

Confronting Discrimination

Phenomenological and Genealogical Perspectives

International Symposium

Call for Papers

27–29 October, 2021

University of Innsbruck, Department of Philosophy

In cooperation with the Research Platform *Center for Gender Studies Innsbruck* (CGI), the Research Area *Cultural Encounters – Cultural Conflicts*, and the Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen

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Forschungsschwerpunkt Kulturelle
Begegnungen - Kulturelle Konflikte



Forschungsplattform Center Interdisziplinäre
Geschlechterforschung Innsbruck

Outlining the agenda

The idea of equal treatment is essential to the self-conception of democratic societies: the rule of law promises protection against arbitrary disadvantages. However, contemporary social reality is still haunted by forms of discrimination. Often, discrimination goes unnoticed, is tacitly tolerated or even endorsed. The global *Black Lives Matter* movement starkly revealed this contradiction, thus raising awareness for the prevalence of racism and racial discrimination, especially in Western societies. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic makes visible a broad array of systematic patterns of discrimination, as susceptibility to the virus is not only a matter of biological vulnerability but is also entangled with complex structures and histories of discrimination.

These examples point (1) to the large diversity of experiences of discrimination, from racism, xenophobia, nationalism, and linguisticism to sexism, homophobia and transphobia, classism, ableism and ageism; (2) to the ways in which patterns of discrimination are anchored in the very structure of social relations; and (3) to their manifold expressions (othering, bullying, stigmatization, incitement, stereotyping, hate speech, deprivation, exploitation, physical violence, etc.). For several decades, these problems have loomed large in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Authors such as Fanon, Beauvoir, Arendt, Foucault, Goffman, Young, Garland-Thomson, Butler, Spivak, and many others have made significant contributions to a critical understanding of the dynamics of discrimination.

Expanding these critical reflections, this international conference intends to combine the productive potential of *phenomenological* and *genealogical* approaches to current issues of discrimination. Bridging phenomenology and genealogy seems promising, given that an appropriate understanding of discrimination must take into account both concrete experience as well as its structural and historical dimensions. Therefore, bringing phenomenology and genealogy into dialogue will allow for mutual instruction and constructive criticism: while phenomenological analyses run the risk of absolutizing the perspective of affectedness, thereby individualizing discrimination, genealogical analyses tend to reduce experiences of discrimination to their social-historical conditions. Juxtaposing phenomenology and genealogy thus heralds a more comprehensive understanding of discrimination in its many facets.

Crucial Questions

Against this backdrop, this international symposium plans to confront experiences and structures of discrimination by taking up phenomenological and genealogical perspectives on these issues in the context of various disciplines and research projects, mainly tackling questions such as:

- What does it mean to experience discrimination and how do these experiences relate to structural discriminatory frameworks? How can such experiences become the issue of phenomenological analysis so that they are adequately and sensitively reflected and discussed?
- How can different experiences and structures of discrimination be related or compared genealogically?
- In which ways do multiple experiences of discrimination mutually condition and reinforce each other and how do they become institutionally visible and nameable? How do they become recognizable when they are perhaps not directly evident or witnessed by those affected?
- What role do experiences and structures of discrimination play in the production of academic knowledge and how does this relate to the scientific criteria of impartiality?

The Symposium as Venue

In this context and in consideration of all those events that demonstrate how discrimination structures social relations and affects the experiences of people, the main ambition of the symposium is to provide space for scholars and activists to explore, revisit, criticize, and discuss, that is, to confront discrimination – not least by considering what both scholarship and activism may contribute to current disputes and conflicts.

The symposium's keynote speakers are Fahim Amir (Vienna), Elsa Dorlin (Paris), Burkhard Liebsch (Bochum), Marina Martinez Mateo (Munich), Gerald Posselt (Vienna), and Gail Weiss (Washington).

Given the pandemic situation allows it, the symposium will take place at the University of Innsbruck in cooperation with the Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen (<https://www.buchsenhausen.at/en/>) from 27–29 October, 2021. Otherwise, an online format will be applied.

Call for Papers

The symposium invites scholars, in particular also PhD candidates, and activists who are passionate about phenomenological and genealogical approaches and related fields such as Gender Studies and Postcolonial Studies to trace some of the past and present features and modalities of discrimination, while being aware of the ambivalences of the rhetoric or policy of discrimination. In this sense, the symposium strives to provide and assess diverse accounts of discrimination at times that are, apparently, eventful.

Should you be interested in presenting a paper, please send us an abstract of 300-350 words in English by 30 April, 2021, to the following e-mail address: confronting-discrimination-2021@uibk.ac.at. Please indicate whether you wish to present in the PhD candidates' section (27 October, 2021) or in one of the general panels (28 and 29 October, 2021). The selection procedure will be based on peer reviews. Notification of abstract acceptance will be made by the end of May 2021.

There is no participation fee. Catering will be provided by the symposium. Also, the organizers can assist in travel arrangements. Travel and accommodation costs need to be sustained by the participants.

Outstanding papers presented at the symposium may be subsequently published in a special issue of *Le foucaldien*. *Le foucaldien* is an internationally renowned open access journal with high quality standards (peer review) and broad readership: <https://foucaldien.net/>

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