COMING SOON

IMH

Durham University
Institute for Medical Humanities

Interdisciplinary Models of the Human

"It's a hard thing, my fine friend, to demonstrate [sufficiently] any of the greater subjects without using models. It looks as if each of us knows everything in a kind of dreamlike way, and then again is ignorant of everything as it were when awake" (Plato [287 b-c] 1995, 277d1-4).

Mo-Hu

Models of the Human (A New Seminar Series)

The 'MO-HU' seminar series will bring together, compare, integrate and interdisciplinarily stress-test models of what makes us human, and what human organisms are and make (how they sleep, dream, think, act, desire, grieve, suffer, imagine, rejoice, rationalize, predict or hallucinate, and more).

To look at all these elements and experiences, even within a single discipline, would be doomed to infinite dive into particulars, if it weren't for the abstracting and simplifying nature of models. Models are selective, hypothetical simplifications of the reality, yet with a strong explanatory or exploratory potential.

When cognitive science has to model a specific aspect of human experience it wants to understand, it makes a selection of key elements that *might* be involved. For the same target experience (e.g. dreams or consciousness), literature, narrative theory, psychology, philosophy of mind, phenomenology, anthropology, religion, biology, cinema, visual or performative arts will make different choices, leading to different models of the human.

Models are everywhere, but they are never natural or innocent, especially when implicit or mistaken for reality. Models are pervasive and resilient, as habits or biases can be. Models affect laws and society, norms, possibilities, and impossibilities. Models can make some aspects of life and mind visible, and confine others to the hidden, the abnormal or the obscene.

Models need therefore to be challenged, and no discipline should claim the ultimate model on the human. Models should instead be exchanged, complemented, questioned and expanded through an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural dialogue between different disciplinary models and, equally important, different ways of modeling.

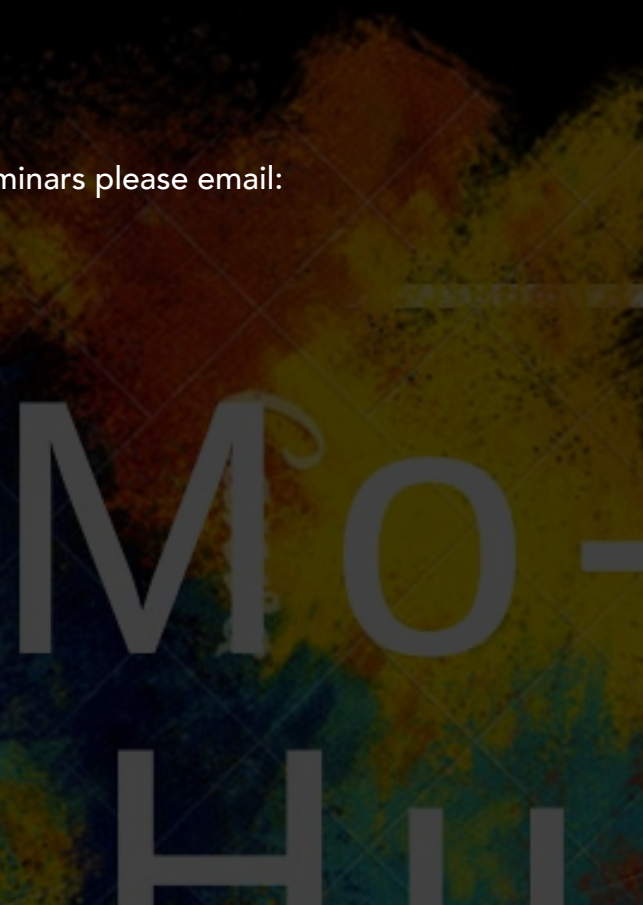
This is our own model for the MO-HU seminar series. Bring your own model, you'll find new tools to play with it (we cannot promise you'll bring it home intact…).

S1: Dreams

The first MO-HU seminar series will be dedicated to dreams and hypnagogic experiences.

Confirmed speakers:

- Jan 28, 5pm: Professor Peter Schwenger (Western University)
- Feb 25, 9pm: Professor John Sutton (Macquarie University)
- March, TBC: Professor Evan Thompson (University of British Columbia)
- March/April, TBC: Professor Sharon Sliwinski (Western University)

All the seminars will take place on Zoom.
To obtain the link and the access code to the seminars please email:

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