

**CALL FOR FELLOWS**  
**Center for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Studies**

**IN THE ESCHATON**

**Application Deadline: Friday, April 28<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 pm**

Background: The Center for 21st Century Studies (C21), one of the oldest humanities institutes in the United States, leads the way in imagining, defining, and creating the multidisciplinary field of 21st Century Studies. A UW System Center of Excellence, C21 focuses on the intersection of the humanities, arts, and sciences (social and natural) with issues of compelling concern, organizing its research and public programs around timely and engaging themes. We bring nationally and internationally known scholars to campus to address the year's research topic in seminars, lectures, and conferences. Each year the Center constitutes a group of about six UWM fellows, as well as an external fellow, whose research interests relate to the theme and contribute to C21's mission to imagine, define, and create the emergent field of 21st Century Studies.

Research Topic for 2017-18: "In the Eschaton" The Center for 21st Century Studies invites scholars from the UWM community to address the theme, "In the Eschaton." The world has been coming to an end for close to two millennia. Ever since being proposed by John of Patmos, the apocalypse has been considered by many to be imminent in the Western world. The eschaton—the period within which the end of the world emerges—has been reworked, reused, and reimagined as a way of making sense of the present. Though it emerges from a variety of sources and for diverse reasons, it always tells a powerful story: everything we think is true and real is about to disappear, replaced entirely by a new world.

Eschatology plays an important role in American history as well, as a number of the most powerful religious traditions in the United States have held the end to be imminent, and have promulgated long-lasting organizations based around this principle. This ironic trajectory demands attention to the odd temporality of the eschaton: it always exists in the future, but its demands always focus on the present. What aspects of the contemporary must be avoided or provoked? This is true of the desacralized forms of global disaster as well: nuclear war, viral pandemic, asteroid strike, climate collapse. In each case, scientific knowledge is presented as the solution to an emergent event, a possible solution to an unknowable future.

Scholarly attention to eschatology has been interdisciplinary but fragmented. While obviously central to chiliastic religions, theologians tend to give it short shrift. But unlike most theological concepts, eschatology appears increasingly in contemporary life. A common science fiction trope, it has been a central event in novels from Margaret Atwood, David Foster Wallace, and Colson

Whitehead. Philosophical concepts such as the “end of history” depend upon it. European theorists including Paolo Virno place it at the center of language. Artists have provided a rich set of images to represent the unimaginable. Ecological theorists focus on collapse, disappearance, and extinction. What are the modes of writing and representation which best illuminate the interiorities of the eschaton? And what world, precisely, is ending in the eschaton: that of civilization, the human species, the literal earth, or even the death of one particular consciousness?

We are also interested in alternatives to the eschaton. Non-linear assumptions of time, whether they emerge from non-European cultures or from philosophical traditions, may still envision a radical break (e.g., Mayan circular periodicity) or an escape (e.g., immanence) without the teleological purposefulness of eschatology. What do temporal modes which are not eschatological evoke, avoid, and contain? What is the gendered nature of the eschatology? What role does gender play in its promulgation and what is its relationship to sexuality? What is gained or lost in conceptual alternatives?

The Center for 21st Century Studies invites scholars from the humanities, the arts, the sciences and the entire academic community to take up our 2017-2018 theme, “In the Eschaton,” from a variety of disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. We are especially interested in proposals that integrate theoretical and empirical perspectives in order to make sense of the eschaton as:

- a temporal event, one placed always in a position of futurity
- a limit to meaning, one which promises to end all division
- an uncoding of language, one which emerges from words but overcomes their limitations
- a fundament of promise, one in which all wills are coordinated
- a vanquishing of space, one where geographic space is subsumed
- a totalization of the sublime, one which exceeds all human capacities
- a destruction of instrumentalization, one which collapses ends and means

Terms/Eligibility of Faculty for Fellowships: UWM faculty in all departments who hold the rank of assistant, associate, or full professor may apply. Faculty fellows receive a reduction in their teaching responsibilities sufficient to bring their course load down to one course each semester, as well as being relieved from major committee work. The Center provides each fellow with access to office space on the ninth floor of Curtin Hall and with research assistance (library assistance, duplication, etc.) as resources permit. Each fellow is expected to participate in the Center Fellows’ Seminar and public programs throughout the year, and to give a public presentation on his or her research no later than the academic year following the fellowship. No one may hold a Center fellowship more than twice in a five-year period. Faculty involved in substantive projects outside of teaching, such as organizing conferences, which will require substantial time away from their research in 2017-2018 are eligible to apply, but must disclose such commitments on the application form.

Terms/Eligibility of Academic Staff for Fellowships: UWM academic staff in all departments may apply. C21 will work with academic staff on a case-by-case basis to provide compensation for participating in the seminar. The Center provides each fellow with access to office space on the ninth floor of Curtin Hall and with research assistance (library assistance, duplication, etc.) as resources permit. Each fellow is expected to participate in the Center fellows' seminar and public programs throughout the year, and to give a public presentation on his or her research no later than the academic year following the fellowship. No one may hold a Center fellowship more than twice in a five-year period.

Procedures: Submit ONE SINGLE PDF including the following components, in this order, as an email attachment to [c21@uwm.edu](mailto:c21@uwm.edu):

- an application cover sheet, available online at <http://www4.uwm.edu/c21/pages/opportunities/forFaculty.html>
- a three- to four-page statement (maximum 1,000 words) describing your research project and its relation to the Center's current theme. Explain how it fits into your past research (if applicable) and future plans for research
- a curriculum vitae
- a recent offprint, manuscript (article length), or example of artwork

**You are responsible for informing the chair of your department (or appropriate supervisor) that you are applying for a 2017-18 C21 fellowship to ensure that your full participation as a C21 fellow will be supported by your department.**