

**Saturday,
29 April 2017
ICI Berlin**

Post-Truth and Politics

**Departing from the Thought
of Hannah Arendt**

In 1967 Arendt published an article on “Truth and Politics” in the *New Yorker* in response to historical exigencies that resonate with those presented today by the so-called “post-truth society.”

While acknowledging the inevitable implication and interminable contest between truth and politics, Arendt attempts to make the case for a rigorous separation of truth-telling from political praxis, which is nonetheless supposed to operate within the framework afforded by factual and scientific truth. Today, given the intensifying political, and especially biopolitical, consequence of the sciences, it is no longer clear that such a distinction is tenable. Since Arendt wrote, the involvement of politics and epistemology, of power and knowledge, has undergone an intensive interdisciplinary investigation, which has transformed the university, especially in the humanities. Interrogating this entanglement of truth and politics, we will ask whether it is true, as some have claimed, that the university is responsible for “post-truth” on account of the relativism it is now perceived to propagate. Or are such claims themselves symptomatic of the problem – fueling the widespread disaffection with established institutions especially those supposed to speak the truth?

As alarm is raised about the attrition of factual truth and the preponderance of “lying in politics,” to cite another essay of Arendt’s, we propose to consider the theoretical and historical precedents for such tendencies as well as the significance of the cultural and technical changes in the dissemination of news brought about by social media. Beyond the university and the media, rational-scientific and factual truth, we may finally reflect on the peculiar kind of truth-telling Arendt attributed to poetry.

**An ICI Berlin event,
organized by Benjamin Lewis Robinson, in collaboration
with Bard College Berlin and
the Hannah Arendt Center at Bard College**