

CFP—call for papers

Colors and Cultures—couleurs et cultures

Place: Université de Haute-Alsace, Mulhouse (France), possibly also Basel (Switzerland)

Date: 14-16 April 2020

Seeing colors is a sensory experience that goes beyond ocular perception. Color directly affects our mood, our communication, and our wellbeing. Color, in short, shapes our understanding of reality. Color can provoke unexpected behavior. When the Dutch football team played in Bern at the European championships in 2008, for example, the Oranje fans performed a new routine when crossing the city streets. They would wait patiently at the curb and then burst into cheers to express their enthusiasm when the light changed from red to orange—their home team's color!¹

While color has a profound influence on our lives, it has all kinds of *cultural variations*, which may go back to specific geographical origins based on regional vegetation, different qualities of light, environmental experience, etc. Even the *mimetic principle of colors* as a way to represent reality, while universal, differs from culture to culture. At some point, these differences may even become direct *cultural contradictions*—as we find, for example, in the symbolism of the color white as purity for European cultures, but as mourning for Chinese and other Asian cultures.

In a world of globalized development and technological innovations of color, questions arise about how colors are perceived due to transcultural contact and technological adaptation. Though its organizers are mainly literary scholars, this conference is interested in sharing interdisciplinary perspectives from a variety of angles that analyze differences in color perception, reception, and production. We also invite comparative diachronic analyses that trace changes in understandings of color across time (e.g., development, commerce, educational influences), as well as synchronic assessments that primarily focus on diatopic differences.

Here is a list of possible issues to be considered:

- salient new issues in color studies?
- the history of color studies, via Newton and Goethe?
- the function of color in literature?
- colors in Indigenous story-telling?
- color and orality?
- the experiential origins of color symbolism?
- culturally specific colors in a globalized world?
- reasons for changing traditional color symbolism?
- traditional colors and trade?
- the impact of technological changes (i.e., communication, or new paint, new materials, digital art, etc)?
- “authenticity” and traditional colors?
- sacred/focal colors in different cultures?
- colors and language – the Sapir-Whorf theory?

¹ Curiously, the middle color of a traffic light is called “yellow” in Germany but “orange” in the Netherlands—despite its definition by the same standardized EU norms!

- Englishization and color terms?
- colors as connected to form or shapes?
- color in non-figurative contexts and in non-figurative art?
- color and health?
- color and the mind?
- reductive/effective Indian “blue/green” color terminology?
- color in architecture? In car design, etc.?
- colors and dress-code across time?
- color photography? color film?
- the physics of color?
- physiology and the perception of color?
- color universalism?
- etc.

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Language: English/French

Deadline for proposals:

Please send a proposal of 250 to 350 words to samuel.ludwig@uha.fr before 30th October 2019. Proposals will be accepted/rejected by 1st November.