

The Power and Norms of Critique (Berlin, 11-13 Feb 26)

Uferstudios Berlin, Feb 11-13, 2026

Isabel Mehl

International and interdisciplinary conference organized by the Graduiertenkolleg „Normativity, Critique, Change“ in Berlin on February 12th and 13th 2026 with an opening reception on February 11th 2026.

Critical impulses play a central role in the development of society while they are tied, in their turn, to the normative frameworks established within social contexts. In this respect, critique is always in tension with prevailing norms; however, it may also depend on normative foundations that can go beyond what is given in a society. Against the background of this tension, the conference aims to investigate the scope and the (normative) foundations of critique, focusing on four contexts: firstly, the narrative foundations of normative critique, secondly, the interpersonal forms of relationship relevant to the realization of critique, thirdly, physicality and materiality in the emergence of resistance and fourthly, the positionality of critique.

Opening Reception – 11.02.2026

I Am Your Sound

18:30-19:30

A Performance by Echoes in Pieces (Ha Heres Mina, Han Guka, Kim Liyoun)

Afterwards Welcome Drinks and Get together

Day One – 12.02.2026

Panel 1: Challenging Narratives

10:00-13:30

Narratives are the starting point for every form of change, at the same time they provide an essential basis for maintaining normative structures. An ever-increasing number of competing narratives are complicating the understanding not only of the so-called present, but also of the past(s) and possible futures. These sometimes challenging (in the sense of contradictory) narratives of the world open up the possibility as well as the necessity of rethinking one's own narratives along with their underlying situatedness and mediality, especially in mutual exchange. How are image and text constellated in order to challenge narratives that affirm norms (canon critique, colonialism, etc.)? The panel will focus on the plasticity of memory and the access to images that constitute or question it.

Speakers:

10:00-11:00 Andrea Geier: Debates on Postcolonial Studies and Anti-Semitism: A (german) controversy without conflict?«

11:15-12:15 Judith-Frederike Popp: Dwelling in the space of awe – Narrative constellations as constructive elements in philosophical critique

12:30-13:30 Stephanie Graf: tba

Break

13:30-15:00

Panel 2: Relationalities

15:00-18:30

The panel has its focus on the in-between: on our orientations towards/to/from others as well as the relations of care in which we stand or want to stand in. How do artworks and technological developments determine and change our view of care work? What role do narratives representing alternative forms of relationships play in changing our actual understanding of them (e. g., Sophie Lewis' "Abolish the Family")? How can relationships and orientations not only be understood as objects of critique, but themselves become effective as critique? To what extent can they be understood not only as guided by normative structures, but also as a nucleus of their change or suspension? How is the conflictual nature of care work to be understood?

Speakers:

15:00-16:00 Jordan Troeller: Fornicating Frogs and Spurting Shafts: Ruth Asawa's Andrea (1969) as a Case Study of Antinormative Motherhood in the Arts

16:15-17:15 Liza Mattutat: Archive and Autofiction: Writing Care in Times of Crisis

17:30-18:30 Anna Lena Götsche: Doing Family in times of increasing right-wing conservative and authoritarian attitudes

Day Two – 13.2.2026

Panel 3: Movement & Resistance

10:00-13:30

The panel deals with the role concrete physicality plays in the realization of critique, not least from the perspective of minoritized bodies. How do more or less conditioned and abled bodies unite as a movement? How can critique be understood as embodied between collective action and resistance, rejection, passivity and depression? Particularly with regard to an increasingly mediated, mirror-like form of experiencing the self, the question of interruptions and withdrawal takes on a new turn. What role do cultural narratives play in the construction of norms and, in particular, fantasies of a healthy body? In contrast, can a critique of this construction be produced by adaptation or disruption?

Speakers:

10:00-11:00 Quill Kukla: Spatial Agency and the Choreography of Resistance

11:15-12:15 Priya S. Gupta: The University Cannot Hold

12:30-13:30 Filipa César: tba

Break

13:30-15:00

Panel 4: Critical Positioning

15:00-18:30

The panel brings into view strategies of positioning, as they are located, for instance, in the way of writing, in the access to canonical sources or in the deliberate staging of polyphony. Following on from discourses on situatedness, identity politics and relevance in the face of austerity measures, we will examine the position from which knowledge emerges. How do these manoeuvres of positioning relate to existing norms of expression in science and art and to what extent can they be understood as critical? Do these strategies address a different audience, and if so, do they reach it? What is the relationship of these speaking positions to history, and how do they locate themselves in the present?

Speakers:

15:00-16:00 Ruth Sonderegger: Ensemblage. Towards affirmative forms of (aesthetic) critique

16:15-17:15 Thomas Richard Hilder: Ethnographic Polyphonies, Public Pedagogies, Queer (Ch)oral Histories

17:30-18:30 Chris Tedjasukmana: Media Witnessing as Embodied Critique in the Age of AI Authoritarianism

For registration and more information please visit:

<https://www.normativitaet-kritik-wandel.de/Events/Tagung-2026/index.html>

Reference:

CONF: The Power and Norms of Critique (Berlin, 11-13 Feb 26). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 31, 2026 (accessed Feb 2, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/51546>>.