter: Kyle Jones	Primary discussant: Andrew Brandel

Workshop Sessions #5 and 6: Face to face discussions

Each student will have 20 minutes for proposal-related discussion with the instructors in the penultimate segment of the workshop.

10:50 a.m. to 12 noon: Workshop Session #5: Face-to-face sessions with instructors

10:50-11:10 **Yana Stainova**

11:10-11:30 **Bryce Peake**

11:30-11:50 **David Platzer**

11:50-12:10 **Andrew Brandel**

12:10-2:00 LUNCH

2 to 5 p.m.: Workshop Session #6: Face-to-face sessions with instructors

2:00-2:20 **Eric Hirsch**

2:20-2:40 **Vijayanka Nair**

2:40-3:00 **Samuel Shearer**

3:00-3:20 **Jeremy Dell**

3:20-3:40 **Niko Vicario**

3:40-4:00 **Katie Day Good**

4:00-4:20 **Kyle Jones**

4:20-4:40 **Tom Schilling**

Sunday, September 16th

9 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.: Workshop Session #6: Wrapping Up and Next Steps

Where next? What have we learned? What are some of the remaining issues concerning proposal preparation? This final session will be an opportunity for the group both to tie up loose ends and to imagine future directions for the field, both intellectually and logistically.