

Call for Applications

Freiburg Institute of Advanced Studies (FRIAS)
2021 Summer School (Online)

“Concepts, Discourses and Practices of Resilience in the Environmental Humanities”

28th June – 2nd July 2021

The ‘Environmental Humanities’ stands for an ongoing and increasingly visible endeavour of the humanities disciplines – philosophy, history, religious and cultural studies, to name but a few - to seek new ways to unite and collaborate with each other and with the natural and social science and technology-focused disciplines in a time of multiple ecological crises.

Likewise, ‘resilience’ is a term that has gained momentum across an interdisciplinary spectrum of scholarship and research in the face of global trends as diverse as climate change, pandemics and psychological stress due to abuse or isolation. With origins in psychology and ecology, resilience can serve as an analytical frame to better understand past and present changes in social or socio-ecological system (Böhme 2019, Gunderson/Holling 2002). From a sociological perspective, resilience perspectives ask if and how a society can cope with environmental crises and if there are any kinds of capacity for transformation emerging in this process (Endreß/Rampp 2014). Historians look at the biodiversity in ecosystems helping to maintain resilience for illuminating social processes of empires (Perdue 2013). Thus, ‘becoming resilient’ is increasingly demanded by subjects, populations and systems (Welsh 2013). Often, however, resilience is referred to in a normative fashion, e.g., to posit policy preferences in light of impending crises and catastrophes. This makes resilience a rather amorphous concept that is dismissed as politically charged by some and foregrounded as a bridging concept by others (Davoudi 2012).

In contrast to other paradigmatic concepts of our time, such as sustainability, the discourse on resilience has not yet been thoroughly acknowledged, nor delineated, in the humanities – despite intensive discussion about the merits and problems of the concept in human geography, sociology and other disciplines that have lasted for over a decade. The humanities can enrich the resilience discourse, however, by offering insights into the cultural prerequisites and consequences of becoming, or having to become, resilient. The Environmental Humanities therefore provide a fertile ground on which ‘multiple resiliences’ (Anderson 2015: 60) can be explored, examined and interpreted in a world ‘populated with ontologies, politics, and ethics’ (Vardy & Smith 2017:177), in both critical and constructive ways that are ‘capable of expressing concerns for the well-being of those most vulnerable, socially and ecologically, and of taking ecopolitical sides in such debates, not adopting a false neutrality and objectivity’ (ibid.) . In some instances, resilience might operate as a meaningful boundary object that enables Environmental Humanities scholars to engage productively with researchers from other fields.

What is the aim of the Summer School?

This one-week Summer School aims at providing an open and supportive space for young scholars and advanced students from the Environmental Humanities to critically examine and discuss different perspectives on resilience. During the summer school, participants can get in touch with scholars involved in resilience research and relate their own work to the growing body of scholarship. The focus on resilience will serve as an analytical frame for examining environmental threats and socio-cultural change.

Who is organising the Summer School?

The event is organised by Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS) Research Focus "Environmental Humanities" 2020/21, located at the University of Freiburg. For further information on this program and the individuals involved, please visit: <https://www.frias.uni-freiburg.de/en/research-areas/research-areas-2019-20/focus-2019-20>

How will the Summer School be organised?

The Summer School will be held as a digital seminar series over the course of five days (13:00 to 18:00 Central European Summer Time), using Zoom as the main videoconferencing platform. Participants will discuss key aspects of resilience with expert scholars from Germany and elsewhere. There will be a mix of key note and student presentations, reading and discussion sessions and other types of interactive digital formats. The entire event will be conducted in English.

Who can apply?

Master-level and PhD students with an interest in resilience who broadly identify with the Environmental Humanities or who stem from neighbouring disciplines. You must presently be enrolled as a Master or PhD student at a tertiary institution. The Summer School is ideal if you are currently preparing a final thesis, have recently completed your Master thesis, or are currently working on a PhD project with relevance to the Environmental Humanities and resilience.

How much does it cost to participate?

Thanks to generous support by the [Freiburg Institute of Advanced Studies](https://www.frias.uni-freiburg.de/en/research-areas/research-areas-2019-20/focus-2019-20), this summer school is offered free of charge.

If I am selected to participate, what do I need to contribute?

You are expected to be available during the entire period and participate actively in discussions and readings sessions. You will also be asked to present your current research project (e.g., your Master thesis or PhD project).

How can I apply?

By 16th May 2021, please send an e-mail with a **letter of motivation** (max. one page), your **current CV** (max. two pages), and **proof of current enrolment in a tertiary institution** at Master or PhD level to: summerschool21@frias.uni-freiburg.de

When will I find out if my application was successful?

You will be notified of the outcome of your application in early June 2021.

References

- Anderson B. 2015. What Kind of Thing is Resilience? In: *Politics* 35(1), 60–66.
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- Endreß M. & Rampp B. 2014: Resilience as Process of Transformative Autogenesis: Steps towards a Sociological Theory [in German]. In: *Behemoth A Journal on Civilisation* 7(2), 73-102.
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- Perdue P. 2013: Ecologies of Empire: From Qing Cosmopolitanism to Modern Nationalism, in: *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review* 8, 1-30.
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