



The European Humanities University

welcomes submissions for the

XVI International Academic Conference for Undergraduate and Graduate Students

Europe 2014: Humanities between past and future

Unlike the natural and technical sciences that demonstrate impressive progress, the humanities and social sciences often reveal their inability to address the crisis phenomena of today's world. Especially intensive and extremely radical in their forms are the twentieth century attempts at rethinking the fundamental foundations of humanities—the century that has experienced the unprecedented social shocks that were paid for at the cost of tens of millions human lives. It is not without reason that such tragic events in history correlate to unrealized illusions of the thinking and ideas on the individual and society that were nourished in the European tradition over many centuries.

A certain line under this dramatic discord, and a gap between knowledge and the reality that this knowledge addresses was drawn by Hannah Arendt's words about sixty years ago: "[T]hought and reality have parted company" and "Reality has become opaque for the light of thought." The dramatics of this confession, dominant through the twentieth century—and indicative of an absence of a proper method and framework of knowledge that we should use to interpret the existing social reality and define our own guidelines in which to live in this world—was to some extent shattered just over twenty years ago, when the social system that was preventing positive change in the contemporary world for many decades proved unfounded and collapsed.

The notion of "humanities" is used here in its maximally broad meaning, combining both social sciences (economics, law, sociology, etc.) and those termed "humanities" in English. With this in mind, we should pay attention to the fact that the substance of humanities (literature, art, history, philosophy) expresses itself not according to scholarly theory principles. Nevertheless, this "non-scholarly" means of expression in a literary work, painting, or music is an extremely important (and, at times, also a much deeper) way for an individual to understand himself and the society in which he lives.

The following sections are planned as part of the conference.

Language of Humanities

Chair: A. Mikhailov

Language is too often perceived as an instrument that we allegedly master. However, even in our native language, to say nothing of a foreign one, the extent of this “mastery” may differ considerably. Our language is very often stock, hackneyed, based upon using widespread stereotypes, which prevents us from making the Other understand the content of what appears in an extremely stripped-down manner in our forms of communication. One of the gravest concerns that the humanities face is the prevalence of the language of abstract theory in it, often thrusting itself upon the reality that we live in, and thus preventing us from understanding this reality in its specificity. That is why, over the last several decades, the language of humanities has been rethought as to what it should be to regain the necessary strength to denote and impact.

Problems of Establishing the International and European Legal Order

Chair: K. Ivanov

Today’s processes of interaction between different legal systems and the vigorous exchange between them have led to the establishment of global standards in law. Transformations of the national legal system—one of the key processes taking place in Eastern European societies since the 1990s—are, to a great extent, related to the processes of universalisation of legal principles. This process embraces all branches of law and opens up national legal systems to international law, as well as allows for discussing establishment of both international and regional legal order.

This panel is a platform for discussion of tendencies in the development of international and European law, as well as aspects of current influence from international and European law on the national legal order. The section is expected to bring together students majoring in different areas of law.

Constitutionalism and Legal Instruments of Human Rights Protection in Central and Eastern European States

Chair: O. Bresky

The condition of the human rights protection mechanisms is at the heart of development of constitutional law. The human rights issue has ceased to be an exclusively internal affair of each state and has grown to be a factor in international policy. The panel will address the topics of court advocacy condition; the right to qualified legal aid; development of the Ombudsman institute (and special organs exercising international control over the activities of states in the sphere of human rights); and focus on ways and methods of regulating the sphere of new technologies that would allow preservation of the humanism of our civilization.

Mapping Knowledge

Chair: F. Ackermann

We have grown accustomed to reading the world as complex textual structures and we normally fix our insights as texts. During the last decades, cultural analysis paid special attention to different aspects of this de- and reconstruction process. The practice of reading and writing itself became an issue of anthropological research. A spatial turn paid more attention to the spatial dimension of both: Language as a semiotic practice and history being perceived not mainly within a framework of time, but literally taking place. From a post-colonial historical perspective, it is obvious that maps were not just an illustration of knowledge, but cartography itself was part of the production of space, history, and consciousness. In this section we will analyze the production of knowledge and its spatial dimension in regard to our own work.

Studying Religious Life as an Interdisciplinary Project

Chair: O. Breskaya

Since the mid-nineteenth century, research methods and categories of analysis of religious life in religious studies have been evolving. Today's scholar of religion no longer finds unusual the concepts of "urban religiosity," "megachurch," "spatial analysis of religious phenomena," "cognitive science of religion," etc. Studying religious processes has shifted into the domain of a more narrowly specialized knowledge, at the same time creating new combinations of interdisciplinary links between history and the sociology of religion, and between philosophy and the psychology of religion. It is exactly this tendency that makes many of today's scholars switch focus from the narrow disciplinary approach to interdisciplinary studies of the religion phenomenon in the categories that integrate

various ways of analysing religion. The panel welcomes the participation of young scholars of religion demonstrating an interdisciplinary approach and categories of analysis of religious life in their presentations.

Theology and the Public Square

Chair: S. Garrett

Panel languages: English and Russian

Modern liberal democracies consign discourse on God to the boundaries of religious institutions and private beliefs, separate from the public square. Yet, some contemporary political theorists like William Connolly maintain that secular, politically liberal societies require its citizens to compartmentalize their religious beliefs and “confess faith in the sufficiency of reason, procedure, or deliberation” in order to be actors in the public sphere. Such “faith” raises a number of questions, though, about the kinds of binary descriptions, like sacred-secular and public-private, that are used to order liberal democracies. Hence, this panel discussion will explore the underlying theological and ontological commitments for liberal democracies, the linkage between belief and action, whether the kind of binary descriptions that animate liberal democracies are still viable, and alternatives for incorporating God-talk into the public sphere.

Europeanisation Processes in Central and Eastern European States: Sociopolitical and Economic Aspects

Chair: V. Valentinavičius

Within the panel, we will address the topics related to the transformation of the region, and uncover the tendencies in politics and economics that the states of the region have in common and in which they may differ. The presenters are expected to interpret the processes of Europeanisation and address them in a more general definition based on both the processes in domestic policy and in foreign policy. The presenters are free to address the topics of history related to the section’s focus, and also to present case studies. Interdisciplinary presentations are welcome on condition that they stay within the framework of the political science, sociological, and philosophical paradigms.

Public Policy and the Third Sector: Problems of Definition and Analysis in the Region of Central and Eastern Europe

Chairs: T. Chulitskaya, A. Stsiapanau

The problem of public policy and the third sector in the region of Central and Eastern Europe is rather new for academic research. Questions arise as to how these notions correspond with the realities of Central and Eastern European countries, practices of governance, and with social life in these states. How is the public policy agenda formed, and what are the peculiarities of instruments for its implementation? Can nonprofit organizations exist and function under political conditions when state regulation of various spheres of civil life is still in place (e.g., in Russia and Belarus)? An interesting perspective for discussion of these issues is to compare the countries of the region, to search for a basis of such comparisons, and to develop a classification of public policy and the third sector. Participants of the panel are invited to discuss these and other questions, as well as ways to research the above-mentioned phenomena of the public sphere.

Humanities and Education

Chair: R. Miniankou

The panel aims at analysing the practices of presenting social sciences and humanities in today's higher education. On the one hand, we will focus on analyzing the existing practices; on the other, the objectives and perspectives of humanities education in the situation of the society of social ambiguity and ever-changing identities. It is important to understand what knowledge today's individual should possess to successfully solve his or her personal and social problems in the context of continuous social change, as well as how this knowledge can be presented in particular courses in humanities, and in the structure of professional training.

Interpretation of Cultural Heritage as a Way to Knowledge in Humanities

Chair: A. Kalbaska

Museums, as one of the most effective forms of interpretation of cultural heritage, help an individual to understand himself as well as others. Different types and ways of interpreting heritage correspond to different periods in history and cultural traditions. They are subject to political and ideological influences, manifold and subjective. The same events can be presented from diametrically opposite perspectives, and with opposite results. Starting from the second-half of the twentieth century, the international Movement for a New Museology has been growing in importance globally: museums extend beyond their walls, and bring historical artifacts back to life while using various forms and methods of interpretation. Nevertheless, the problem of interpreting and understanding heritage still remains key to all participants of the process.

History from Below

Chairs: I. Ramanava, I. Makhouskaya

The twentieth-century shift in understanding the individual and society has led to the transformation in humanities in general, and history in particular. Not just a new perspective is meant, but rather *a radically different approach to reconstructing the past*. For history from below, microhistory, the history of everyday life ('Alltagsgeschichte') the object of study is a variety of rationalities, a variety of strategies employed by communities, social groups, families, and individuals. Studying the interconnection between an individual rationality and collective identity makes historians use interdisciplinary approaches while working with their sources.

The primary focus of this panel is the history of everyday life and a micro-history in studying history of Belarus.

Cultural Heritage in the Context of Today's Global Challenges

Chair: S. Artioushevskaja

The topicality of studying cultural heritage-related issues results from the complexity and broadening of the cultural heritage concept, as well as from a qualitative change in its role in today's world. The processes of globalization leveling off regional differences, the commercialization of the cultural sphere, the rapid development of tourism, and a variety of today's other challenges make urgent the problems of study, conservation, and practical use of cultural heritage. One needs to mention the growth in importance of cultural heritage as

a factor of preserving cultural diversity, the self-identification of communities at different levels, and recognition of the role of cultural heritage as a resource for the sustainable development of a society. Panel participants are welcome to discuss the following topics: cultural heritage and identity; problems of protection of cultural heritage; forms and methods of actualization of cultural heritage; heritage industry; and cultural heritage and tourism.

Contemporary Art: Between Classics and the Avant-Garde

Chair: A. Toustsik, E. Yancheuskaya

Since the avant-garde of the last century, art is no longer about producing works of highly artistic merit, but rather about presenting new ideas and attempting to influence the world around us by artistic means. Hence, a wish to regard art without the framework of sociopolitical problems is often considered as ungrounded and naïve. But does contemporary art preserve its connection with classics? What new techniques and technologies does it develop within itself and what does it draw from ancient times? Are cinema and photography to a larger extent an artistic practice or a technical process, or maybe a successful scientific experiment? What does the future hold for art? Maybe its borders will be totally erased: art therapy will become an integral part of our life, and each one of us with no exception will be able to become a creator and an artist with the support of state-of-the-art media tools?

Media Culture: Analysis, Interpretation, Critique

Chair: V. Kanstantsiuk

This panel addresses the issue of interpretation of today's media culture in the interdisciplinary context—from the perspective of cultural theory, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, communication theory, linguistics, history, political science, etc. The section can include (but is not limited to) presentations on the following topics: the “old” and the “new” media, and their shared and specific features (What is “new” in the “new media”?); the genealogy of media in philosophical and social aspects; anthropological aspects of high-tech everyday life; cinematography as representation and form of critical reflection on the medialized reality; interactivity v. interpassivity in the context of political life of society; the language of the new media; medialized urban space; problems of regulating access to knowledge and cultural production in the Internet era; the fate of media and Net-art in the era of DIY culture; and transmedia—new formats and genres of media culture in the era of media convergence.

(Ir)relevant Issues of Gender Theory

Chairs: A. Minchenia, V. Sasunkevich

The panel focuses on contemporary gender theory issues and their use in examining social, political, cultural, and economic realities of post-Soviet society. The section includes (but is not limited to) presentations in the following areas: gender aspects of the private and public spheres; gender education for NGOs; feminist critique of popular culture and media; gender aspects of the state-of-the-art information and audiovisual technologies; gender, Internet, and virtual identities; gender optics in literature; gender, sexuality, power; queer theory and LGBT movement practice; transgender theory and practice; gender and nationalism; gender dimension of economy and feminist critique of neoliberal theory of political economy; men in feminism; and gender clashes of post-socialist society.

Popularisation of Urbanism and New Professional Identities

Chair: S. Liubimau

Today, the city is often seen as the central node of development, shaped by new types of relations between production and consumption, competitiveness and culture, social problems and political representation. Qualitative changes in the ways cities function give new meaning and new legitimacy to existing spheres of employment and also shape new professional identities of architects, social activists, municipal politicians, urban animators, cultural entrepreneurs, journalists, etc. The goal of this panel is to identify the specificity of these new places and modes of work, and the new professional identities that emerge together with the popularization of urbanism as a distinct practice and field of knowledge. In particular, we are interested in how these professions and workplaces endeavour to achieve legitimacy and seek to realise social goals. The panel welcomes both theoretical analyses and studies of particular projects, cases, and approaches.

Design and Humanities: Ideas about Design across the Post-Soviet Area

Chair: A. Pihalskaya

“Designer” is a popular profession across the post-Soviet region. It is believed that a design professional must first and foremost possess practical skills. The necessary information on

the history and theory of design is usually borrowed from the European and US contexts. The local history of design finds itself to be shifting to the periphery of our attention. The panel focuses on identifying the peculiar features and characteristics of the post-Soviet region that determine and influence the activities of a designer; and defining the role and significance of the profession in the post-Soviet region based on case studies both from the Soviet era and the recent past.

Psychology as Social Practice

Chair: T. Shchyttsova, I. Gloukhova

Indisputably, psychology holds a special place among the social sciences. Its claim for understanding the laws of our spiritual life and behaviour turns psychology into a matter of unquenchable interest for the general public. But it is exactly the practical dimension of psychology—its ability to act as effective means to transform our understanding of ourselves and our social experience—that calls for special reflection as to which perspective of a human being lies in the foundation of these or other methods of practical psychology. On the other hand, the issue of social and historical conditionality of the psychotherapist, and the counsel of practical psychologists also calls for clarification. What social demands does practical psychology meet? How is this sphere of knowledge and social interaction developing in post-Soviet states and in Belarus, in particular?

Contemporary Society: Between Individualism, Collectivism and Community Practices

Chair: O. Shparaga

Individualism originated in Europe resulting from the development of modern societies in which the state guaranteed (and counted on) personal immunity and its fundamental civil and political rights. Whereas collectivism, right up to the collapse of the USSR, was associated with encroachment on these rights and unimpeded interference by the state into the private and social lives of individuals. But what is the relation between these concepts today, in the situation of the erosion (crisis) of the welfare state in Western Europe and the social state in post-Soviet countries? Why do contemporary social theorists find the notion of individual freedom unsatisfactory, and reflect upon practices and theories of community referring to the notions of collective values, social capital, justice, and publicity? Finally, how do these notions (and working with them) change the character of philosophy and sociology itself?

Competitiveness of Enterprises

Chairs: A. Kavaliou, A. Stralcou

The science of strategic management postulates a resource concept of strategy as the main trend of the contemporary research program. Indeed, a search for the sources of success of companies within companies themselves is a fruitful area. But a question arises: given the availability of resources, conditions for activities must be level, and competitive advantages must be of only a temporary nature. How then does the long-term advantage occur? Additionally, many factors of enterprises' competitiveness lie beyond the companies themselves. Which social and business institutions ensure competitiveness? Is there a correlation between the competitiveness of national economies and companies acting in the global environment?

Hence the main questions of the panel will be: Which factors determine the key competencies or companies? Do companies have a possibility to create resources ensuring competitive advantages? Can the government form the conditions to raise the competitiveness of companies?

Between Market and Society: A German Model of Economics

Chair: I. Motūzaitė

Panel language: English

It is no secret that the most impressive project of social and economic development after World War II was Germany's model of a social market economy, directed at ensuring a consumer-friendly competitive market as well as social security, fair work conditions, and an open-trade policy. It is a liberal system suitable for countries in which free entrepreneurship prevails as an essential good, accompanied at the same time by concern for social welfare.

However, what are the costs of the practical implementation of these sometimes incompatible aims? Analysing a fifty-year-old method of Germany's development of a social market economy, we can speak about the key of such success with all its advantages and disadvantages.