

When Are We?
Time in the Light of Contemporary World Crisis
University College Cork, 11th-12th May 2026

When are we? is a question we want to raise in the midst of a time of uncertainty, violence and precariousness: in a time of ignoring of human dignity and respect as reflected in numerous authoritarian leadership across the world, recurring forms of colonialism and imperialism, the climate emergency, the continuous struggle for social justice brought forth by the Black Lives Matter movement, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and the ongoing genocide in Palestine. The disorientating situation in which we find ourselves now, after a moment of 'suspended temporality' during the Covid-19 pandemic, is pushing humanities scholars, social scientists, and creative practitioners to reflect on our own understanding of temporalities as linked to the contemporary world crisis and to investigate *When are we?*.

Reflecting on time highlights the long duration, repetition [or recurrence], interruption, practices of resistance over time, and forms of memory recollection. How are key events reflected in the representation, construction, and narration of temporalities in our disciplines? What is the contribution of current scholarship to critically utilising temporalities? What is the role of new technologies in the study of time? How can our recognition of the Anthropocene and the Capitalocene raise awareness of more-than-human temporalities and highlighted the significance of working with palimpsests and 'deep times' in the context of the environment we all share and live in?

This conference aims to create a space to explore these questions; for instance, we can build on the definitions of time in the political, social, and cultural analysis by Achille Mbembe (*On the Postcolony*, 2001). From a literary point of view, time as defined by Saidiya Hartman (*The Time of Slavery*, 2002; *Lose Your Mother. A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*, 2007) provides critical tools for fruitful discussions. Furthermore, Afrofuturism offers novel ways to think of time and artistic representations of temporalities as outlined by Anderson, Reynaldo, and Charles E. Jones (*Afrofuturism 2.0: The Rise of Astro-Blackness*, 2016). Further thoughts for reflection derive from critical studies in Social Sciences; Oliver Harris, Alfredo Gonzáles-Ruibal, Gavin Lucas, and Tim Ingold have thoroughly explored the relationship between time and archaeology/anthropology. Further back in time, Norbert Elias (*Über die Zeit*, 1988) has offered a sociological view on temporalities by considering time as deeply entrenched in our human life and generational experiences, thus seeing it as a profoundly relational concept. These are just a few examples of possible paths we could take. *When are we?* This is the starting point of our conversation, which aims to consider and explore time from a multiplicity of perspectives and interdisciplinary approaches.

Questions to explore might include, but are not limited to:

- How can temporality be a useful concept in working through our anthropocenic times?
- How is time perceived, narrated, constructed, and manipulated in cultural production?
- How can we methodologically approach multitemporal palimpsests, layers, and co-existences? What can they bring to our studies?
- While we often think of time as chronology and linked to past - present - future, how can temporalities be useful in disrupting these modernistic certainties?

- Do different media allow for different time perceptions and interpretations?
- Which ‘alternative’ modes of temporalities are created in and beyond our disciplines and which new perspectives and possibilities do they offer?
- How do different cultural productions and knowledge interact with each other, especially cross- and transdisciplinary? How do they create different or new ways for thinking about temporalities?
- Which role does gender play in temporal configurations?
- How do AI technologies mark and shape temporalities?
- What are the current climate system and biodiversity loss telling us about the pacing of social and ecological collapse?
- How are alternative temporalities (more-than-human, deep times etc.) changing our perspectives of times?
- Which terminologies have been used by scholars to define temporalities in our fields, and which perspectives do they reflect?
- How do we make sense of ongoing colonial wars in what has been defined as post-colonial time? And what do new perspectives on postcolonial temporalities add to the study of postcolonial societies and consciousness?

Please send your abstract of ca. 300 words and a short bio-note to LMasini@ucc.ie by **January 15th**.

The conference offers the possibility to submit proposals for **individual papers as well as thematic panels**. If proposing a panel, please include a brief outline of the panel and the individual abstracts. The conference will be held in English. Acceptance e-mails and further info will be shared by mid-February. Presentations should not exceed 20 minutes.

Contact Information

Conference Organisers:

Dr. Leonora Masini, Department of Italian, UCC, Cork

Dr. Barbara Siller, Department of German, UCC, Cork

Dr. Chiara Giuliani, Department of Italian, UCC, Cork

Professor Laura McAtackney, Radical Humanities Laboratory and Archaeology, UCC, Cork

Works Cited

Anderson, Reynaldo, and Charles E. Jones, editors. *Afrofuturism 2.0: The Rise of Afro-Blackness*. Lexington Books, 2017

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Mbembe, Achille. *On the Postcolony*. University of California Press, 2001