

Twentieth Annual Historical Materialism Conference Call for Abstracts

The Cost of Life

Oppression, Exploitation and Struggle in the Time of Monsters

9–12 November 2023,

SOAS, Russell Square, Central London

Deadline for abstracts: Monday 12 June 2023

Whether the discussion is about reforming pension systems, overhauling health care or the sources of inflation, we are constantly reminded that life has a cost, a price to pay, a burden to bear. At the same time, we are also periodically reminded that not all lives are valued or priced in the same manner; some lives are cheaper and more expendable than others: from over-work and deteriorating living conditions for billions of 'essential workers' to police violence and incarceration; from sexual abuse and the denial of bodily autonomy to the socially determined vulnerability and 'susceptibility' during the pandemic; from the persistence of racialised exploitation and oppression to the many faces of neocolonialism; from militarised borders turned into kill zones to the ongoing climate disaster.

But there is also the struggle of life (and the struggle for a decent life). As the impressive UK strike wave, the French insurrection against Macron's aggressive neoliberalism, mass protests in Greece, farmers' strikes in India, the new wave of struggles in the Americas, and the continuous youth rebellion against a future of extinction show us, there is a multitude of resistances to exploitation, racism, systemic violence and ecological degradation; resistances that are facing the increasingly authoritarian mutation of contemporary capitalist states trying to cope with the hegemonic crisis of 'actually existing neoliberalism'.

These recent struggles pose important practical and theoretical questions. How can we articulate a reading of the conjuncture that can bring forward the common thread running through all these attacks on life, the common thread of capitalist social-property relations in their articulation with patriarchy, racialisation and imperialism? How can we bring together the collective aspirations, demands and desires in a manner that leads to a coherent strategy for emancipation? What can we learn from these struggles and how can we treat them as experimental terrains for new political practices? And how can critical Marxist theory, in all its necessary and welcome polyphony, contribute to such an endeavour, bridging the gap between radical theory and collective praxis? These are some of the questions we want to be discussed at the twentieth annual Historical Materialism Conference.

We still believe that this particular format of the in-person conference offers a unique and irreplaceable form that brings together comrades, enables discussion, helps the dissemination of new and original research, creates research networks and communities, and builds solidarity. This is why we will not accept online presentations, except in very rare

and specific cases. We would also note that we do engage in online broadcasts and podcasts all year round for such sessions.

As in the past, the conference ethos is strictly egalitarian. This means everyone is invited to contribute in a comradely spirit, the conference is open to all currents of critical Marxist theory and we expect all presenters to attend the entire conference, not just their own session (with no 'cameo appearances'). We also expect all speakers to make themselves available for the whole period of the conference for their sessions (with only completely immutable circumstances constituting exceptions), as tailoring a conference of this size around individuals' preferences and desires is not feasible or desirable. The conference is an important part of the broader Historical Materialism project – including the journal, the book series, and the global network of HM conferences – and we want to encourage all conference participants to get involved with these different elements, for example by subscribing to the journal and submitting their conference paper to us for consideration.

In line with the central theme of this year's conference, we particularly want to invite contributions on the following non-exclusive questions:

- Marxist perspectives on the capitalist economic conjuncture and the signs of an emerging crisis;
- Contemporary imperialism, the shift towards a more divided and polarised world, and all these fuelling war;
- The tendency towards hegemonic crises in advanced capitalist formations;
- Racism and processes of racialisation.
- The new wave of struggles and their strategic significance;
- The social conditioning of pandemic and health threats and the social production of vulnerability;
- Authoritarianism and restrictions over the conditions of life;
- Ecology, the ongoing climate disaster and the movements against extinction;
- The new and old forms of collective politics emerging within struggles and how they might help or hinder the renewal of radical politics.

Whilst we encourage papers and panels that address these themes, as always, the Historical Materialism conference seeks to provide a space for critical Marxist theory and research across the globe and a range of disciplines and interests, so submissions on other themes are welcome.

The following streams will each be issuing individual CFPs:

- Workers' Inquiry Stream
- Marxist Feminist Stream

- Sexuality and Political Economy Stream
- Race and Capital
- Culture Stream
- Marxism and Technology Stream
- Ecology and Climate Change Stream

Individual proposals for papers and panels must include: i) Names of participants with e-mails and institutional affiliations. Where there is more than one participant, we require a clear indication of a corresponding author. ii) Title and abstract of the paper or panel. In the case of a paper, please submit an abstract of no longer than 300 words. In the case of a panel, please submit an overarching description of 300 words, names and details of each participant and abstracts for individual papers.

The deadline for submissions is **Monday 12 June 2023**. Partial submissions may be rejected.

To submit a paper or panel proposal visit: <https://conference.historicalmaterialism.org/>

For all enquiries, please contact: info@historicalmaterialism.org