

Popular Culture and World Politics: From Little Things, Big Things Grow!

The study of popular culture and world politics has never been more important. The erosion of democratic norms quickens with organised mainstream political forces struggling to mount effective responses to a host of challenges. Intolerance of refugees, of religious pluralism, of the rights of women and LGBTQ+ peoples are on the rise. Climate change is happening at a pace surprising even hardened scientific pessimists. Everywhere established, organised political forces including political parties, trade unions, religious organisations, non-government organisations are searching for ways to engage with and motivate disenchanted and suspicious populations.

Yet there is ongoing creativity in confronting the challenges assailing peoples everywhere. Even if the vision of 'imagine all the people sharing all the world' is one that populists and authoritarians everywhere are doing their best to undermine, it is through a wide and growing range of popular cultural responses that ordinary people loudly speak back and remake the world in their preferred image. The discourses and actions of Black Lives Matter protestors resonate through popular outputs that mock and disempower white supremacy (e.g. *BlackKkKlansman*) and that factually lay bare the horrors of trans-Atlantic slavery not simply with statistics but with contemporary visits to sites where the legacies of slavery remain evident in the landscape (e.g. Samuel L. Jackson's *Enslaved*). These cultural outputs are framed by a contemporary politics of demands for racial justice in much of the global north but the appeal extends deep into the global south. Satire and parody have hollowed out the authority of Donald Trump and countless memes massively circulated through social media critique and diminish polarising political figures in ways that organised political opposition is unable to do. In the UK, Marcus Rashford uses his footballing celebrity to assail a right wing populist government and its policies that entrench hunger and poverty among vulnerable children. In those difficult and confined times, popular culture has proven itself to be a source for contestation as well as comfort. Despite the difficulties and setbacks for a more inclusive politics, popular culture will remain a compelling place for people to explore the practicalities of how, from here, we go about sharing all the world.

We believe a workshop is an ideal format to bring scholars from various disciplines and countries together to unpack the workings and potentialities of the articulation of popular culture and world politics. In times of social distancing, and hardship faced individually as well as collectively, it is especially important to maintain a space to collaborate and support each other - a workshop offers exactly that.

We invite contributions on a wide range of themes, including - but not limited to:

- Popular culture and populism
- Politics of aesthetics and visuality
- Popular visualization of crisis and pandemic
- Popular culture, activism and contestation
- Militarisation, conflict and peace representations
- Postcolonial, Feminist, Queer perspectives on popular culture
- Memory, history and popular culture
- Art, poetry, dance, fashion
- Humour and satire
- Digitalization, memes, social media

Morgane Desoutter (Lecturer in International Politics and Popular Culture, Otto-von-Guericke University, Magdeburg)

Simon Philpott (Reader in Postcolonial Politics and Popular Culture, Newcastle University).