We are pleased to announce the start of CAPITAL FORMS, an Economic Humanities training project supported by the [London Arts and Humanities Partnership (LAHP)](https://www.lahp.ac.uk/about-lahp/).

This semester-long project will include a monthly reading and discussion group (beginning 22 January 2020) and a final daylong symposium (15 May 2020) focused on methods and approaches in the humanities for studying topics related to political economy. Please read on for full details about CAPITAL FORMS and how to participate.

While geared for postgraduate research students at universities belonging to the London Arts and Humanities Partnership (LAHP), participation in CAPITAL FORMS is open.

If you have any questions, please email the conveners at: capitalforms2020@gmail.com

Full details for the reading group and symposium can be found at: <https://capitalforms.wordpress.com/>

The schedule of events includes:

22 January: Logistics (reading group)

12 February: Labour (reading group)

18 March: Money (reading group)

22 April: Debt (reading group)

15 May: CAPITAL FORMS Symposium

**CAPITAL FORMS OVERVIEW**

There is increasing interest amongst academics and PhD researchers in the broad interdisciplinary field of the Economic Humanities. Within this field, there is particular interest in the ways that artists, filmmakers, writers and creatives of all kinds have used cultural and aesthetic forms and practices to explore economic questions such as the impact of tax avoidance, austerity, debt, and data mining on contemporary societies, as well as issues of raced markets and economically-inflected gender inequalities.

However, PhD researchers often struggle with the challenges of interdisciplinary work of this nature, and with frequent isolation and atomization within their broader traditional disciplinary areas (English, Film Studies, Drama, Art History, Music etc.) that are typically their institutional homes. CAPITAL FORMS brings together students at LAHP universities across a broad range of arts subjects working on related themes to showcase ongoing academic and artistic practice in the field, to allow PhD researchers to find support from academics and other PhD students across the LAHP partnership, and to gain greater awareness of developments, challenges, opportunities and resources in this interdisciplinary sub-field.

**READING GROUP**

The CAPITAL FORMS reading Group will consist of guided reading and discussion sessions held monthly on a Wednesday (see below for full schedule). The sessions will be facilitated and cover a range of economic themes, including debt, financialization, labour, and logistics. These sessions will provide effective strategies on managing projects that crossover into the discipline of economics and political economy and will outline through guided reading and discussion a range of critical methodologies available to students. The sessions will provide the space for PhD students to reflect on the economic challenges that are facing academia today and consider how they might build in resistance to this in their own research.

Each 2-hour session will be facilitated by one of the CAPITAL FORMS convenors, and will focus on a different topic. Preparation will include reading one text to be circulated ahead of time. All readings will be provided as linked pdf’s (see below). As this is a reading group, participants are encouraged to attend each session.

All seminars will meet from 6PM-8PM at Queen Mary University of London (room TBC; the nearest tube station is Stepney Green or Mile End). A map of the Mile End campus is available here:<https://ph.qmul.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Article/Mile-End-campus-map.pdf>

**Seminar 1: Logistics**

**When:** Wednesday 22 January 2020, 6PM-8PM

**Where:** TBC, QMUL Mile End Campus

**Facilitator:** Dr Shane Boyle, Department of Drama, QMUL

**RSVP:** If you plan on attending, please confirm by [booking a place here](http://eventbrite.co.uk/e/capital-forms-reading-group-logistics-tickets-87091967419).

**Description:** The so-called ‘logistics revolution’ of the 1960s all but transformed the world of capital. Originally a military term, logistics took hold of businesses in the post-war period as a management science that championed reorganising production processes according to the costs and speed of circulating goods. Today the priorities of logistics undergird the ‘lean’ manufacturing systems and supply chains that define work and retail globally. The first seminar of CAPITAL FORMS addresses how artists have both responded to and been complicit in this shift of the capital world system. The chapter from Deborah Cowen introduces the logistics terrain and foregrounds the role art performs in supporting and contesting a world remade by logistics. As the first meeting of the reading group, this session will also introduce the project aims and schedule.

**Reading:** [Deborah Cowen (2014), ‘Rough Trade? Sex, Death, and the Queer Nature of Circulation,’ in The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in Global Trade, Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2014, pp. 197-231.](https://www.dropbox.com/s/m4fkmw27eyh7f7o/cowen%20rough%20trade.pdf?dl=0) [Click for link]

**Seminar 2: Labour**

**When:** Wednesday 12 February 2020, 6PM-8PM

**Where:** TBC, QMUL Mile End Campus

**Facilitator:** Martin Young, Department of Drama, QMUL

**Description:** Art requires work. The effort and process of production is often concealed by the finished piece, and has been frequently absent from critical discourses, but over recent years there has been an increased attention to artistic labour and its wider economic and cultural stakes. This session will address these themes and the relationship between the activity of artistic production and other forms of productive and exploited labour. The reading from Leigh Claire La Berge’s new book Wages Against Artwork introduces key recent debates about artistic labour and its relation to value and capitalist commodity production.

**Reading:** [Leigh Claire La Berge (2019), ‘Socially Engaged Art and Decommodified Labor,’ in Wages Against Artwork, Durham and London: Duke University Press, pp. 1-33. [Click for link]](https://www.dukeupress.edu/Assets/PubMaterials/978-1-4780-0482-0_601.pdf)

**Seminar 3: Money**

**When:** Wednesday 18 March 2020, 6PM-8PM

**Where:** TBC, QMUL Mile End Campus

**Facilitator:** Dr Alasdair King, Department of Film, QMUL

**Description:** Peter Szendy’s short collection of essays, The Supermarket of the Visible, appeared in English translation in 2019. Szendy’s pieces address what he sees as the saturation of the contemporary world with images of all kinds. The Supermarket of the Visible analyses this general image space and develops ideas of an economy of images and icons – in Szendy’s words, an ‘iconomy’. In his introductory essay, ‘Money, or The Other Side of Images’, he draws on scenes from The Sopranos and from films by Godard and Bresson to look at the relationship between the circulation of images and the circulation of money. In this reading seminar on ‘Money’, we will think about how money, currency, and finance are registered by contemporary artists, writers and theorists, and look in detail at the challenges and rewards of Szendy’s engaging and entertaining essay.

**Reading:** [Peter Szendy (2019) ‘Money, or The Other Side of Images’ in The Supermarket of the Visible: Toward a general economy of images, New York: Fordham University Press, pp. 3-26. (Translated by Jan Plug)](https://www.dropbox.com/s/k95vmzyhzoqqzqv/szendy%20supermarket%20of%20the%20visible.pdf?dl=0) [Click for link]

**Seminar 4: Debt**

**When:** Wednesday 22 April 2020, 6PM-8PM

**Where:** TBC, QMUL Mile End Campus

**Facilitator:** Ruby Tuke, Department of English, QMUL

**Description:** Since the recent global financial crash and ensuing years of austerity, debt has become a source of political contention. Yet what exactly are the theoretical assumptions that underpin these debates? How might these assumptions influence creative practice? In this reading seminar, we’ll read a section of Elettrra Stimilli’s Debt and Guilt: A Political Philosophy (2019) in order to think through some of the wider implications of debt’s semantic link with guilt (schuld / schulden in German), which her book raises.

**Reading:** Excerpt from Elettrra Stimilli (2018), Debt and Guilt: A Political Philosophy, London: Bloomsbury.

**CAPITAL FORMS SYMPOSIUM**

A summative daylong symposium will be held at Queen Mary University of London on 15 May 2020. This will include presentations, screenings and workshops from artists and academics working on economic-related themes. It will conclude with a round-table discussion on the challenges of and approaches for researching political economy in the Humanities. The full symposium schedule will be available soon.

**PARTICIPATION AND CONTACT**

CAPITAL FORMS is convened by Alasdair King, Martin Young, Ruby Tuke and Shane Boyle.

If you would like to take part, please attend the reading group. The reading group is open to anyone, but postgraduate research students at any of the LAHP-affiliated universities are especially encouraged to take part. If you are planning to attend the first seminar on logistics, [please RSVP here](http://eventbrite.co.uk/e/capital-forms-reading-group-logistics-tickets-87091967419).

Please be in touch by email with any questions: capitalforms2020@gmail.com

Full details for the reading group and symposium can be found at: capital-forms.co.uk

For updates and announcements, follow us on Twitter: [@capitalforms](https://capitalforms.wordpress.com/mentions/capitalforms/)