

Dear colleagues,

We are pleased to invite graduate students and postdoctoral scholars to apply to present at the annual Princeton Graduate Student Conference, which will be held in-person on September 27-28, 2024. The theme of this year's conference is "**The Art of Answerability: Ethics as Aesthetics in Times of Crisis.**" Please see the call for papers below.

*Call for Papers*

*Princeton University Graduate Student Conference, September 27-28, 2024*

***The Art of Answerability:  
Ethics as Aesthetics in Times of Crisis***

*Co-organizers: Kathleen Mitchell-Fox, Melvin Thomas, Yazhe Yang, Princeton University*

*Inter arma silent Musae* ("in times of war the Muses are silent") - does this phrase still ring true today? To paraphrase Adorno, is writing poetry after Auschwitz "barbaric?" What can or should art do in today's world of high-speed intercultural communication and, moreover, in times of crisis? For Mikhail Bakhtin, art and life were supposed to "become united" in an act of aesthetic answerability. Answerability to what, or better yet, answerability to whom?

The "answerability of art" is a question that has long been open to interpretation and interrogation. From Lev Tolstoi to LEFist Boris Arvatov, numerous artists, writers, and theorists have formulated conceptions of art and its implications of and for responsibility. The vocabularies for navigating this relationship have encompassed "infection," "function," and "structure." Beyond theoretical and philosophical criticism, literature, poetry, and the arts (broadly understood) can offer reflections on the role of aesthetics, including, even, an insistence that it remain role-less. Therefore, we must consider: what are the responsibilities advertently or inadvertently entailed by art for its readers and/or consumers?

We invite submissions that both examine and challenge understandings of the ways in which art might be and has been considered "answerable" in the Slavic context. Is "responsible art" synonymous with a "responsible artist," or is it determined by aesthetic form alone? How can the relationship between aesthetics and ethics be adequately theorized? How have specific political conditions and crises influenced the production of literature, its metaliterary understanding, and the mythos surrounding writers? What duty does art have, if any, to social bodies (e.g., nations, ideologies, social classes), literary institutions (e.g., the so-called "canon," literary movements, or particular media), or metaphysical aspirations? What are the limitations of "art and answerability?" We hope to encourage probing discussions of these questions at our conference.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The forms and content - aesthetic or otherwise - that answerability takes on across various genres and media: what are the structures, materials, and substances of "answerability" for different artists?
- Theorizing the answerability of art before and after Bakhtin: how productive are old frameworks (including Bakhtin's) in light of new contexts and texts?
- The interconnections between aesthetics, ethics, and politics: what are possible interpretations of the claim that art is "apolitical?" Should art be categorized as "ethical," "political," "social?"
- The ethics of artistic production in times of crisis: how can art respond to conflict, disaster, and violations of human rights?

- The “art of answerability” in the contemporary episteme: how have recent studies in critical race, postcolonial, and gender and sexuality studies informed new ideas of writing and reading as potential responsibilities?
- The transmission of art: looking beyond artists, authors, and readers, what responsibilities might translators, editors, curators, and scholars be said to have?

### **Format**

This conference will be in-person. It intends to provide graduate students and postdoctoral researchers with the opportunity to present their work to senior scholars in the field and to receive as much constructive feedback as possible. Each presenter will be given approximately 20 minutes to present a pre-circulated paper, followed by commentary from the panel discussant and then open Q&A with the audience.

The conference is hosted by Princeton University's Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures. The working language of the conference is English, but we will also accept presentations in Russian.

### **Abstract Submission Details**

We welcome abstract submissions from graduate students and postdoctoral scholars across disciplines working on any and all Slavic and Eastern European art forms and cultures. Please submit all abstracts (300 words or less) and a short bio (no more than a few sentences) in a Word document file to [princeton.slavic.conference@gmail.com](mailto:princeton.slavic.conference@gmail.com). The deadline for submissions is **June 30, 2024**.

We will be able to provide travel subsidies and lodging for conference participants.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at [princeton.slavic.conference@gmail.com](mailto:princeton.slavic.conference@gmail.com).

We look forward to your contributions!  
 Kathleen Mitchell-Fox, Melvin Thomas, Yazhe Yang  
 2024 Conference Co-organizers  
 Princeton University