



GeoHumanities
Equipe LISCA/ILCEA4 group THAW
‘Territories, Horizons in the Anglophone World’
Université Grenoble Alpes

CFP ‘Place and Post-Truth’ Seminar

19 November 2021

This Call For Papers invites propositions on the complex relationships between place and truth with the challenging perspective of addressing the ramifications of place with what is often referred to as ‘post-truth’.

The organizers of this seminar consider ‘place’ according to the definitions offered by geographers such as Agnew, Cresswell or Tuan, among others, with place as lived experience, anchoring, encounters and even embodiment, while space is more abstract, quantifiable and measurable. Within this conceptual framework, space is more objective, while place is more subjective and submitted to a number of variations. This first series of definitions does not exclude other sociological, anthropological or philosophical approaches of place, especially when place is perceived as cut through by movement and change (Ingold, Massey), or maybe more challengingly even, as a notion of a certain boundedness that leaves room for an openness or extendedness (Malpas), as place is defined prior to space (Malpas).

What those definitions share, as they link place and movement, is the versatile nature of place, which eschews its traditional description as a closed portion of space. It therefore renders problematic the relationship of place with truth, as the reality of place, its meaning, purpose and function are questioned. Place as a bounded portion of space has the advantage of representing a reliable vision of a portion of the world, a kind of nugget of truth, if only circumscribed to a tiny home-bound or bodily portion of space. The fact that place is conceptualized as ever changing, ever adapting, in a continual process of becoming and emergence (Ingold, Malpas) makes room for a questioning of what reality is and what truth and post-truth correspond to.

The concept of post-truth is intriguing as it holds on to the word ‘truth’, as opposed to ‘lies’ for example. So post-truth does not strictly coincide with the idea of lying, precisely because it still holds on to truth as a reference. Post-truth however seems to be situated after a change of paradigm, as if truth had been overcome, or relinquished, or had ceased to be valued as a reference. One could almost sense a form of arrogance, as if subjectivity, emotions and beliefs held decidedly more value than a set of universally referenced truths.

The emergence of post-truth is often construed as immoral in the political framework, echoing the long-standing moral philosophical debates on truth and veracity as universal values, and on the subjective assessment of harmful truths and ‘white lies’. A moral consideration of truth as an absolute norm has been seen as ignoring the fallibility of human reason, and suppressing the multiplicity of perspectives. Between the tyranny of truth as an absolute and the fraudulent ‘alternative reality’ generated by a general mistrust of facts, many seek a solution in a renewed commonality.

This Call For Papers invites propositions that will question post-truth and its precursors and contemporaries: lies, propaganda, manipulation and disinformation. We would like in particular to discuss the violent dimension of post-truth, the violent assertion that it is possible to become blind and deaf to objectivity, verifiable facts and universal values in order to promote a subjective truth.

For Edgar Morin, there are two kinds of truths: the truth of facts and the truth of theory. But he insists that the truth of facts is reliable and cannot be contested, while that of theory is not reliable as it can fail or change. Therefore fact-checking is often presented as the solution to undermine attempts at being ruled by post-truth edicts. But this also raises the question of sincerity and trust: since all facts cannot be checked, forms of trust in someone’s discourse and in the institution that produces the discourse are necessary. But because truth is always mediated through discourse, doubt and suspicion are likely to be channeled through this in-between space and occupy it entirely, leaving no room to facts and fact-checking.

We look forward to receiving propositions that look into the ambiguities of place and the post-truth apparatus and strive to make sense of the competitions between an individual experience of place (shaped with emotions, memory, trauma, pleasure) and a more collective agenda of verified facts and shared places of becoming.

For this seminar we invite propositions on postcolonial issues such as haunted places, the construction of truth (truth commissions in New Zealand and South Africa), in-between urban/rural places, invisible places (retention centres, mother and baby homes (Ireland), legal fiction (Australia), but also how ‘pre-truth’ national narratives are constructed retroactively (‘deep fake’). We also look forward to receiving abstracts on how former colonial powers react to reappraisals of their histories and places of memory (demands for the removal or relocation of statues and memorials deemed racist; Balliol College’s 2021 apology for the historical acceptance of donations linked to the Atlantic slave trade; the National Trust’s report on the connections between colonialism and the properties in their care...).

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- 'Colonial Countryside project', *National Trust*. Web. Accessed March 21, 2021. <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/colonial-countryside-project>

Please send your proposal by ~~15 June 2021~~ August 31st 2021 to :

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