

Call for Papers: The Forms of Academic Work

Special Issue of Postmodern Culture

Edited by The Working Group on Academic Forms

Questions of the professional shape of the disciplines of the humanities have recently come to the fore. The projected special issue of *Postmodern Cultures*, “The Forms of Academic Work,” seeks to utilize the form of the electronic journal to think through the ways in which the forms we do academic work in structure that work. From the monograph to the research paper, from peer-review conventions to writing applications, from conceptualizing syllabi to the rhythm of the semester as such, forms impinge on our practices. But for all their centrality, there’s not been much discussion of what academic forms are (or what things are academic forms), let alone much consideration of whether they need to be what they are, or what they might be in the future.

The **Working Group on Academic Forms** pursues this question. We posit that an understanding of the concrete forms of academic work, their history, affordances, reach, conscious and unconscious structuring of our working (and private) lives will help us understand the disciplines of the humanities better. If forms structure our work, how will altering these forms also alter our work? If altering the forms of our work is in the cards, how would we like to change the forms to achieve our ends? What would be good forms? Why do forms persist? What forms are necessary? How would we know? We ask these questions on the understanding that to answer them is a process and an interdisciplinary project. Forms of work sit at the center of how we understand the mission of the university writ large, but also the most individual and miniscule act, from setting aside thirty minutes to write a “call for papers” to the extemporized explanation of the MLA citation system to a student.

For this special issue, we seek contributions willing to catalog, theorize, and historicize, to (re-)conceptualize and innovate specific forms of academic work, explicitly working with the affordances of an electronic journal conceived as an experiment, geared (at least potentially) at academic and non-academic readers. We are explicitly not looking for – or at any rate, we are not looking *only* for – “300 word proposals” and “7000 words essays”. We are looking for papers that theorize academic forms as much as for papers that (re-)practice them. **Choosing one “form” of academic work (see a potential list below), contributors should feel free to consider what approach best suits discussion of this form.** Metadiscussions are explicitly encouraged, including reflections on your own chosen form, in discussing a form: we are interested, for example, in discussions of the affordances of the monograph, especially in the age of digital (re-)production, in the age of the short monograph, in the age of not-really-reading monographs—and even in the form of a 7000 word research paper. But we’re also interested in your resurrection of the essay à la Adorno to discuss the essay, in your innovating academia through aphorism, in your video essays or mixed-media montage of research commenting on the potentials of new forms to say new things; in your rethinking what kind of work “teaching” is, and what forms it takes; in your considering the question of whether it’s work to talk to colleagues about Henry James over lunch, and what it would mean to call that a “form”. We’re really interested, too, in the juxtaposition of these forms—in their coming together within that other form, the “special issue.” In short, we’re interested in all the

ways you think thinking about form will help us understand our work. And if you can do so while making use of what we're able to do on a journal-website, that's all the better.

Please submit your ideas, as an abstract, a description, a précis, a sketch, or in any other apparently suitable short form, to:

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by October 1, 2023. We'll get back to you as soon as possible. Completed projects should tentatively be on hand by April 2, 2024.

Forms already being worked on:

Aphorism, Article, Coffee Break, Conversation, Curriculum Vitae, Disability Accommodation Requests, Footnote, Interview, Review, Citation & Referencing

Suggestions for further academic forms (feel free to propose additional forms):

Blog post; chat; classroom discussion; companion; conference presentation; conference poster; dissertation colloquium; dissertation; edited collection; elevator pitch; essay (various subforms: reflective, gobbet, five-paragraph); exam; handbook; keynote; lightning talk; "minor" forms: abstracts, acknowledgments, authors' biographies; introduction; keywords, preface; monograph; peer review; recommendation letter; social media posts; syllabus; teaching; viva voce.