

Call for proposals for the one-day seminar of **Friday June 4, 2021**

## COVID-19 and the notion of "border" - The effects of the pandemic

Keywords: COVID-19, border, representation, identity, alterity, isolation, trauma

In the context of a pandemic that affects the whole world, the notion of “border” has become more than ever a field of study that redefines our relations with others. For Michel Agier (2013), the border is the preeminent place to experience otherness. Correspondingly, Régis Debray (2010) sees the border as a space of recognition of the Other, but also of oneself. Indeed, a border is a place of separation, but simultaneously it is a place filled with opportunities for exchange. The upheaval caused by the health crisis applies to major forces such as countries, as well as to every single individual. We can therefore ask ourselves: What new dimensions does the notion of border acquire now and what are the correlations at the socio-cultural level?

This seminar is open to cross-disciplinary works and will welcome proposals in the following areas:

### AXIS 1: THE PANDEMIC AND THE SOCIOCULTURAL FRONTIER

Experiencing a global pandemic is a shared traumatic experience. According to Nicolas Demertzis and Ron Eyerman (2020), such a form of trauma provides a sense of fixed collective identity. This seminar will therefore also be an opportunity to discuss the pandemic as trauma, its representation and its impact on interpersonal and intercultural relations. Eventually, creating a possibility to reflect on a possible connection between this trauma and the phenomena of increased racism, nationalism and xenophobia, that have been observed during the pandemic.

As for the cultural field, artistic production has been greatly impacted by the pandemic. For health security reasons, cultural venues were closed and artistic production was stopped. Nevertheless, the ceasing of activity was not absolute. Part of the cultural production has adapted and seems to articulate itself around the pandemic. In this axis, we would like to question: In what ways has the pandemic affected the different forms of artistic production and their diffusion? In order to maintain contact with their audience, how did cultural actors overcome the borders imposed by the health crisis?

### AXIS 2: THE PANDEMIC AND THE COMMUNICATION FRONTIER

The pandemic, like any crisis, required rapid and effective communication. However, due to globalization, communication is sometimes simplified to the point of choosing certain languages over others. Indeed, some languages have an international influence which makes them safe values to be understood by the vast majority. However, this choice of communication can lead to the marginalization of a portion of the population that does not master the reference languages. Thus, not providing enough information of the current sanitary situation to certain

minorities. (Ingrid Piller et al., 2020). In the context of globalization and the pandemic, how do we overcome linguistic borders?

In addition, periods of confinement and curfews have affected the way we communicate. Socially, the boundaries of communication have been reorganized around these constraints, in both intimate and professional relationships. On the one hand, in education, technology has enabled non-physical communication, which has not always been described as efficient. (Alawamleh et al., 2020). Furthermore, through technological means, the flow of information and exchanges seemingly continues. Has the use of technology been a barrier to communication or has it fostered it? What does/did the use of technology change in terms of communication?

### AXIS 3: THE PANDEMIC AND THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE FRONTIER

Social distancing measures have resulted in countries going into lockdown, thus increasing isolation. In 2003, Jean-Louis Pan Ké Shon stated that it was easy to determine an individual's rate of isolation based on their socio-demographic characteristics. However, one of the consequences of the pandemic is the emergence of a new loneliness for individuals who were perfectly integrated into society and for whom isolation was not foreseeable according to these same criteria. This axis invites us to study relations between the individual and the rest of the community, by shedding light on specific phenomena such as isolation. Along with, the analysis of relations between the individual and the organizations, such as those between: individuals and governments; universities and their students; firms and their employees.

The interdisciplinary dimension is essential for this seminar. We would hope for the participation of researchers, but also of cultural actors.

The seminar is organized by the students in the 2nd year of the Master in Plurilingualism and Interculturality of the Faculty of Languages at University of Strasbourg as part of the initiation to research, with the financial support of the research units Linguistics, Languages, Speech (LiLPa), the Romance Studies: Culture and History (CHER) and the Research Group on Oriental, Slavonic and Modern Greek Studies (GEO).

### **Practical information**

This seminar will take place **online**.

The deadline for proposal submissions is April 30, 2021. Please submit abstracts in English or in French and a brief bio-bibliographical note to [m2pluri.unistra@gmail.com](mailto:m2pluri.unistra@gmail.com)

After examination of the proposals, the answers will be given to the speakers before **May 10, 2021**.

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