

## 14 doctoral and 2 postdoc positions, 'Normativity, Critique, Change', Berlin

Berlin

Bewerbungsschluss: 03.05.2021

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Job Position: 14 doctoral and 2 postdoc positions

Institution: RTG 2638 at Freie Universität Berlin, Humboldt Universität zu Berlin, Universität der Künste Berlin

The new Research Training Group 2638 "Normativity, Critique, Change" will start its work in October 2021 and is calling for applications to fill 14 doctoral positions (TVL-13 65%, for 3 years) and 2 postdoc positions (TVL-13 100%, for 4.5 years). The RTG 2638 is dedicated to questions on the nexus of normativity, critique, and change from an interdisciplinary perspective.

To launch the call for applications, we invite interested candidates for doctoral and postdoc positions to the informational online event on 15 March from 2pm to 5pm (CET).

The event will be hosted via WebEx and will be accessible from 14:00 on.

Registration is not obligatory, but to obtain the QR code and password please contact: [grk2638@philosophie.fu-berlin.de](mailto:grk2638@philosophie.fu-berlin.de)

Call for Applications will be open from the 15th of March till May, the 3rd.

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### Research Agenda

The new GRK 2638 is dedicated to questions concerning the nexus of norms, their critique, and how norms relate to social change. It seeks to study the specific structures of normative practices common to the arts, law, religion, language, and morality. These normative practices are characterized by the ways in which they are bound to the standards inherent in things like artistic genres, moral habits, and linguistic rules. At the same time, when individuals engage in these practices, they critically reflect on them and the standards that guide them, which in turn redefines and shapes these very normative practices themselves. The GRK's research agenda follows the hypothesis that in all these contexts – in the arts, law, religion, language, and morality – applying a norm necessitates critically reflecting on that norm. Consequently, this implies that the realization of standards can lead to their transformation. The GRK explores the transformative aspect of normativity in these contexts, analysing similarities and differences. The GRK's main objective is to develop an understanding of how transformation is inherent to normativity, not to view them as opposites.

To illustrate the GRK's perspective on normativity, consider the debate on gender-neutral in language. The debate demonstrates that the standards guiding normative practices are not simply given rules that practitioners execute as if they were machines capable of speaking and writing. Norms are, from the GRK's point of view, always tied to controversies and diverging interpretations. Applying a rule is a hermeneutic practice that requires situation-specific knowledge regarding rules and the reasons behind them. Moreover, applying a rule is always improvisational and spontaneous. Thus, the application of a rule can lead to its transformation. Transformation can itself become a standard, as some artistic practices make clear. By investigating the transformative aspects of normativity, the GRK seeks to render intelligible the difference between, on the one hand, innovation for the sake of innovation as a standard that runs the risk of becoming an empty stereotype and, on the other hand, transformation as a hermeneutic standard. The research agenda of the GRK is based on the premise that normativity has to be studied with the expertise gathered in related but distinct disciplines. This is why the GRK brings together the knowledge gained in

Philosophy, German Literature, Art History, Studies of Religion, Dutch Studies and Linguistics, Musicology, Theatre Studies, Law Studies, Dance Studies, Film Studies.

Four guiding questions circumscribe the analytical framework of the GRK's research.

1. How is the praxis of applying a norm to be accounted for? Are normative standards tied to critique and if they are how are they tied to critique? In which way has normativity by itself to be understood as being transformative?
2. Does critical reflection on norms represent continuity with those norms or does it instigate a break with them? What role does critique play for the continuity and discontinuity of a practice? Can crisis contribute to the further development of normative practices? How should collisions of norms be conceptualized?
3. Is there a difference between, on the one hand, traditional conceptions of the application of norms and, on the other, modern conceptions of the application of norms? Do the identities of those following particular norms play a role in how they apply those norms?
4. How are we to understand the impact of language on the constitution of different normative practices? What role do the linguistically mediated practices of reasoning and judging play in the transformation of norms? How are we to conceive of language as at once a medium and an object of critique?

These four key topics structure the common working programme of the GRK. The GRK employs 14 PIs in 10 different disciplines, bringing together the humanities and law. It is designed to foster a broad exchange of theoretical knowledge in an interdisciplinary research environment. Key aims of the innovative research design of GRK 2638 are:

- To conceptualize normativity while recognizing both what artistic practices can teach us about it and the specific form of normativity that applies to artistic practices
- To reflect on the relevance of critique and conceptualize it not simply as subversion
- To articulate novel perspectives on the disciplines through an interdisciplinary approach

Concept of Qualification

Research Training Groups (GRKs) are established to foster the work of researchers at an early stage of their academic career. They are funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) for a maximum period of 9 years. GRKs are designed to further develop the qualifications of doctoral researchers within the framework of a focused research program and a structured training strategy. The course of study is tailored to enable doctoral candidates to complete their dissertations within three years. During the first four semesters, each cohort will discuss the four key topics stated above. The discussion will take place in the GRK's colloquia, seminars, and workshops. The PhD researchers will participate in shaping the course of study and will be encouraged to invite guests working on their topics of interest. In the third year, the PhD students will focus on composing and finalizing their dissertation. Postdocs are encouraged to do independent research within the framework of the GRK. With their more in-depth research projects, postdocs will support doctoral candidates in tailoring the coursework and the guest invitations. Postdocs will also ensure that the GRK's focus remains coherent throughout the different cohorts.

Since qualification through (post-)doctoral research and supervision is inevitably intertwined with thematic questions, the GRK 2638 aims to pursue an interdisciplinary and progressive micro-space for doctoral and postdoc researchers to conduct their study. These aims include:

#### Conviviality and teamwork

In an academic world that is ever more dominated by competition, we want to create a space that is conducive for collaborative work. We like to think of ourselves as a learning community. This entails recognition of the intersubjective nature of knowledge production and a commitment to continuous reflection on the hierarchies among scholars in different positions. Participation in the GRK will require a sense of community as an epistemic value. The combination of 10 different disciplines taken together to create a single group is both demanding and ambitious. To make this set-up fruitful, we will have to ensure that unproductive forms of self-promotion by any member of the GRK can be addressed.

#### Interdisciplinarity and the role of theory

Despite the differences in method and phenomena, what all disciplines involved in the GRK have in common is their origin in the humanities. We understand our GRK as a space in which the 10 disciplines involved can enrich one another and thereby challenge the researchers to think beyond self-enclosed conceptions of disciplinary cohesion. Within the GRK, both PhD and postdoc researchers will convene a forum that fosters group discussion on fundamental structures of normative practices, enabling them to take a theoretical perspective on their respective topics of research. This dialogue should enable the members of the group to better grasp the specific differences in the roles played by normative practices in their respective objects of research and should help them improve their ability to articulate these differences. In this way, the group seeks to cultivate new theoretical approaches in the disciplines involved. That is the reason why the GRK seeks to attract PhD students interested in taking a more theoretical approach within their disciplines.

#### Intersectionality

Since knowledge is always situated knowledge, academic collaboration necessitates that we take into account different positionalities with respect to ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, citizenship,

and other social categories. Our understanding of discrimination is intersectional and refuses to establish hierarchies between different forms of oppression. We recognize that access to academic practices such as a GRK is dependent on cultural, economic, and social capital. We are committed to the idea of making implicit knowledge explicit. We want to help clarify administrative procedures and to welcome researchers from different academic systems or different class origins. We encourage applications from the Global South. We offer workshops on Diversity and Critical Practice in Academia. Finally, we have hired a conflict counsellor (Ombudsperson) deliberately positioned outside of the structures of the GRK who can be discretely approached with all matters of structural discrimination and unproductive forms of disagreement.

### Language

As stated above, we seek to attract international researchers who are interested in taking a more theoretical approach. Given that theory is essentially tied to language, we aim to establish a bilingual space. English and German will be equal means for contribution to the discussion. The GRK will require at least a passive understanding of complex German. We will offer support such as languages courses for those who desire it.

### Social commitment and academic intervention

We understand research as a contribution to the critique, reflection, and transformation of social injustices. This means that we see academic work itself as an important intervention in dominant discourses. The GRK will take an interdisciplinary approach to grasping the ways in which critical reflection might be understood as a constitutive component of social practices and their dynamics. The GRK aims to train young researchers by equipping them with novel perspectives on their disciplines and the requisite skills to present their work within the academy and engage in transdisciplinary outreach.

### Conditions for Research

In contrast to some PhD programs, there is a low amount of coursework and doctoral researchers are expected to actively take part in shaping the ideas and activities of the GRK. The research profile defined by the GRK provides a framework for the independent research projects undertaken by the doctoral researchers. GRKs also differ from individual PhD projects by creating a space for a group of doctoral researchers to work together and to benefit from discussions and exchange with each other. While doctoral researchers are taken seriously as producers of knowledge, the GRK will ensure excellent supervision in order to enable each doctoral researcher to complete their degree within the three years of their funding. Each PhD student will be advised by two supervisors (either 2 PIs of the GRK, or 1 PI of the GRK and 1 international professor). In addition, a range of qualification measures ensures the acquisition of academic and professional skills tailored to the specific profile of each doctoral researcher.

Within GRK 2638, doctoral researchers will be offered staff positions (instead of scholarships) at one of the participating universities for a period of three years, while postdoc researchers will be hired for a period of four and half years. Payment for the staff positions is in line with the German Public Service Fare (TV-L E13; doctoral students are at 65%, postdocs at 100% of the rate), thus ensuring health care and pension insurance coverage.

As the activities of the GRK take place in Berlin, permanent residency during the semester is required. The offer support for non-EU researchers to acquire residency through the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

#### LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

Karin Gludovatz, Kunstgeschichte (FU Berlin)  
Kirsten Maar, Tanzwissenschaft (FU Berlin)  
Christoph Möllers, Rechtswissenschaft (HU Berlin)  
Sabine Nessel, Filmwissenschaft (FU Berlin)  
Thomas Schmidt, Philosophie (HU Berlin)  
Georg W. Bertram, des. Sprecher, Philosophie (FU Berlin)  
Anne Fleig, Literaturwissenschaft (FU Berlin)  
Stefan Gosepath, Philosophie (FU Berlin)  
Susanne Gödde, Religionswissenschaft (FU Berlin)  
Matthias Hüning, Sprachwissenschaft (FU Berlin)  
Rahel Jaeggi, Philosophie (HU Berlin)  
Ariane Jeßulat, Musikwissenschaft (UdK Berlin)  
Doris Kolesch, Theaterwissenschaft (FU Berlin)  
Bertram Lomfeld, Rechtswissenschaft (FU Berlin)

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#### Becoming part of the GRK 2638

Below we have provided some initial information regarding the application process, as this site is still under construction.

We will issue a call for applications in April 2021. A bilingual kick-off event will take place on 15 March 2021 from 14:00 to 17:00. The principal investigators will present the research agenda of the GRK "Normativity, Critique, Change" in more detail and will answer questions about potential doctoral and postdoc projects. A link to the online event will be provided soon.

Please subscribe to the mailing list if you want to be kept up-to-date about our research group:

<https://lists.fu-berlin.de/listinfo/GRK2638/>

How to apply?

Applicants are asked to propose a research project that fits with the thematic scope of the research group. The application may be submitted in either English or German. It should outline your project's theoretical approach, its interdisciplinary compatibility, and its feasibility. Postdoctoral applications should not only demonstrate the interdisciplinary compatibility of the project, but also its intrinsic interdisciplinary character.

You will need to provide the following:

- Evidence that you have obtained a degree in one of the disciplines included in the Research Training Group. Applicants at the doctoral stage should submit their BA and MA certificates (or equi-

valents) and include the transcripts of records. Postdoctoral applicants should also submit their doctoral degree certificate (or equivalent).

- Curriculum vitae
- A statement of motivation (maximum: 3 pages) that describes how you plan to contribute to the group and how your proposed project will fit into its research agenda and areas of investigation. Please indicate which of the PIs (principal investigators) you would like to have as a supervisor.
- A thesis proposal with a project timetable (maximum: 10 pages), and a bibliography. The bibliography is not included as part of the 10-page limit.
- A reference from a university professor or lecturer that details your academic ability and potential. To ensure confidentiality, the reference will have to be uploaded by the referee in the application portal upon our request.
- Doctoral degree applicants should submit a sample of their work (maximum: 25 pages), such as a chapter of their MA thesis, a paper (published or forthcoming), or a work-in-progress chapter of their doctoral dissertation.
- Postdoctoral applicants should submit a copy of their doctoral dissertation.
- Applicants from universities outside of Germany must provide proof of German language proficiency equivalent to at least DSH 1/TestDaF 3.

The documents need to be uploaded to the Dahlem Research School application portal. This application portal will be accessible immediately following the kick-off event on 15 March 2021.

#### Selection of candidates

Candidates will be selected in a two-step process.

First, applications are reviewed by two principal investigators – one PI will be an expert in the field of the applicant's research topic, while the other will be an expert in a different field. This procedure helps us to guarantee the interdisciplinary compatibility or character of the project. Applications submitted by candidates who completed their prior qualification with one of the PIs in the research training group will be reviewed by a different PI.

Second, based on the outcome of the PIs' assessments, the interdisciplinary selection committee will invite shortlisted candidates for a video interview by the end of June. The interviews will be held online in order to ensure a fair selection process across the board for all applicants, whether they are based in Berlin, in Germany, or abroad. The interviews will be concluded by mid-July.

The candidates will then be ranked by the selection committee according to the PIs' assessments and impressions gained from the interviews. The selected candidates will be informed by the end of July at the latest and will start their positions on 1 October 2021.

The Agreement on Doctorate Supervision ("Betreuungsvereinbarung") will be granted by accepting the applicant to the GRK. It is not necessary to have the Agreement on Supervision from a PI to start the application. Doctoral students will be enrolled and employed at the university of their primary supervisor.

Further information on RTG 2638:

[fu-berlin.de/normativitaet-kritik-wandel](http://fu-berlin.de/normativitaet-kritik-wandel) (coming soon)

Email: [grk2638@philosophie.fu-berlin.de](mailto:grk2638@philosophie.fu-berlin.de)

Quellennachweis:

JOB: 14 doctoral and 2 postdoc positions, 'Normativity, Critique, Change', Berlin. In: ArtHist.net, 22.02.2021. Letzter Zugriff 21.12.2024. <<https://arthist.net/archive/33441>>.