

#3 RADICAL DEMOCRACY WORKSHOP

JANUARY 23, 2023

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

**RESISTIBILITY, INTERRUPTION, REFUSAL.
AGONISTIC SUBJECTIVITY AND FEMINIST POLITICS**

INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH
SENCKENBERGANLAGE 26, 60325 FRANKFURT

PROF. DR. BONNIE HONIG

(Nancy Duke Lewis Professor of Modern Culture and Media and
Political Science, Brown University, Providence, USA)

ORGANIZATION

**FELIX TRAUTMANN & ARISTOTELIS AGRIDOPOULOS
IFS, FRANKFURT**

APPLICATION UNTIL JANUARY, 13
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IfS Institut für
Sozialforschung

RADICAL DEMOCRACY WORKSHOP #3 - Institute for Social Research, Frankfurt

Resistibility, Interruption, Refusal. Agonistic Subjectivity and Feminist Politics

International Workshop with Bonnie Honig

Since her early works Bonnie Honig's radical democratic thought offers a variety of critical approaches to political agency and subjectivity as well as the paradoxes of legal and constitutional processes. Her understanding of the performative nature and yet always already agonistically configured social relations can be read as an attempt to expand and radicalize political forms of critique. Resisting, interrupting and refusing become, in the light of Honig's work, not only practices against existing realities but also the starting point for new social relations and political assemblies. In the workshop we want to further explore these notions alongside Honig's critical reading of Arendt as well as her reinterpretation of figures like Sophocles' Antigone and Euripides' Agave. This agonistic, feminist and performative understanding of politics results, by way of a critique of liberal and communitarian political theories, in a broad idea of democracy as a form of life, constituted by every day practices and collective action.

23 JANUARY, 2023, MONDAY: 3 PM – 9 PM

Session 1 (3 – 4:30PM): *Agonism and Subjectivity. Radicalizing Arendt's Political Thought*

Session 2 (5 – 6:30 PM): *Feminist Politics. Rereading Antigone, Agave and Their Sisters*

Evening Lecture by Bonnie Honig (7 PM): »We are gathered here today« – *Performativity and Contagion from Eve Sedgwick and J.L. Austin to Hortense Spillers and Patricia Williams*«

In Euripides' *Bacchae*, the 2015 film *The Fits*, and John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (1970), refusal is contagious. But each represents a different model of contagion. In the *Bacchae*, refusal breaks out all-at-once; in *The Fits*, a contagion passes through a community in a sequence, which allows it to mutate as it travels; and in *A Theory of Justice*, refusal is a contagion that turns out to be isolable. In each of these examples, efforts to contain the contagion are made via »deformatives«, Eve Sedgwick's term for Austinian performative utterances that are, she says, »uniquely contagious«. Might that contagion be reworked for democratic theory? Deformatives shame or stigmatize gender queerness which, Sedgwick argues, is marginalized by Austin's focus on the »I do« of the straight couple as an exemplary performative in *How To Do Things with Words*. I read Austin differently, noting his repeated and neglected turn not just to the couple but also to the crowd, which is gathered and dispersed by a bull that may be about to charge. This is the first of three counterexamples explored here that may summon a democratic theory of contagion: each isolates, mutates or emancipates a contagion.

Bonnie Honig is Nancy Duke Lewis Professor of Modern Culture and Media and Political Science at Brown University. In her research she focuses on political theory, feminism, legal theory and cultural studies, as well as politics of film and literature. She is considered one of the key thinkers of an agonistic model of democracy. She is author of several books, including: *Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics* (1993); *Emergency Politics: Paradox, Law, Democracy* (2009); *Antigone, Interrupted* (2013); *A Feminist Theory of Refusal* (2021).

Registration: People interested in participating in the workshop are kindly asked to register until January 13th by email (trautmann@em.uni-frankfurt.de). Participants will be provided with digital copies of the texts that are going to be discussed in the workshop.