

# International Workshop

## Taking the Pulse of Our Times: Media, Therapy & Emotions



<http://www.unav.edu/en/web/instituto-cultura-y-sociedad/media-therapy-emotions>

21-22 November, 2014  
Room M07, Edificio Amigos



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## **PROGRAM**

### **November 21th (Friday)**

9.00 Introduction:

Ana Marta González - Scientific Coordinator of the Institute for Culture and Society and Claudia Wassmann - Marie Curie Fellow, ICS.

#### **Emotional Investment of Social Life**

9.15-10.30 Session 1:

**“The Big Summer Holiday and the British Family, 1960-present”**

**Speaker** - Sandra T. Dawson. Northern Illinois University.

**Commentator** – Rocío Davis. University of Navarra

10.30-11.45 Session 2:

**“Restaging History; Revisiting Pain: Re-enacting Trauma in Film and Television.”**

**Speaker** – Stella Bruzzi. University of Warwick.

**Commentator** – Alejandro N. García. University of Navarra

11.45-12.15 Coffee Break

12.15-13.30 Session 3:

**“‘Empty Husks’: Age, Disability, Care and Death in Contemporary Films”**

**Speaker** - Sally Chivers. Trent University.

**Commentator** – Rosalía Baena. University of Navarra

#### **Anger, Self Control & Management of Emotions – Historical and Psychological Perspectives**

15.30-16.45 Session 4:

**“Beyond Goleman: Anger, emotional stupidity and life style issues”**

**Speaker** - Ursula Oberst. Ramon Llull University.

**Commentator** – Pilar León. University of Navarra.

16.45-18.00 Session 5:

**“Anger: an American Emotional Dilemma”**

**Speaker** - Peter Stearns. George Mason University.

**Commentator** – Ana Marta González. University of Navarra

## November 22th (Saturday)

### Therapy and the Media in Contemporary Societies - Narratives on Psychotherapy and Psychiatry in Film

9.30-10.45 Session 6:

**“The relationships between therapy culture, psychology and cinema: the case of Woody Allen”**

**Speaker** - Miguel Ángel Huerta. Pontifical University of Salamanca.

**Commentator** – Alberto N. García. University of Navarra

10.45-11.15 Coffee Break

11.15-12.30 Session 7:

**“Therapy Cultures in Society: A Polycontextual Approach”**

**Speaker** - Robin Kurilla. University of Duisburg.

**Commentator** – Omar Rosas. University of Navarra.

12.30-13.30 General Discussion and Closing Remarks

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\*Each session will begin with a presentation of the pre-circulated paper by the speaker (30 minutes max), followed by a 5-10 minute critique by the assigned commentator. The remaining time will be dedicated to open and general discussion.

## **SESSION ABSTRACTS**

### **Session 1 :**

*“The Big Holiday, Work and the British family, 1960-present”*

**Sandra Trudgen Dawson. Northern Illinois University. United States**

Richard Branson, one of the most innovative entrepreneurs of the British leisure industry recently announced that all his employees will now have unlimited time off. The announcement, met with mixed emotions from critics and supporters of paid holidays, came less than eighty years after British workers gained the right to just one week of paid holiday each year. What happened in those intervening years? What does this huge shift in attitudes to paid time off work mean for our times? Does it herald the end of the big annual summer holiday so celebrated in the press and on film and so much a part of the 60s and 70s? Has the recent economic recession altered worker perceptions of the meaning of work and leisure? Has technology effectively severed the relationship between private life and work? What does the increase in reality shows that reveal the intimate details of teenagers on holiday suggest about the relationships within families? This paper looks at the historical origins of paid holidays for British workers, the expansion of the holiday industry and media representations of the emotions surrounding the big summer holiday, work and the British family from 1960-present.

## **Session 2:**

*“Restaging History; Revisiting Pain: Re-enacting Trauma in Film and Television”*

**Stella Bruzzi. University of Warwick. Great Britain.**

‘Re-enactment’ – the dramatized restaging of lives and events – is an increasingly common feature of documentary as well as fictional texts. It is also arguably a mode of personal or collective therapy. Selecting several examples (from the 1960s to the present day), this paper will look at how to ‘re-enact’ history is also to remember, re-constitute and maybe even to misremember it. The reconfiguration of trauma and pain, even in documentary, is part-fantasy, as re-enactment frequently exists along the fault-line of what was known of the event or act at the time, the knowledge that has been accumulated since and what we might want the event to symbolise. Any re-enactment comprises the original ‘act’ or event and subsequent ‘enactments’ of it (for example in archive or interview accounts); it also, inevitably, reflects some of the preoccupations of the times in which the ‘re-enactment’ takes place. To revisit an original death and trauma is also to change it. Using examples such as Peter Watkins’ *The War Game* (1967), Ant Farm’s *The Eternal Frame* (1975), Paul Greengrass’s *United 93* (2006) and Christine Cynn and Joshua Oppenheimer’s *The Act of Killing* (2012) I will look at some of ways in which ‘re-enactment’ has been used in a documentary context.

### **Session 3:**

*“Empty Husks”: Age, Disability, Care and Death in Contemporary Films*

**Sally Chivers. Trent University Canada.**

In my paper, I will turn to recent films (such as *Amour* [2012, France] and *Arrugas* [2011, Spain]) that depict late-life disability, contemplation of suicide, and contrasting care choices to raise questions about how contemporary emotional culture influences debates about the right-to-life and the right-to-die for older adults. The paper’s title comes from a right-to-die manifesto posted online by Gillian Bennett, an 83-year-old with dementia, shortly before she ingested a lethal drug by choice. Her perspective on life with dementia as equivalent to becoming an “empty husk” emphasizes intellectual ways of knowing the self. She expresses that becoming an economic burden on the state would be irresponsible once she is unable to know herself. In stark contrast, David Hilfiker, a 69-year-old, credits a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease with having launched “one of the happiest periods of [his] life.” He privileges an emotional transformation as a way to counter a deep fear of shame and abandonment. These contrasting perspectives tap into cultural views of value and of identity at a time when popular media induces panic about the dangers of an aging population due to economic and health-care crises. Films are a useful starting point for this discussion because viewers have to negotiate the cultural panic induced by the fear of the so-called grey tsunami, personal disgust and fear at the prospect of aging, guilt about their own care choices, and affective ties associated with death within family contexts, but they can do so at some remove and in the context of the workings of the imagination.

#### **Session 4:**

*“Beyond Goleman: Anger, emotional stupidity and life style issues”*

**Ursula Oberst. Ramon Llull University. Spain**

In this paper, I want to call into question the common belief that our conscious self, our cognitions and therefore also our possible knowledge about emotions are the masters of our feelings; emotion regulation, and specifically anger management, though it is a skill that can be learned and successfully employed, does not necessarily guarantee that people employ adequate anger management in real-life situations or that they become better persons. I also want to discuss the ambiguous attitude towards so-called negative emotions in contemporary society.

In the first part (“Emotions and emotion regulation”) I will address what emotions are and what are their functions from a psychological viewpoint. Emotions can be helpful, providing crucial information about the state of one’s interactions with the world or speeding one’s responses in life-threatening situations (adaptative value). However, in many situations strong emotions have to be managed if people want to get along with others or keep their careers. Emotion regulation is the process by which emotional reactions are managed. Some finding of studies on emotion regulation will be presented.

In the second part (“Emotional Intelligence and Emotion Management”), I will talk about the two models of emotional intelligence and will discuss their possible usefulness. I will address some myths about EI that appear in the popular literature, but also in some academic publications: that emotional intelligence (the “EQ”) is more important than cognitive (abstract) intelligence (the IQ); that EI can be trained and learned; that having high EI will turn you in a happy and successful individual and enable you to resolve interpersonal conflicts; and that people with high EI are more prosocial, and ultimately, better people.

In the third part (“The trouble with anger”), I will talk about anger regulation or anger management, specifically. The movie “Anger management” reflects the common view in contemporary society that anger is an emotion which is not politically correct and therefore has to be “managed”, like a company. In this movie, friendly and easy-going business man Dave is supposed to have TAS, toxic anger syndrome, a disease that can be treated by appropriate therapy – this reflects a tendency in contemporary society to consider all kinds of unwanted or uncomfortable behavior and conditions as disorders and to use pharmacological treatment for

them. For instance, frequent temper tantrums of spoiled children are now considered a disorder and named “disruptive mood dysregulation disorder (DMDD)”.

If the tenets of emotional intelligence models are true, people who have undergone EI training or emotion management therapy should have more abilities to regulate their anger. I want to show that they might have higher emotional knowledge, but still can be “unable” to regulate these kinds of emotions, because they might not “really” want to; unconscious personal goals might be in conflict with anger regulation.

In the fourth part (“Life style: backlash of the unconscious”) I will address the influence of these unconscious goals in our emotions and question the common belief of the primacy of cognition over emotion. I will also reflect on the hypocrisy in contemporary society with respect to anger, because it is an uncomfortable and “politically incorrect” feeling.

In my presentation at the conference I will use parts of the movie “Anger Management” and features from the “Star Trek” series and movies, as well as from the “Star Wars” movie to underline and illustrate my arguments.

## **Documents**

Yoda: "Fear is the path to the dark side. Fear leads to anger; anger leads to hate; hate leads to suffering..."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RarqzMn-FkU>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPgBuRVZ6Gs>

Anakin’s dark side revealed: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCw127qWhuU>

Yoda on fear, anger and hate: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFnFr-DOPf8>

Darth Vader anger management: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5forw5zhkac>

Psychology of anger (Hovard Kassinove): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C0lHoA6W53k>

Spock emotionally compromised: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wntUM6K75Uw>



## References

Salovey, P. & Mayer, J.D. (1990). Emotional Intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality*, 9, 185-211.

Mayer, J.D., Salovey, P. & Caruso, D.R. (2000). Emotional intelligence as zeitgeist, as personality, and as a mental ability. In R. Bar-On & J.D.A. Parker, *The Handbook of Emotional Intelligence* (pp.92-117).

**Session 5:**

*"Anger: an American Emotional Dilemma"*

**Peter Stearns. George Mason University. United States**

This paper examines the complex culture toward anger that began to emerge in the United States from the 1920s onward. In contrast to earlier standards, this new culture, which first developed as part of workplace controls, quite generally disapproved of anger and sought more systematic control. The approach spread widely, in recommended family life but also in politics. The culture raised interesting challenges for entertainment media, caught between seeking to provide symbolic outlets for anger and reinforcing the basic new standards. The film *Anger Management* will be analyzed in terms of this media challenge, with the conclusion that the film fundamentally if somewhat circuitously illustrates the core standards.

**Session 6:**

*"The relationships between therapy culture, psychology and cinema: the case of Woody Allen"*

**Miguel Ángel Huerta Floriano. Pontifical University of Salamanca. Spain**

The relationships between psychology and cinema have been very close in the course of history. On the one hand, filming arrangements activates participatory and identification psychological mechanisms. These are very interesting points in the study of human emotions. On the other hand, the psychoanalytical trend influenced the study of the film theory. Thus, there are some noticeable connections between the investigation of the unconscious mind and the language that is used in audiovisual representations. Furthermore, many films have represented psychoanalysis intensively, offering a very particular representation of the culture of therapy. The selection of psychoanalysts and patients that are on the filmography of Woody Allen constitutes one of the most significant cases of this representation. So, to complement this work, a filmmaker uses formal and narrative resources that are paradoxically influenced by psychoanalysis.

## **Session 7:**

*Therapy Cultures in Society: A Polycontextual Approach*

**Robin Kurilla. University of Duisburg. Germany**

1 Introduction: Relations among Mass Media and Everyday Life

2 Narratives on Psychotherapy and Psychiatry in Film

3 Film Themes in Contexts of Scholarly and Public Discourses

4 Orientation and Symbolic Resources on 'Therapy Markets'

5 Comparisons in the Context of Globalization: Therapy as Rite of Passage

Starting with a brief consideration of the relatedness among mass media and everyday life, the paper moves on to distil common themes out of narratives on psychotherapy and psychiatry in film. Special attention is paid to emotions and their relation to the body. It follows an exemplary reconstruction of the most salient of these themes in contexts of scholarly and public discourses in order to explore their socio-historical preconditions and repercussions from various angles. Particular emphasis is placed upon social control, stigmatization, and the naturalization of emotions on the way to modernity and beyond. The subsequent discussion of whether these themes are able to orientate emotion, cognition, and social practice in everyday life settings underlines the importance of face-to-face interaction and strengthens the concept of milieu in this regard. This is not to ignore macro categories such as public opinion, class, religion, and culture, but to ground these categories in everyday life realities. While the film themes may offer symbolic resources and orientation in general, micro interactions remain the only sites where these resources can be socially capitalized on. Having reviewed alternative 'therapy markets', the discussion leads to the thesis that stances towards different therapy cultures are co-constructed in micro-interactions rather than on a purely discursive or macro level. The paper concludes with an ethnologically inspired definition of therapy as a specific type of *rite de passage* that may comprise a number of emotionally connected interaction ritual chains. This definition sheds light on functional equivalents of therapy and, at the same time, serves as the grounds for examining possible translations and transitions among traditional belief systems, institutionalized psychotherapy, and the self-help market on the one hand and everyday life encounters in local and global contexts on the other.

During this workshop the speakers will address to the following films:

*Amour* (2012) by Michael Haneke

*Wrinkles* (2011) by Ignacio Ferreras

*Nokan* (2008) by Yōjirō Takita

*Anger Management* (2003) by Peter Segal, with Jack Nicholson

*Anger Management*, TV series (2012) sitcom with Charlie Sheen

*Take the Money and Run* (1969) by Woody Allen

*Bananas* (1971) by Woody Allen

*Sleeper* (1973) by Woody Allen

*Annie Hall* (1977) by Woody Allen

*Manhattan* (1979) by Woody Allen

*Stardust Memories* (1980) by Woody Allen

*Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986) by Woody Allen

*Oedipus Wrecks* (1989) by Woody Allen

*Deconstructing Harry* (1997) by Woody Allen

*Anything Else* (2003) by Woody Allen

*One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1975) by Miloš Forman, with Jack Nicholson

*Shrink* (2009) Jonas Pate

*The War Game* (1967), by Peter Watkins

*The Eternal Frame* (1975), by Ant Farm

*United 93* (2006), by Paul Greengrass

*The Act of Killing* (2012) by Christine Cynn and Joshua Oppenheimer

*Star Trek* (2009, 2013) by J.J. Abrams

*Star Wars* (2008) by George Lucas

*The Big Bang Theory*, TV series (2007, 2014)



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