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Affect & Cultural Studies

It would be impossible to imagine the practice of cultural studies without – in some way or another – bringing affect, emotion, feeling, and passion into account. Culture is encounter, encounter is the meeting of forces: energies emerge, circulate, settle, intensify, dissipate, accumulate, shimmer, cut and connect. More than signification, other than consciousness, wider than ‘the human,’ the whole matter of affect raises different and sometimes difficult questions about the vital/fateful angles & atmospheres of living contexts and those singular impingements that traverse the mutual composing of bodies and worlds. While the theoretical discourses of affect, passion, and sensation predate cultural studies (see, for example, the philosophies of Spinoza and Hume), it is arguably, today, through work in contemporary cultural studies that the widely divergent-disciplinary strands of ‘affect theory’ might find, rather than any kind of easy reconciliation or nullifying cross-refutation, their most illuminating juxtaposition and most pertinent deployment. This spotlight session will specifically focus on how theories of affect *in* cultural studies open up new avenues for understanding the increasingly inseparable intertwining of the aesthetic and the political: by calling upon capacities of/for feeling (to affect/to be affected) that unfold, at once, the intimate and impersonal pathologies that contribute to the felt-sense of belongingness to, as well as the dispossession of, life-worlds.