

Critical Antiquities Workshop

Semester 2 2021



CAN
CRITICAL ANTIQUITIES NETWORK

The seminars will be held online on Zoom.
Please note the seminars are on **Fridays in Australia and Thursdays in the US.**

Workshops

Dennis Schmidt | Western Sydney University
'Thinking and Moral Considerations'

- Sydney: Friday 13 August 10am
- New York: Thursday 12 August 8pm

Book Launch | Ramsey McGlazer
University of California, Berkeley

Old Schools: Modernism, Education, and the Critique of Progress
(Fordham University Press, 2020)

With comments presented by the author and distinguished guests Anne Rogerson (University of Sydney) and Samir Haddad (Fordham University).

- Sydney: Friday 3 September
10am-11:30am
- New York: Thursday 2 September 8pm

Book Launch – Andrés Henao Castro
University of Massachusetts, Boston

Antigone in the Americas: Democracy, Sexuality, and Death in the Settler Colonial Present
(SUNY Press, 2021)

With comments presented by the author and distinguished guests Demetra Kasimis (University of Chicago) and Ely Orrego-Torres (Northwestern University)

- Sydney: Friday 8 October 11am
- New York: Thursday 7 October 8pm

Emanuela Bianchi | New York University
'Aristotle and the Ends of Eros'

- Sydney: Friday 5 November 11am
- New York: Thursday 4 November 8pm

Daniela Cammack | University of California, Berkeley
'Proximity and Politics'

- Sydney: Friday 3 December 11am
- New York: Thursday 2 December 7pm

ALL WELCOME

For more information on the Critical Antiquities Network please email fass.can@sydney.edu.au

Event details can be found here:
- sophi-events.sydney.edu.au

TO REGISTER

To register, please **sign up for the Critical Antiquities Network mailing list** and you will receive CAN announcements and Zoom links.

Thinking and Moral Considerations

Dennis J. Schmidt | Western Sydney University

- Sydney: Friday, August 13, 10am
- New York: Thursday, August 12, 8pm

The title of these remarks repeats the title of an essay by Arendt that was published in 1971. In that essay Arendt asks whether thinking – understood in the broadest sense and not merely as a matter of knowledge – provides some sort of “guarantee”, some sort of compelling attachment to a moral sense. Here reflections are largely, but not exclusively, directed to Platonic texts.

My intention is to ask this question again by beginning with a closer look at Arendt’s text, but then moving to look at some key Platonic texts – including some that Arendt does not take up – that treat this issue. My special concern will be to ask what, if anything, binds us to the good? While the focus of my comments will be centered on Platonic texts and will take Arendt’s text as the guiding impulse for those comments, it will be necessary to refer to some issues in Aristotle, Kant, Heidegger, and Agamben in order to unfold some further possibilities.

Philosophy has tended to hold tight to the conviction that reason, thinking, truth, and the good matter. Bloch took this conviction as evidence for the importance of the principle of hope. Arendt echoes this in her essay, especially its final words: “The manifestation of the wind of thought is not knowledge; it is the ability to tell right from wrong, beautiful from ugly. And this indeed may prevent catastrophes, at least for myself, in the rare moments when the chips are down.” Since my own conviction in this matter has been badly shaken, this paper is an effort to understand more clearly how it might be renewed.

Book Launch | Ramsey McGlazer

(University of California, Berkeley)

Old Schools: Modernism, Education, and the Critique of Progress (Fordham University Press, 2020)

With comments presented by the author and distinguished guests Anne Rogerson (University of Sydney) and Samir Haddad (Fordham University).

- Sydney: Friday, September 3, 10am
- New York: Thursday, September 2, 8pm

Book Blurb:

Old Schools marks out a modernist countertradition. The book makes sense of an apparent anachronism in twentieth-century literature and cinema: a fascination with outmoded, paradigmatically pre-modern educational forms that persists long after they are displaced in progressive pedagogical theories.

Advocates of progressive education turned against Latin in particular. The dead language – taught through time-tested means including memorization, recitation, copying out, and other forms of repetition and recall – needed to be updated or eliminated, reformers argued, so that students could breathe free and become modern, achieving a break with convention and constraint.

Yet McGlazer’s remarkable book reminds us that progressive education was championed not only by political progressives, but also by Fascists in Italy, where it was an object of Gramsci’s critique. Building on Gramsci’s pages on the Latin class, McGlazer shows how figures in various cultural vanguards, from Victorian Britain to 1970s Brazil, returned to and reimagined the old school.

Strikingly, the works that McGlazer considers valorize this school’s outmoded techniques even at their most cumbersome and conventional. Like the Latin class to which they return, these works produce constraints that feel limiting but that, by virtue of that limitation, invite valuable resistance. As they turn grammar drills into verse and repetitious lectures into voiceovers, they find unlikely resources for critique in the very practices that progressive reformers sought to clear away.

Registering the past’s persistence even while they respond to the mounting pressures of modernization, writers and filmmakers from Pater to Joyce to Pasolini retain what might look like retrograde attachments – to tradition, transmission, scholastic rites, and repetitive forms. But the counter-progressive pedagogies that they devise repeat the past to increasingly radical effect. *Old Schools* teaches us that this kind of repetition can enable the change that it might seem to impede.

Book Launch | Andrés Henao Castro

(University of Massachusetts, Boston)

Antigone in the Americas: Democracy, Sexuality, and Death in the Settler Colonial Present (SUNY Press, 2021)

With comments presented by the author and distinguished guests Demetra Kasimis (University of Chicago) and Ely Orrego-Torres (Northwestern University)

- Sydney: Friday, October 8, 11 am
- New York: Thursday, October 7, 8pm

Book Blurb:

Sophocles's classical tragedy, *Antigone*, is continually reinvented, particularly in the Americas. Theater practitioners and political theorists alike revisit the story to hold states accountable for their democratic exclusions, as Antigone did in disobeying the edict of her uncle, Creon, for refusing to bury her brother, Polynices. *Antigone in the Americas* not only analyzes the theoretical reception of *Antigone*, when resituated in the Americas, but further introduces decolonial rumination as a new interpretive methodology through which to approach classical texts. Traveling between modern present and ancient past, Andrés Fabián Henao Castro focuses on *metics* (resident aliens) and slaves, rather than citizens, making the feminist politics of burial long associated with *Antigone* relevant for theorizing militant forms of mourning in the global south. Grounded in settler colonial critique, black and woman of color feminisms, and queer and trans of color critique, *Antigone in the Americas* offers a more radical interpretation of *Antigone*, one relevant to subjects situated under multiple and interlocking systems of oppression.

Aristotle and the Ends of Eros

Emanuela Bianchi | New York University

- Sydney: Friday, November 5, 11 am
- New York: Thursday, November 4, 8pm

While eros is of key philosophical significance for Plato, it all but disappears in Aristotle's thought, replaced by that more rational and reciprocal relation, *philia*. This paper explores the demise of eros in Aristotle via an investigation of the ancient epithet *erōs lusimēls*, and suggests, with the assistance of Julia Kristeva, that it may reappear in other forms in his corpus, disguised and sublimated yet still operative.

Proximity and Politics

Daniela Cammack | University of California, Berkeley

- Sydney: Friday, December 3, 11 am
- New York: Thursday, December 2, 7pm

What difference does regular proximity to unknown others make to the way we think about, experience, and practice mass politics? Many people dislike, even fear, crowds as oppressive, homogenizing, and intolerant, yet they can also be supportive, friendly, even joyful – thinking here of my own memories of scores of gigs and festivals. This paper argues that the experience of being physically in a mass may help to foster collective agency in a way significant for democracy. Drawing on a variety of ancient Greek and modern sources, including Aristotle, Thucydides, Demosthenes, Rousseau, and Marx, it proposes that proximity – especially being with many unknown others during decision-making processes – helps us to act collectively for two important reasons. Proximity both affects our perceptions of the feasibility of potential collective actions, especially in conjunction with mass majority voting (leading us to think we *can do this*); and it provides essential moral support (leading us to *do more* and *do it better*). Mass democracy without physical masses leaves too much to the imagination, thus critically hamstringing democratic agency.