

**International Conference**  
***Ethics and Spectatorship in Film and Screen Media***  
**University College Cork, Ireland**  
**29–30 November 2025**

The **International Conference “Ethics and Spectatorship in Film and Screen Media”** will take place on 29–30 November 2025 at University College Cork (UCC), Ireland.

We are pleased to announce that our **keynote speakers** will be:

- Sarah Cooper, Professor of Film Studies at King’s College, London and author, among others, of *Selfless Cinema? Ethics and French Documentary* (Legenda, 2006). Her research interests range from critical theory, through documentary, arthouse, and experimental film, to film theory and philosophy.
- David Sorfa, Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at the University of Edinburgh and editor-in-chief of the journal *Film-Philosophy*. He has particular interests in film-philosophy, existentialism, phenomenology, the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, Jacques Derrida and the presentation of thought and thinking in cinema.

The conference is organised by Dr. Giacomo Leoni at the Department of Film and Screen Media, UCC, with support from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation funding programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No 101106754.

Selected papers will be considered for publication in a special issue of the diamond-open-access, peer-reviewed journal *Alphaville* (<http://www.alphavillejournal.com>).

**Call for papers**  
**Submissions are invited for papers and/or panels dealing**  
**with the titular topic of *Ethics and Spectatorship in Film and Screen Media***

Both ethics and spectatorship are broad and multifaceted concepts that have gained significant attention within Film Studies over the past two to four decades, respectively. Until recently, the intersection between the two has been underexplored, and primarily approached through the application of various categories of spectatorship to the theoretical frameworks used to discuss the ethics of film. Yet, the ethics of spectatorship raises complex and compelling questions about the roles and responsibilities of audiences in engaging with visual media. This conference seeks to explore the ethical dimensions of the

spectator's role, the way in which individual spectatorship is experienced, and our understanding of the scope and practice of spectatorship in action.

What are the ethical responsibilities of the viewer? What ethical questions arise in the act of watching, interpreting, and responding to films and audiovisual productions, both fictional and documentary, as opposed to ethical questions embedded in the text itself? How do we conceive of ourselves as spectators, and do we have agency about what kind of spectators we are?

We welcome submissions that engage with questions surrounding ethics and spectatorship, ethical spectatorship, and ethical issues in addressing spectatorship in film and screen media, whether fictional or documentary, including, but not limited to, the following topics:

- **Spectatorship and agency**: What does it mean for a spectator, or an audience of spectators, to engage ethically? Are there ethical responsibilities or expectations placed upon us as we participate in the act of spectating?
- **Ethics and aesthetics**: How do the ethics of spectatorship intersect with and depend upon the ethical dimensions of a film's artistic creation? Is an ethical approach to spectatorship compatible with an aesthetic-driven understanding of it?
- **Practices of spectatorship**: What are the implications for viewing practices when spectatorship is understood as an ethically infused process?
- **Theorising spectators**: Are certain ethical models or theories more suitable than others for evaluating the ethics of spectatorship?
- **Individual experience and positionality**: Do our personal identities, past experiences and traumas, and sense of belonging and affiliations shape our activity as aware spectators?
- **Feminist and gendered ethics of spectatorship**: How do gendered representations in film influence ethical engagement? What ethical responses are elicited by different depictions of gendered subjects and bodies?
- **Individual spectatorship and the neoliberal media**: Does globalized and immediate access to film allow individual agency in spectatorship to thrive? Can ethical spectatorship survive in the age of global distribution and algorithmic promotion?
- **Streaming in the Anthropocene**: How should we think ethically about spectatorship and access to content in the age of resource depletion and climate change?
- **Empathy and voyeurism**: Is our interest in *the pain of others* born of compassion or of morbid curiosity? And what is the relation between our viewing pleasure and the autonomy of bodies and persons displayed on screen? Does the difference lie in the artistic production or in the framing of the spectatorial act?

- **Generative AI and ethical spectatorship**: What new questions arise today about the ethical implications of synthetic media? What implications can technological development in AI have for our role as spectators?

## **Submission of Abstracts**

Proposals should be sent to Dr. Giacomo Leoni at [gleoni@ucc.ie](mailto:gleoni@ucc.ie), by the **deadline of 31 July 2025**; please include in the subject line [Proposal for Ethics and Spectatorship Conference].

To propose a paper: Include name and academic affiliation in the body of the email and attach a file with the proposed abstract (300 words maximum) and a separate author biography (100 words).

To propose a panel: Include name and academic affiliation of all intended participants (up to four presenters and one chair) and attach a short description of the panel overall (max 300 words) and of each of the intended presentations (300 words each), plus author biographies (100 words each).

Proposers will be notified of the selection outcome by 1 September 2025.

We welcome diverse perspectives and look forward to a thought-provoking and intellectually stimulating exploration of the ethics of spectatorship in film and media.

## **Contact Information**

For further information and any question, please write to [gleoni@ucc.ie](mailto:gleoni@ucc.ie).