

## Working with the Negative

### Convenors

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### Workshop Description

This workshop seeks to explore the potential of 'working with the negative' in the context of IR. We address the theme *The future yet to come: for a global politics of hope* by inviting participants to delve deeper into the problematic of how we engage critically with what exists while avoiding either the disavowal of modernity's violences and exclusions or risking their reproduction.

We seek to open up 'the negative' as a space for rethinking fundamental concepts such as worlds, subjectivity, agency, temporality, resistance and refusal. The concept of negativity has its roots in Hegelian, Post-Hegelian and Marxist scholarship, as well as in Frankfurt School Critical Theory and in contemporary Critical Black Studies. In this context, negativity emerges as a critical perspective that challenges and disrupts the boundaries and divisions of modernity, rather than moving to produce or claim new ontological certainties and alternative modes of governance.

Many contemporary approaches within IR, particularly those rooted in relational paradigms and concerned with the Anthropocene, work with the negative in ways that are generative of non-modernist approaches to the world and our current predicament. Often framed as 'post-apocalyptic' these approaches declare a radical break with modernity as having already occurred, paving the way for new and creative ways of 'living on in the ruins'. Other approaches work with the negative but seek to 'stay with the trouble' of modernity as a condition we cannot just read or write our way out of. We seek to critically explore different ways of working with the negative at the end of/ after/ and in opposition to modernist framings and to interrogate the stakes in assuming that modernity is ending/ has ended/ still requires ending.

### We invite contributions engaging with the following themes and questions:

**Exploring the Concept of the Negative in IR:** What are the foundational principles of 'the negative' and how does it intersect with critical Black and Indigenous studies, critical environment studies, radical politics, queer-feminist theory, and the Anthropocene?

**Interrogating the post-apocalyptic:** By portraying the present as post-apocalyptic, do we move too quickly to wipe the slate clean? Should we stay with the trouble of modernity's crises? What are the costs and disavowals involved in focusing on alternative futures amidst the persisting violences of the present? What role can hope play here?

**Rethinking Agency and Subjectivity:** How does 'the negative' challenge established ideas of agency and subjectivity in IR? Can working with 'the negative' foster a more nuanced understanding of the intricate processes of becoming?

**Critiquing Modernity - Critique in the Anthropocene:** What are the critical implications of employing 'the negative' in reevaluating modernity? How does 'the negative' problematize, challenge, disrupt, move beyond, end or abolish the violence and artifice inherent in ontological world-making?

**Critical Ethics of Negation:** What is the significance of critical ethics grounded in negation, resistance, and the refusal of modernity? How does working with the negative seek to problematize and undo the world of modernity, and what are implications of such an approach in a global context?

**Submission deadline:** 5 February 2024, via: <https://eisa-net.org/ewis-2024/>