

Early Career academic workshop

“Humanities and Social Sciences: crises and changes”

Tunis, 29 February - 1 March 2024

The Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research organizes in collaboration with St John’s College, University of Oxford and the Tunisian Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts “Beit al –Hikma”, a workshop around the theme “**Humanities and Social Sciences: crises and changes**” on **29 February - 1 March 2024**, in “Beit al-Hikma”, Tunis.

Context

The workshop is an unusual event in that it has two main aims. On the one hand, it seeks to put cutting- edge research from the UK and Tunisia in dialogue around broad axes of research and reflection, outlined below. The second, parallel, aim is to build connections, exchanges and more lasting collaboration within the overall objectives of the Tunisia-UK Joint Commission for Higher Education and Scientific Research. These specific aims include establishing direct contact among researchers; exchanging views and know-how in relation to grant applications and joint research; and sharing information and best practice in the fields. The present workshop puts into dialogue 10 Early Career Researchers (ECR) from the UK and 10 ECRs from Tunisia

Theme

We live in a perpetually changing world, marked by uncertainty and which can be read, most often, under the sign of crises at different levels: economic, social, political, environmental, climatic, etc. Solicited more than ever to play their role as tools of understanding, analysis and assistance in decision-making, Humanities and Social Sciences are increasingly called upon to conduct all types of debate and reflection on these crises with a view to exploring changes for the benefit of humans and humanity. It goes without saying that these crises themselves have not ceased to affect, in turn, the human and social sciences themselves in ways which are already reflected in the intellectual order and affect the world of knowledge itself. Crises and changes in the real world or/and crises and changes in the world of knowledge, is the double point of view from which our theme, **Humanities and Social Sciences: crises and changes** can be approached.

Humanities and Social Sciences have been ideal loci from which to observe and make sense of crises and changes affecting our world as human beings within social contexts. Crises can lead to progressive changes, which affect reality, such as revolutions, but crises can also engender regression or even catastrophic changes. The dramatic transformations in information technology, the environment and belief systems and ideas pose serious challenges to the very idea of what it means to be human in the 21st century. Artificial Intelligence is pushing the boundaries between the human and the non-human at dizzying speed while climate change has affected every aspect of life. All of this occurs within an

increased imbalance in wealth and power between North and South. Racial, cultural and linguistic diversity is at stake and people are on the move, forced by violence, economic need and lack of opportunity.

On the other hand, crises and changes in the fields of Humanities and Social Sciences themselves have affected their institutions, theories, and pedagogies. Manifestations of this include decline in funding and take up of humanities subjects across the world; precarity of the Humanities and Social Sciences research; and revision of theories and methodologies under pressure from global social movements and economic conditions such as the marketisation of higher education and research.

Sub-themes

The broad axes suggested here are meant to be open to approaches from all the disciplines covered by the Humanities and Social Sciences. This can be done in collaborative interdisciplinary work or within single disciplines. The main broad axes proposed are conceived as umbrella concepts or themes, which can be divided into subthemes and narrower angles. They should allow the emergence of gathered fields of interventions related, but not restricted to, the following sub-themes.

1. **Critical narratives of crises and changes.** We seek research which addresses situated historical perspectives; literary representations; reconstructions in art and audio-visual media; critical analysis of discourses.
2. **Borders and crises.** Papers could address the paradoxical situation by which borders are both strengthened and challenged. Such borders include those between humans as well those between the human and non-human, such as artificial intelligence (AI); migration, exile and refuge; citizenship and belonging; linguistic borders; the interface between the global and the local.
3. **Ethics in times of crises and change.** Ethics is understood broadly to encompass disciplinary ethics, global ethics and norms.
4. **Beyond crises.** Examining some of the ways through which crises are resolved and change is imagined. This includes literary and cinematic utopias and dystopias, and social, cultural and political dynamics of revolution and reform.
5. **Critical reflections on the humanities and social sciences.** While they offer ways of dealing with and analysing crises and changes in society, Human and Social Sciences, themselves, face challenges including paradigmatic changes; language change; economies of knowledge; revision of epistemologies; politics of knowledge production; reception of concepts across cultures through translation, school curricula.

Submission

Interested participants are requested to submit an abstract of **300 words in English** exclusively on the following link. <https://forms.gle/vLytAhD2PEn79w9P6>

We understand early career status to be **within 10 years of the first academic appointment** (Examples in the Tunisian system include permanent or contractual positions. In the UK system, examples include postdoctoral researchers, research fellows, assistant professors, lecturers). The working language of the workshop is English.

Timeline

- **15 October 2023**: Deadline for submission of abstracts.
- **1 November 2023**: Notification of acceptance.
- **8 November 2023**: Confirmation of participation.
- **29 February- 1 March 2024**: Workshop at Beit El Hikma.

Funding

The organizers will assist the participants to cover the costs of their transportation and accommodation. The specific details of support for each candidate will be sent along with the notification of acceptance.

For more information, please contact: ecrw.mhesr.tn@gmail.com

Organizing Committee

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