

Workshop Proposal // "Kinship in American Studies"
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"Formed Under Pressure: Kinship and the Planetary Technosphere"
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Proposal

This panel explores how kinship emerges within the planetary technosphere under conditions of technological mediation and mental, as well as physical distress. Following Judith Butler, and in combination with feminist and queer kinship studies (cf. Weston; Spillers), kinship is understood not simply as any type of enduring relationship, but as a category shaped by norms that often affirm conventional family arrangements while simultaneously opening up the possibility of alternative forms of intimacy, care, and solidarity. In this context, pressure refers to environmental, institutional, and technological demands that influence how people interact and relate to one another.

Examples of how kinship is produced in the technosphere include the confines of extra-planetary and technology-mediated environments, such as space tourism capsules, Moon habitats, and planetary analog simulations, as they are imagined in a variety of cultural products (*The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet*, *Orbital*, *Interstellar*, *Moon*), and the ways in which these sites serve to redefine the human, but also renegotiate humanity's relations with the non-human, more-than-human and even the planet itself.

The pressures at work in the technosphere (cf. Milsum; cf. Haff) are not independent. On the contrary, they are actively produced and intensified by its infrastructures, which impose, regulate, and mediate the conditions under which lives and relationships can be sustained, a perspective in line with research on techno-social mediation (cf. Latour; Crawford; Haraway), which emphasizes the role in shaping opportunities for survival. The technosphere encompasses infrastructures and systems as varied as spacecraft, factories, battlefields, digital platforms, and AI-mediated environments, and demonstrates that survival is inseparable from technological, institutional, and collective endurance. These contexts generate forms of camaraderie and obligation that resemble family but are formed through mediation and survival rather than heteronormative standards of family relations. Hence, they reflect Butler's observation that kinship exists in tension with, and at times in alignment with, heteronormative family structures.

Our workshop puts particular emphasis on how the concept of the technosphere implies a planetary dimension of how technology intervenes in the spatial and relational interconnectedness of human, non-human and more-than-human life on Earth (Heise; Elias and Moraru). Read together, then, these perspectives situate kinship within technological mediation and planetary relations, drawing on posthumanist frameworks (Braidotti; Haraway; Nayar; Rossini; Vint) and thereby opening it to a wider 'web of life' (Puig de la Bellacasa).

Inspired by these theories, the panel therefore asks:

- How does literature (re-)produce forms of kinship that emerge in the planetary technosphere through its affordances of form, content, or (re-)distribution?

- To what extent does the technosphere create pressures that sustain normative forms of belonging while opening spaces for alternative intimacies with nonhuman entities?
- How can posthumanist and planetary perspectives help envision forms of care that extend beyond humans to encompass ecological systems, technologies, and nonhuman entities?
- Do such pressurized environments reinforce normative models of kinship, or do they create non-normative relationships that challenge traditional boundaries?
- What kind of planetary technospheres can emerge through human interrelations?
- How are kinship formations shaped within environments of the planetary technosphere, such as spacecraft, military units, online spaces?

We invite prospective panelists to address these, and related, questions about “Kinship and the Planetary Technosphere” and ask applicants to submit their proposals to laura.cwalina@hhu.de and maxine.broich@uni-duesseldorf.de.

Confirmed speaker: Prof. Dr. Kylie Crane