

Call for papers:
'Popular Culture and Politics'

La Rochelle Université-Université de Reims

To be held at: La Rochelle University (France) from 11th to 13th December 2019

The ambition of this conference is to explore the close links, hidden or implicit, that exist between popular culture and politics. Indeed, politics may attempt to subvert popular culture, or may be an object of ridicule or praise in Popular Culture, and it would therefore be of great interest to investigate this research field, which is relatively unexplored in France and which mixes two sometimes contradictory and conflicting spheres.

Throughout History politics and politicians have been represented in popular culture, whether it be in caricatures, works of fiction dealing with issues like systems of governance, the role of the politician and their links to other types of power (economic, military, media, etc.), that reassess past events, or seek to influence public opinion. However, it would appear that popular culture today has also become a tool which, with the development of the internet, cable television channels and social networks that magnify its visibility and its viral effect, is used by politicians themselves, and also by ordinary citizens and influencers, as an essential vector of expression and power. Thus, Twitter has become the favourite communication channel for the President of one of the Super Powers. By using one of the most popular social networks, Donald Trump is merely continuing his long-standing acquaintance with popular culture. From a 'designer' through his *reality shows*, he has been transformed into a 'user' and also a 'character' and a caricature of mass culture. The infamous 'fake news' have quickly become a highly efficient means to manipulate the masses, such is the difficulty of erasing these modern-day rumours that were in evidence throughout the recent electoral campaign. Born and spread through the mass media, popular culture has now become a political medium. Once despised as something of interest only to the masses, with the development of the internet it has been transformed into a prerequisite to gain the confidence of the public and our votes, a shared frame of reference between the demagogues and their electorate, where TV series are the new illustrations of current issues and political denunciations, such as *Tchernobyl*, *House of Cards*, *Baron noir*, *Borgen* etc.

The porosity between politics and popular culture is clearly illustrated by the impregnation of the real world by symbols of dissent derived from 'pop culture'. The mask worn by the anarchist in *V for Vendetta* (Alan Moore and David Lloyd, 1982-1990) is an effigy of Guy Fawkes, a historical opponent of the English political regime who was involved in the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 in London. Popularised by James McTeigue's 2006 film, it was then recycled in a modern political context, paradoxically in the political and social contestation led by the *Anonymous* and *Occupy Wall Street* Movements (2011-). Another example is the Italian partisans' song "Bella Ciao", which been given a new lease of life by the series *La Casa de papel* in which the characters are considered to be part of the resistance to the system.

Moreover, the links between popular culture and politics are not limited to representations in fiction, the modes of expression of mass culture are multiple. Sport in general and football (*soccer*) in particular are an example of how popular culture can be an extension of political and economic issues. For example, the *SuperBowl* in the United States reveals multiple facets of a cultural practice that combines economic, political, communicational, cultural and sporting issues.

These examples illustrate the porosity between politics and popular culture, and the conference will explore how politics today is influenced in its representations, its communication, its decision-making, its economy, its mode of operation, by popular culture. We may also explore in depth the historical background to the links between popular culture and politics. Papers could examine different countries and different fields of study, and combine them (sociology, anthropology, political studies, cultural studies, history, literature, economy, media, journalism, linguistics, etc.), and explore all of the fields of study in popular culture (the visual arts, TV series and the internet, cinema, comics, videos and YouTube channels, etc.), different 'genres' of fiction (science-fiction, fantasy, horror, detective stories, pulp fiction, etc.), sports, music, collector's items, cultural and media practices, games (role plays, video games, board games, etc.), toys, literature, etc.

Abstracts (approx. 400 words) and a short biography should be sent to Danièle André daniele.andre@univ-lr.fr, Annabel Audureau annabel.audureau@univ-lr.fr and Frank Healy frank.healy@univ-lr.fr.

The deadline for submissions is **3rd November 2019**.

We are also delighted to announce that part of the conference will be devoted to the creation of the **Popular Culture Association of France**. (<http://pcaof.com/en/>)

Scientific Committee:

Reims University: Sylvie Mikowski, Yann Philippe, Hervé Lagoguey, Nantes University: Sergio Coto-Rivel, Limoges University: Estelle Epinoux, La Rochelle University: Danièle André, Annabelle Audureau, Frank Healy.

Organisers: Danièle André, Annabelle Audureau, Frank Healy – CRHIA (Centre de Recherches en Histoire Internationale et Atlantique) La Rochelle University.

We are pleased to announce that Diane Negra, Head of the Film Studies Department, University College Dublin, has accepted to be one of our **Keynote Speakers**.

Bibliography (illustrative)

Books

Caso, Federica And Hamilton, Caitlin (Eds.), *Popular Culture and World Politics: Theories, Methods, Pedagogies, E-International Relations*, Bristol, 2015.

Leah A. Murray (Ed.), *Politics and Popular Culture*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing; New edition (July 1, 2010).

Edsforth, Ronald & Bennett, Larry (Eds), *Popular Culture and Political Change in Modern America*, SUNY series in Popular Culture and Political Change.1991.

Articles

Bradley, J.M. (1997). *Political, Religious and Cultural Identities: The undercurrents of Scottish football*. *Politics* 17(1), 25-32.

Clapton, William, *Popular Culture Matters: Defining 'Politics'* in *Popular Culture & World Politics*, Jul 26 2018, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/07/26/popular-culture-matters-defining-politics-in-popular-culture-world-politics/>

Cloonan, M., & Street, J. (1998). *Rock the Vote: Popular Culture and Politics*. *Politics*, 18(1), 33–38. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9256.00058>

Dorzweiler, N. (2017). *Popular culture in (and out of) American political science: A concise critical history, 1858–1950*. *History of the Human Sciences*, 30(1), 138–159. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952695116684314>

Dubosclard, Alain, *Le cinéma, passeur culturel, agent d'influence de la diplomatie française aux États-Unis dans l'entre-deux-guerres. 1895. Mille huit cent quatre-vingt-quinze* [En ligne], 42 | 2004, mis en ligne le 10 janvier 2008, consulté le 03 septembre 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/1895/279>

Finn, G. (1991). *Racism, Religion and Social Prejudice: Irish Catholic Clubs, Soccer and Scottish Identity - Social Identity and Conspiracy Theories*. In *International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 8 No. 3.

Grayson, Kyle, Matt Davies, Simon Philpott, *Pop Goes IR? Researching the Popular Culture–World Politics Continuum*, October 2009, *Politics* 29(3):155 – 163.

Hall Stuart (2018) *Popular culture, politics and history*, *Cultural Studies*, 32:6, 929-952. Routledge.

Orwell, G. (December 1945). 'The Sporting Spirit', *Tribune*. London, UK.

Rubin, Jennifer, *Why popular culture matters in politics*, October 28, 2013, *The Washington Post*.

Dissertations/Theses

Patrick J. Knightly, University of Massachusetts Amherst, ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst, Masters Theses 1911 - February 2014, 1999 *Politics and the popular culture: an examination of the relationship between politics and film and music*.