



Call for papers for an *ephemera* workshop on:

Crawling from the wreckage: Does critique have a future in the business school?

Organizers: Peter Fleming and Alison Pullen

Date: 20-21 February 2020

Location: Frank Gehry Building, Sydney

Survival itself has something nonsensical about it today, like dreams in which, having experienced the end of the world, one afterwards crawls from the basement.

T.W. Adorno, *Minimal Moralia*.

Critique is always a critique *of* some instituted practice, discourse, episteme, institution, and it loses its character the moment in which it is abstracted from its operation and made to stand alone as a purely generalizable practice.

Judith Butler, *What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue*.

Moralistic reproaches to certain kinds of speech or argument kill critique [...] by configuring political injustice and political righteousness as a problem of remarks, attitude, and speech rather than a matter of historical, political-economic and cultural formations of power.

Wendy Brown, *Politics Out of History*.

Critical thinking in the business school has reached a decisive and alarming impasse. On the one hand, despite nearly thirty years of Critical Management Studies, the wider world of work, corporations and the economy has never looked bleaker. Harvey Weinstein, the impending ecocide, and a triumphant global elite have almost reduced radical politics (and society more generally) to a burnout wreckage of pointless complaint. If critical thinking once harboured the optimistic hope of making a practical difference, in the face of such a brutal

reality it now risks being an inept moralising bystander grimacing at others' attitudes as the ship goes down.

On the other hand, the business school itself has embraced 'extreme neoliberalism', with rampant managerialism and edict-issuing technocrats in full bloom. Sadly, even the institution that critical scholars call home is often touted as one of the more extreme emblems of all that's wrong with late capitalism. When it comes to keeping our own house in order, it's almost as if Critical Management Studies has been fiddling while Rome burned.

This workshop will provide scholars with the opportunity to reimagine how critique can emerge from the business school in light of the dismal actuality that we find ourselves in. Can we crawl from the wreckage of a devastated neoliberal order? And is the practical revitalisation of critical thinking commensurate with the business school in its present form? Indeed, if it is true that the old order is now dying and the new one is struggling to be born, then we welcome papers that seek to bring about a renaissance of criticality in the business school and beyond. Where to start? We could begin by revisiting, what does it mean to offer critique? What does it mean to critique from a particular position and place? What does achieving critique amount to? How will critique manifest and mutate as we move forward in scholarship and praxis?

Although by no means inclusive, possible topics could include:

- Critical thinking, its origins and future in the business school and university.
- De-neoliberalizing the business school in an era of high-technocracy.
- Capitalism and the future of the university.
- Leftist Critique and radical politics in a Trumpian nightmare.
- Gender and critical thinking in the post-Weinstein era.
- The role of critical performativity in critique.
- Laying bodies on the line through embodied critique.
- The places and spaces of critique.
- The ethics of critique.
- The co-optation of critique into capitalist business school metrics, practices and ideologies.
- The death (and rebirth) of radical democracy in the business school.
- Decolonising critique.
- What comes after critique?
- Connection to land and Indigenous knowledge within critique.
- Critique from marginal thought.
- Critique as methodological approach.
- Critique as activism.

Deadline for submission of abstracts: 1 December 2019

Please send submissions to both Peter Fleming (peter.fleming@uts.edu.au) and Alison Pullen (Alison.pullen@mq.edu.au). Abstracts of 350 words are due December 1st 2019 and final papers February 1st 2020.

Other details

Due to the generous sponsorship of the Department of Management, UTS Business School and Macquarie Business School there will be no workshop fee. Attendees are required to fund travel and accommodation. Refreshments on both days will be provided, as well as a Sydney Harbour view dinner on Thursday 20th February. The workshop includes an opportunity to participate in a cultural heritage guided tour.

Whilst presentation facilities are available, we would like to create a Powerpoint free space.

***ephemera* special issue**

A special issue will be developed from papers given at this workshop.