

Workshop

The Trouble with Thinking

Transnational Dialogues on Academic Freedom

The past decade has seen a troubling turn toward autocracy across wide regions of the globe. What may have once seemed confined to parts of the Global South and the former Communist Bloc is now, through the rise of right-wing populism, markedly visible in Europe and North America as well. Among the first groups to be impacted by autocratic impulses are scientists and scholars—those of us who are vocationally called to think and question. Cases from Iran to Turkey to Russia, from Hungary to Germany to the United States, demonstrate how often governments, or parties or other social forces struggling to capture governments, believe that thinking creates trouble, and how quickly critical views can be silenced. This may happen through actual repressive force or censorship, policy changes or more informal kinds of pressure. It intersects in often undiagnosed ways with the various economic underpinnings of knowledge production.

Moving beyond humanitarian frames of scholar rescue, this workshop brings together scholars who have been forced to leave their countries of origin as a result of their resistance to the narrowing of space for thought with scholars currently concerned about the fate of academic freedom in their home countries. The participants of the workshop will explore the playbooks through which scholars have been shut out of sanctioned systems of knowledge production in the Global South and the post-Socialist East along with approaches they developed to fight this attack on thinking and to rebuild spaces for it in exile. They will track political challenges and structural barriers to substantive academic freedom with a focus on the United States and Germany today. And they will think together towards lessons and tactics which may allow academic freedom to be realized from the ground up as what anthropologist Homa Hoodfar (2017) calls a “transnational human right.” Are there shared early warning signs of broader strictures on thinking, including targeted attacks on different academic fields or issues? How are repressive policies, laws and discourses moving iteratively across contexts, and how are they tied to neoliberal imperatives? What successful strategies have been developed to evade or contest these pressures? What theories or paradigms—including new understandings of academic freedom itself—might allow us to navigate between contexts, enable meaningful solidarity, and not only secure but also widen the spaces of critical inquiry?

Bard College Berlin
A LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITY



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Workshop The

14 October 2024 → 10:30 – 19:00

Trouble with Thinking

*Transnational Dialogues
on Academic Freedom*

Organized by Kerry Bystrom and Aysuda Kölemen
for Bard College Berlin & OSUN Threatened Scholars Integration Initiative
in cooperation with ICI Berlin

Programme

10:00	Morning Coffee
10:30	Welcome and Opening Remarks Kerry Bystrom and Aysuda Kölemen
10:45–12:45	Cases and Reflections I North Macedonia, Poland, Turkey and Russia
Speakers:	Tuba İnal-Çekiç Ilya Kalinin Jana Lozanoska Ewa Majewska
Moderation:	Oleksandr Shtokvych
12:45–14:00	Lunch Break
14:00–15:00	Keynote Intervention I Thinking between Political and Economic Unfreedom Asli Vatansever Respondent: Pascale Laborier
15:00–17:00	Cases and Reflections II Germany and the USA
Speakers:	Teresa Koloma Beck Jennifer Ruth Jessica Young Tirdad Zolghadr
Moderation:	Aysuda Kölemen
17:00–17:30	Coffee Break
17:30–18:30:	Keynote Intervention II Building a Global Academic Community: The Urgency of an International Convention Homa Hoodfar Respondent: Thomas Keenan
18:30–19:00	Concluding Discussion How Can Academic Freedom Become a Transnational Human Right? Moderation: Kerry Bystrom

With

Homa Hoodfar
Tuba İnal-Çekiç
Ilya Kalinin
Teresa Koloma Beck
Thomas Keenan
Pascale Laborier
Jana Lozanoska
Ewa Majewska
Jennifer Ruth
Oleksandr Shtokvych
Asli Vatansever
Jessica Young
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