

## What Do We Know About War?

*Michelle D. Weitzel and Raphaël Leduc*

### Description of the workshop

The study of war is foundational to the discipline of International Relations, yet war remains a highly contested concept. As an object of analysis, war spans diverse epistemological traditions as well as disciplines, and is tackled by varied and sometimes dissonant methods and methodologies. What is war? Do we need an ontology of war to isolate it as an object of research? If not, how might we make sense of what Antoine Bousquet, Jairus Grove, and Nisha Shah have referred to as “war’s incessant becoming” (Bousquet, Grove, Shah, 2020), or the ever-changing and generative character of war? War is at once a tool of domination and liberation, while also often thought of as the historical engine behind the creation of contemporary political institutions—chiefly the state. War acts as both a creative and destructive force in society. Some research emphasizes wars’ destructive potential and seeks ways to prevent, limit, or banish war. Other scholarship privileges a research agenda focused on the experience of war and ways such experiences embed themselves in other forms of politics and social engagement. Still other work imagines war as a defined and bounded event that may be counted, measured, and compared across time and place. With this abundance of understandings and approaches, it is crucial that we take stock of how each approach might uniquely contribute to collective understandings of war and politics, but also to ask what current formulations miss. This EISA early career scholar workshop engages these fundamental questions to assess the current state of War Studies and conceptualize fruitful ways forward.

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## Alternative epistemologies in the study of International Relations

***Erna Burai***

### **Description of the workshop**

“Ways of knowing in International Relations” interrogates the world-making effects of what we know and how we know in International Relations. On the one hand, it asks how knowledge is produced and what values are involved in professedly value-free and universal knowledge systems such as “science.” What does it ask of us to renounce? At what costs do we “make” science from a position of exteriority to the worlds we look at? On the other hand, if ways of knowing in IR are not necessarily “scientific,” through what other channels may we receive and build knowledge about the world we are irremediably a part of? Could embodied and metaphysical experience be brought into research and social relations? Recent openings towards relationality, emotions and alternative knowledge systems show alternative ways of knowing and being in the world and ways to accommodate these within the study of IR. Exploring together the premises and reifications in allegedly universal and objective knowledge systems, and alternative ways of being, knowing, teaching and practicing IR, the workshop aims to bring reconciliation with the world that IR has kept at arm’s length and to learn to imagine and enact new collaborations beyond the disembodied, individual researchers-subjects.

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## A Conversation between IR Theory, STS and Secrecy Studies: Knowledge (un)Production and the Role of Technologies

**Clare Stevens**

### **Description of the workshop**

Though the acquisition of knowledge is viewed as an epoch-defining aspect of the current era, debates and controversies across a range of issues and social spaces in the news in recent times demonstrate how much of our global and local conversations are driven by encounters with the secret, including the role that inscrutable technologies are increasingly playing in those encounters. Many scholars have treated that inscrutability of technologies, secrecy and other unknowns as moral challenges that can be resolved through transparency and openness. Building on emerging literatures that have each demonstrated the productive power of secrecy and ignorance in isolation, this workshop seeks contributions from researchers working at the intersection of literatures of IR, security studies, STS, and agnotology, critical secrecy and intelligence studies. This workshop aims to ‘thicken’ the understanding of secrecy and technologies within security discourses and International Studies and means to help scholars who want move from understanding secrecy as the absence of knowledge to part of its production, and to explore how we can understand the productive, strategic but also emancipatory potential of secrecy and ignorance in the development of security and technologies, or the development of (non)knowledge.

## Decolonizing Affective Attachments in Global politics

***Sarah Tafakori & Sabiha Allouche***

### **Description of the workshop**

This workshop responds to the ‘affective turn’ in international politics and global studies through addressing the relative inattention to the politics of emotional attachments centred in the Global South. It aims to explore the intersections of the affective with embodied, gendered, racialized, and classed subjectivities, geographies and histories in their relation to structures of power. Our papers therefore adopt approaches toward global politics and IR which reflect on and problematise ideas around emotional attachments that exceed universalistic interpretations and contribute to broadening the framework of decolonising affect studies. This workshop poses the overarching question: to what extent is the ‘turn to affect’ predicated upon an orientation towards Western and Eurocentric epistemes? To put it another way, how far have the societies and geographies of the Global South been excluded from affect and emotion studies?

We propose, then, that although the ‘affective turn’ has been discussed as a phenomenon across the humanities and social sciences for the past decade or more, consistent intersectional and postcolonial interventions are needed. The workshop will explore aspects of these and other problematics of affect, through bringing to bear a critical attention to issues of racialized and gendered inequality, to questions of universality and particularity, and the relations between the local, national and global.

## Seeing Precarity

*Janine Bressmer*

### Description of the workshop

In this conversation, then, we will bring together researchers, practitioners and thinkers in general who are posing themselves, the spaces around them and the systems in which they exist, and are confronted with, forward-thinking questions that seek to not only (re)situate the problematic histories of humanitarian aid but also pose questions about reimagining a system that sees both beyond its edge of sight as well as inwardly, to precarity in our neighbourhoods, cities and communities. How can we connect the seemingly distant forms of precarity or the seemingly disconnected ways in which suffering is brought to our eyes with the world political realities we live in? What if we move away from the dichotomies of humanitarian assistance being needed 'elsewhere' all the while invisibilizing suffering 'at home'? This ECW conversation will touch on ideas, methodologies, and practices of humanitarian aid that see the sector not as a unified or normatively superior engagement with the world 'elsewhere', but rather reimagines aid as everyday practices of seeing, sensing and engaging with the realities of precarity, distant or close to home.

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