

Call for Abstracts for Issue 12 (Winter 2021)

Ambiguity Conditions, Potentials, Limits

As a topic that is both timeless and current, the variety of manifestations and functions of ambiguity in culture, politics and everyday life has inspired scholars from various disciplines in the study of culture, from gender and queer studies (Engel 2002, Wilkerson 2007) to art history and theory (Eco 1962, Franklin 2020), and social sciences (Bauman 2007). The 12th issue of *On_Culture* seeks to explore ambiguity in its potential and limits as an analytical tool for research in the study of culture. By the same token, the issue is also interested in perspectives on ambiguity as a cultural phenomenon in its historical situatedness and political dimensions.

The act of renouncing fixed binary oppositions in social and cultural environment, although often celebrated for its dynamic power and political potential, can fuel reactionary and anti-democratic backlashes and calls for cultural homogeneity. Especially in times of crisis, such as the ongoing pandemic, simple answers to complex questions seem to be growing in popularity. In a study on the connection between totalitarianism, authoritarianism and ambiguity intolerance, Adorno et al. (1950) pointed out that “ambiguity tolerance” (Frenkel-Brunswick 1949) decreases, when the social and cultural environment is uncertain. More recently, Thomas Bauer (2018, 2021) has also argued that modern societies show a comparatively high level of ambiguity intolerance in comparison to pre-modern societies.

From literary fiction to political discourse, ambiguity counts among the narrative effects of the increasingly noticeable blurring of the fact/fiction boundaries. What are the implications of this epistemological ambiguity and what does it reveal about the cultural landscape which gives rise to this situation? While the concept of ambiguity is often employed to describe equivocal, open, and enigmatic phenomena, the following questions often remain unanswered: What exactly is meant when something is characterized as ambiguous? Are there different stages, degrees, or variations of ambiguity, and can they be differentiated terminologically and analytically? How can we include ambiguity’s historicity in our conceptual reflections and theoretical discussions? To what extent are the production, perception, transformation and functions of ambiguity shaped by the occidental western tradition of thought, and what are the challenging phenomena?

We welcome (disciplinary and interdisciplinary) contributions that go beyond the mere statement of ambiguity, and instead carefully describe different ambiguous phenomena and investigate what means are used to produce this ambiguity, how it functions, and what different levels and forms exist in its production and reception. Though the editorial team would be delighted to see unequivocal answers to some of the previously raised questions, this issue also seeks to disrupt traditional expectations of scientific knowledge production by raising more (new) questions than giving final answers.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- (systematic) approaches to ambiguity in art, visual culture, and literature
- ambiguity and epistemology
- undisambiguation in theory and praxis (e.g. deconstructive (re-)reading, queering)
- conceptual proximity (vis-à-vis ambivalence, hybridity, liminality, queer, opacity, abstraction)
- critique of ambiguity and alternative concepts
- historicity of ambiguity: historical manifestations and transformation processes
- ambiguity and narrative (e.g. fact/fiction boundaries, (post)modern poetics)
- ambiguity and (political and/or activist) engagement: strategic use of ambiguity (e.g. as camouflage and self/protection)
- ambiguity (in)tolerance in everyday life or in times of crisis (COVID-19 pandemic, peak phase of the AIDS epidemic, etc.)
- significance of ambiguity for gender studies, queer studies, and post/decolonial studies
- ambiguity and its potentials for (political-democratic) education and pedagogy
- culture(s) of ambiguity in religions

If you are interested in having a peer-reviewed academic article featured in the next issue, please submit an abstract of 300 words with the article title and a short biographical note to content@on-culture.org (subject line “Abstract Submission Issue 12”) **no later than February 28, 2021**. You will be notified by **March 15, 2021** whether your paper proposal has been accepted. The final date for full paper submissions is **June 15, 2021**.

Please note: *On_Culture* also features a *_perspectives* section devoted to shorter, creative pieces pertaining to each issue topic. These can be interviews, essays, opinion pieces, reviews of exhibitions, analyses of cultural artifacts and events, photo galleries, videos, works of art... and more! These contributions are uploaded on a rolling basis. Interested in contributing? Send your ideas to the Editorial Team at any time: content@on-culture.org

About *On_Culture*: *The Open Journal for the Study of Culture*

On_Culture: The Open Journal for the Study of Culture (ISSN: 2366-4142) is a biannual, peer-reviewed academic eJournal created and edited by doctoral researchers, postdocs and professors working at the GCSC. It provides a platform and forum for pursuing and reflecting on the study of culture. It investigates, problematizes and develops key concepts and methods in the field. More often than not, developing such new approaches and emerging topics is a collaborative and collective process. *On_Culture* is dedicated to fostering such collective processes and the cultural dynamics at work in thinking about and reflecting on culture.

The journal consists of three sections: peer-reviewed academic *_Articles*, *_Essays* and *_Perspectives* such as video clips, interviews and visual statements, which can be submitted on a rolling basis. *On_Culture* is the result of collaborative processes and emergent structures in the field of e-publishing. *On_Culture* puts new approaches and emerging topics in the (trans)national study of culture ‘on the line’ and, in so doing, fills the gap_____ between ‘on’ and ‘culture.’ There are numerous ways of filling the gap, and the plurality of approaches is something for which we strive with each new issue.

Contributions to the *_Perspectives* section are possible at any time, also to previous issues. So if you are interested in also contributing to one of the previous issues, get in touch with our Editorial Team at content@on-culture.org. Please find our Call for Abstracts Archive here: <https://www.on-culture.org/submission/call-for-abstracts-archive/>

As a commitment to the open access to scholarship, On_Culture does not charge any Article Processing Charges (APCs) for the publication of your contribution.

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