CALL FOR PAPERS
The Humanities under Neoliberalism / The University under Neoliberalism
UCD Humanities Institute Annual PhD Conference 2017
UCD, 6th - 7th October, 2017.

“What matters is not to know the world but to change it.”
— Frantz Fanon

This is an interdisciplinary PhD conference encouraging input from a range of subjects to discuss the contemporary political and economic status-quo. We want to trace the broad impact of political, economic and cultural change on the university and, more specifically, on the humanities. Neoliberalism is not just an economic policy, it is a philosophy. Alongside the dissolution of social, political and environmental supports, neoliberalism encourages us to view the market as the bestower of all our liberties. It encourages us to view ourselves as primarily competitive and resilient individuals who no longer require the aid of social supports in a now unencumbered market. As universities conform to this new dynamic of competition and resilience, a degree is seen as a “passport to wealth”, and the institution functions to maintain rather than subvert existing social inequalities.

The increasing dissolution of student grant support as well as a general increase in student fees coincides with the removal of funding from the arts and humanities. The myth of a ‘free’ market that negates processes of social stratification is of immediate concern to the humanities as a discipline; our academic community has been created by these broader practices of social exclusion. If the university only exists to produce graduates for the job market then the true value of the arts is obsolete and not of any value to the state, tasked with supporting and funding. However, the overly competitive atmosphere created by the neoliberal university means that in order to be resilient, individual academics are forced to conform. This threatens academic freedom and the possibility of resistance. We encourage research focused on texts, media, works of art, film, music, criticism and drama and how they have responded, through resistance or reinforcement, to the dominance of neo-
liberalism in the contemporary moment. Neoliberalism’s market-oriented logic has not just spilled over into spheres ‘beyond the market’, it has purposely imposed its logic onto these spheres. It encourages us to understand everything in terms of economic value. Everything can be bought, sold, traded. But what voices does it exclude? Those which cannot be valued, bought or traded?

The conference will take place at the UCD Humanities Institute. The Institute promotes the international visibility and distinctiveness of interdisciplinary research in the humanities at UCD by acting as a laboratory for the study of culture and human experience. It complements research undertaken within related UCD schools and research institutes while concurrently providing a space for the delivery of interdisciplinary of transdisciplinary research of key societal challenges. The institute acts as a driving force for knowledge creation and transfer within UCD and in the context of the humanities in Ireland and Europe.

Professor Thomas Docherty, University of Warwick, is the keynote speaker. His work deals with matters of cultural policy related to international higher education. He is working on a series of new books which include a critique of the neoliberal university and proposals for an alternative.

We encourage papers from researchers, writers and artists not aligned with academia or affiliated with an academic institution. Individual proposals can include but are not limited to:

- Interdisciplinary research projects, not necessarily based in the humanities
- Work on race, gender, class and sexuality
- The extent to which the logic of neoliberalism coincides with that of liberal humanities
- Issues of academic freedom
- The student as consumer
- Activism and neoliberalism
- Feminism and neoliberalism
- Racism and neoliberalism
- Deregulation and social injustice
- The primacy of the individual/the self
- Critical perspectives on self-development/self-reliance
- Emotion and Affect
- Marginalised/alternative critical methodologies
- Art in the age of neoliberalism
- Concepts of transparency/agency/choice
- Emotional imperatives in the job marketplace
- Funding patterns in the university
- Educational access/social justice in the humanities
- The ‘Othering’ of critical theory in academia - we encourage research which uses critical theoretical methodologies

Please send submissions for 20 minute papers, by the 14th of July 2017, to Emma Penney and Donal Fullam at humanitiesunderneoliberalism@gmail.com