03 / Still studying the global interpretatively? New trajectories of interpretive International Relations amid epistemic crisis

Topic : WORKSHOPS

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GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Rationale

Interpretive International Relations has grown into a diverse and vibrant way of studying global politics. Today, however, interpretive approaches work in a challenging epistemic environment. Public debates are marked both by the relativisation of truth and of academic expertise, and by a renewed celebration of the "expert" as the guardian of science against mis- and disinformation. In International Relations, these tensions intersect with the return of "hard security" agendas and a renewed push for formal, standardised methods as the benchmark of rigorous knowledge.

Against this backdrop, the longstanding strengths of interpretive work, specifically its attention to ambiguity, plurality, everyday meaning-making, and co-existing worlds, risk losing visibility and leverage. This workshop asks whether and how current epistemic shifts call for revisiting, adapting, and revitalising interpretive practices in International Relations and related fields. It is interested in how interpretive scholars navigate these pressures in their research, writing, teaching, and wider public engagement, and in how interpretive projects can respond to current crises of knowledge, authority, and security without giving up their core commitments.

Aims and outcomes

Our aim is to facilitate the exchange of papers across professional, geo-social and disciplinary boundaries and hierarchies in order to:

• Map how interpretive International Relations is currently practised in different contexts of global politics, policy, and security.

• Reflect on the ethical, political, and affective dimensions of interpretive research and its epistemic communities.

• Discuss how interpretive approaches can respond to contemporary epistemic crises while holding on to plurality, reflexivity, and hermeneutic openness.

• Create an ongoing network of scholars and practitioners working with interpretive modes of inquiry in International Relations.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The workshop invites contributions that explore interpretive International Relations as a lived, situated practice of knowledge production.

The workshop welcomes theoretical, conceptual, and empirical papers. It is open to a wide range of formats, including standard research papers, work-in-progress pieces, reflexive and (auto-)ethnographic accounts, methodological essays, and experimental or multimodal interventions that engage interpretive concerns.

Contributions may address, but are not limited to, the following questions:

Epistemic and methodological questions

What does it mean to practice interpretive International Relations amidst contemporary epistemic crises and contested truth claims?

What are cutting-edge epistemic practices and developments in interpretive International Relations, and

how have they been

received within the discipline and beyond?

How do the ethical and political commitments of interpretive research shape the relevance and practice of qualitative inquiry today?

How can interpretive practice (up)hold plurality, ambivalence, ambiguity, and the co-presence of multiple worlds against attempts to flatten knowledge into rigid, expertise-driven forms?

What is generative, and what may be limiting, about reflexive modes of interpretive knowledge production in IR?

Everyday practices, affect, and embodiment

What emergent pathways in everyday local, global, and disciplinary politics embrace different modes of meaning-making?

How can interpretive practices strengthen affective literacy, our ability to recognise and engage complex emotions, including their weaponisation in “hard security” discourses and their reparative possibilities?

How do bodies, emotions, and vulnerabilities feature in interpretive accounts of security, crisis, and policy practice?

How does an interpretivist scholar engage in their own making as an epistemic subject? What affective conditions, routines, and practices are re-centred or challenged in that process?

Epistemic communities, power, and reflexivity

What is the role of interpretive epistemic communities in upholding and centring interpretive premises in International Relations?

How do such communities seek epistemic grounding and distinction, given their commitment to plurality and hermeneutic suspicion towards foundational claims?

How are interpretive scholars positioned within broader landscapes of power in academia, policy worlds, and civil society?

How do practices of mentoring, reviewing, editing, and collective authorship cultivate, or undermine, reflexive and relational interpretive work?