

COMPARING

An international doctoral summer school
University College Cork
5 to 9 September 2011

Funded by the
Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences

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CALL FOR PAPERS

Why comparing?

The School is prompted by the intellectual urgency of comparison in the humanities today. With the emergence of new investigative frameworks (e.g. global history, world literature, the ethnological turn in disciplines like music, the emergence of transcultural objects and approaches), comparison has become a vital focus for critical debate, both within and between disciplines: what we witness is an accrued inventiveness of comparative method (with a commitment to experiment, to the development of dedicated approaches to complex objects and problems) and a new intensity of theoretical speculation as to the scope of comparison to precipitate change in our understanding both of objects and of disciplines (whether established and emergent, e.g. cultural studies, visual studies).

Call for papers

Papers are invited from doctoral students and from recent Ph.D. graduates who intend to participate in the School. We welcome proposals for twenty-minute papers within one of the subject areas which the School embraces — literature, history of art, history, philosophy — as well as interdisciplinary or theoretical proposals. Proposals should be no longer than **500 words**, and should include your name, institution, title of your doctoral project or dissertation, year of registration, and email, and should be sent to comparing@ucc.ie no later than **14 March 2011**. Proposals will be reviewed by a selection committee and the outcome will be notified to you no later than 28 March. Applications for the School will close on 29 April; for details of the application process, please consult the School website. An application should be forwarded with a proposal for a paper. The School will offer a number of bursaries to participating doctoral students; applications can be made using a form which can be downloaded from the School website.

What is comparing?

Comparison is understood to encompass three principal directions:

Like for like comparison Enquiries whose rationale is intrinsically comparative, whose objects are complex but related in time or in space or both (e.g. European realisms) or whose claims result from comparative analyses (e.g. revolutions understood comparatively) or where distinct versions of the same or related objects are brought together for the sake of comparison (e.g. western and eastern

philosophies). The programme will substantially explore the place and practice of such comparisons within disciplines and disciplinary histories.

Instrumental comparison Enquiries where comparison is used as a tool, e.g. where comparison is used so as to elucidate or refine or extend claims into an object which is not comparative in scope as such. The programme will examine the conditions under which such comparisons can be initiated and the ways in which they can prompt new research questions, revise analytical or conceptual categories, call existing knowledge into question.

Transformative comparison Comparisons which purposefully operate independently of disciplinary constraints in seeking to define how symbolic practices, or societies, or histories, or worldviews, or conceptual schemes can be made to shed light on each other; and, conversely, how comparing such objects can modify discrete language- or culture-specific perspectives on history, experience, knowledge, reasoning, values (even to the extent of precipitating changes in our attitudes to and use of these categories themselves).

Scope of the School

The formal programme of the school will take place over five days, beginning on 5 September, with a preliminary day on 4 September. The first three days of the formal programme will deal with comparative directions in specific branches of the humanities: art (specifically art history and literature); history (specifically comparison of national and the significance of global or regional histories as a comparative framework); and philosophy (specifically comparative and Asian philosophy). The remaining two days will focus on theoretical problems which arise from specific forms of comparisons, first by examining recent debates prompted by experimental forms of comparison, ones which remap existing materials or concepts by extending frameworks of comparison to objects which are conventionally held to be 'incomparable'; and second by comparing and evaluating the range of comparative practices witnessed in the course of the week's work, so as to begin to theorize an expanded account of comparison as a set of practices in their own right.

Benefits to Ph.D. students and early career researchers of this School will consist in the opportunity to scrutinize the roles comparison plays in a range of disciplines and in being exposed to work which has given rise to new ways of devising and pursuing research questions. The programme is accordingly centred on a number of invited contributions on the methodological considerations which flow from comparative work; contributions from researchers in the Irish partner universities and from abroad on problems of comparisons as they arise in specific disciplines or critical discourses; and contributions based on case studies from Ph.D. students and early career researchers on the basis of this call for papers. Over the course of the week, discussion and debate will encourage the formulation of new research questions, will explore the implications for established and new understandings of comparison for the conceptualization of projects, will focus on the kinds of conceptual and investigative competences which comparison requires today, and will explore the ways in which specific findings have led to changes in disciplinary practice, as well as revisions in how disciplinary boundary lines are drawn.

Subject to academic approval, the School will be offered for credit to participating doctoral students.