

CfP

Speculative Climates: Hauntings of the Past Across the Humanities
International Doctoral Workshop funded by the a.r.t.e.s. Graduate School

Considering the contemporary as a timespace haunted by crises rooted in the past, the workshop on *Speculative Climates* asks how the intricate mesh of colonialism, (neo)capitalism, and the climate crisis is imagined in the Humanities through Gothic hauntings. These hauntings, we argue, not only negotiate our past and help us reflect on the present, but also open up ways of envisioning more equitable and sustainable futures. Thinking (neo)colonialism and climate crisis together, the workshop builds on arguments by Donna Haraway and postcolonial ecofeminists such as Kathryn Yusoff. While Haraway's *Capitalocene* links capitalism and climate crisis, Yusoff argues for the Anthropocene as an ideological concept of White Geology that tries to overshadow how "the inhuman objectification of indigenous and black subjects" (45) preconditions every origin story of the Anthropocene. As Yusoff investigates how slavery drove the coal-mining economy that would ultimately enable the steam engines during Industrialization (which in turn not only enabled capitalist growth, but also caused the contemporary climate crisis), colonial violence is placed at the heart of the Anthropocene, while the causality between (colonial) capitalism and climate change gains centre stage.

As the White Geology of the Anthropocene tries to repress our colonial pasts and neocolonial present, we propose haunting – being a trope in speculative fiction, an evoked imagery in non-fiction, a visual affectivity in the arts – as a mode of analysis that enables a nuanced understanding of the link between material past, present, and potential futures, marked by the mesh of profound ecological, political, and social crises. Seeing the Gothic mode as one of the mechanisms through which the colonial periphery can "write back" to the metropolitan center, we understand hauntings as a form of reckoning with all that the heteropatriarchal Global North aims to repress. While the Gothic naturally lends itself as a mode to imagine the connection of climate crisis to past injustices, the workshop dispels the Gothic from its generic roots in the Global North, recognizing its different articulations within Indigenous and non-western contexts, and thus ultimately resituating Gothic hauntings within a decolonial frame. Hereby, the material reality of the haunting – i.e., extractivism or local histories of colonial violence – are focused on as we understand *haunting* as a global mode of confrontation that persistently demands accountability in the face of narratives marked by colonial and extractive violence; thus, our understanding of *haunting* moves beyond its nature of spectral "remainder" (Ilott 24) of an overcome colonial past as we see our pasts not overcome but still present in current material reality.

Thinking colonial violence and climate crisis together, and arguing for the particular potential of Gothic hauntings as a mechanism to negotiate how the past spills over into the present, the workshop *Speculative Climates: Hauntings of the Past Across the Humanities* aims to provide a space to discuss this violent mesh of crises as the participants consider the link between past violence and the climate crisis in speculative arts and non-fiction. As the marginalized and non-normative become the ghosts that haunt our present – ghosts with many forms and shapes, we ask:

1. To what extent do cultural products (film, literature, music, theater, games, non-fiction, art) address the link between (neo)colonialism and the climate crisis through Gothic hauntings? What other violence comes to the fore as their material expression haunts our present?
2. How are Gothic hauntings employed in speculative climate-imaginaries to transgress normative understandings of time and space, as well as to question heteropatriarchal binaries and the socio-political status quo?
3. What dystopian and utopian visions of the future are engendered as Gothic hauntings are imagined within contexts of climate-related, trans-generational trauma and queer futurity? And to what extent can speculative negotiations of the present thus serve as warning signals, creative instruments of hope or resilience, or outlets of reckoning?

By addressing one or more of these questions – thus, reflecting on the current crises, contemplating possible solutions thereof, and imagining sustainable and just futures –, workshop presentations should focus on the idea of haunting within one of the following possible frameworks:

- ★ haunting in genres like climate fiction, Afrofuturism, Co-Futurism, Fantasy, Science Fiction ...
- ★ haunting in (neo)colonial art, climate imaginaries, ecopoetics ...
- ★ haunting in the tradition of Hauntology (Derrida) and beyond
- ★ haunting and trauma: human and more-than-human trauma, transgenerational trauma
- ★ slow violence, extractivism, and climate migration
- ★ haunting as 'writing'/'striking' back
- ★ the non-heteropatriarchal in disguise of Gothic hauntings
- ★ haunting and utopian moments; i.e. 'being at peace with the ghosts of the past'
- ★ haunting and queer belonging
- ★ haunting of uncertain futures versus imaginaries of queer futurity

We invite proposals (300–400 words, in English) along with a brief biographical note to be sent to **aylin-dilek.walder@tu-braunschweig.de** and **calio@em.frankfurt.de**. Please use the subject line “Speculative Climates”.

Deadline for proposals: **30 April 2026**

Conference date: **19 and 20 November 2026**

Location: **University of Cologne, Germany**

A limited travel and accommodation allowance may be available for speakers. Following the workshop, participants will have the opportunity to publish their paper in a Special Issue on the same topic with a peer-reviewed academic journal.

Works Cited

Haraway, Donna. 2016. “Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene,” *E-flux Journal* 75, 1-17.

Yusoff, Kathryn. *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. University of Minnesota Press, 2018.