

CALL FOR PAPERS

Gender, Racial Capitalism, Technology

In-person symposium:

Philosophy Department, Vilnius University

12–13th February 2027

In volume 1 of *Capital*, Marx describes automated machinery as a ‘demonic power’ which takes on human, bodily characteristics at the same time that it dehumanises the workers that operate it. This technology, the material basis of the mode of production, thus inspires revolt in the worker. Marx’s analysis speaks to an undeniable reality of technologised capitalism, but how this analysis might be used to explain—and to change—the particular developments in technology’s role in contemporary capitalism remains an open question. In particular, Marx’s elision of the gendered and racialised elements of capital limit its ability to critique contemporary capitalism’s use of technology as both its means of production and as a primary vehicle of control and destruction within its ideological programme.

Since Marx’s warning against automated machinery, radical thought has significantly diverged when theorising the relationship between technology and liberation. Given technology’s capacity to alleviate reproductive labour, for instance, the Marxist-feminist tradition has largely leaned towards a techno-optimistic stance, favouring technological intervention as a primary means of liberating women and other marginalised subjects. At the same time, decolonial feminists have long been analysing the central role played by technology as a means of surveillance and population control, as well as more broadly in the ideological production of a “civilised” Western hegemon. Meanwhile, debates within the Italian Operaismo tradition around the relationship between technological “rationality,” class struggle, and capitalist planning have facilitated a critical re-examination of Marx’s philosophy of technology whose resonances are alive today in post-workerist analyses of the gendered “mass worker,” the “cognitariat,” and “immaterial labour.” Technology, too, has been at the centre of debates around the extraction of labour within the Black Marxist tradition, whereby technological infrastructure both rationalises the necessity of a labouring underclass whilst at the same time preventing its revolution.

For queer materialism, standing at the intersection of these diverse traditions, these tensions have long been generative, and it is to these contradictions that this symposium responds.

We invite speakers to present papers which consider any aspects of queer and Marxist theories of technology. We welcome papers from across disciplines which address the following, or any other relevant, questions and themes:

Militarism, Surveillance, Medicalisation and Sexual Politics

- What new forms of technology are facilitating enhanced state surveillance? How are contemporary gendered and racialised formations reified through such surveillance?
- How is the technologically enhanced data and value extraction of contemporary racial capitalism reproducing and transforming structures of gender?
- What is the relationship between sexual politics and technology in Israel's ongoing genocide in Palestine? How is Israel's sophisticated surveillance technology facilitating sexual violence as a key component of Israel's genocidal strategy?
- To what extent have technologies intended to facilitate erotic encounters—such as Grindr or Sniffies—altered structures of desire and eroticism? How has cruising's anti-surveillance politics been eroded through technology's increased mediation of the erotic encounter?
- What does the history of sexology and eugenics reveal about the relationship between capital, empire, and queerness? In what ways do medical technologies reify imperialist and anti-queer ideologies?

Reproductive Labour and Automation

- In what ways are contemporary technological developments reinscribing sexual and racial divisions of reproductive labour? And what is its capacity to remake these relations?
- What might a queer materialist response to the rapid rise of the automatising of labour be? Is there a place for utopian imaginaries of a fully-automated 'luxury' communism as we witness a global rise in automatising and decline in workers' rights?
- In what ways can we understand the rapid expansion of AI infrastructure, and particularly its exploitation of natural resources, as a colonial project? What is the relationship between colonial extraction and the extraction of gendered labour?

Historical Change and Technological Development

- Many foundational thinkers in the history of Marxist-feminism—such as Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, and Paul B. Preciado—argue that historical epochs can be defined through the role of technology in the means of (re)production. Are contemporary technological

formations indicative of a new stage in capitalism's development, or simply a continuation of imperialism's extractive impetus?

- How are contemporary structures of gender being transformed by the mutating structure of class that the platform economy entails? In particular, how are the gendered and racial dynamics of platform capitalism mutually imbricated?
- In *Sexual Hegemony*, Christopher Chitty argues that periods of financialisation also engender regressive sexual politics. What role is technology playing in contemporary financialised capital, and what impact does this have on fascistic anti-gender politics?
- Are we experiencing a technological 'revolution'?
- What possibilities does technology hold for queer, Marxist political organising? What opportunities, if any, does technology create for resistance to forces that discipline and restrict the body?
- Many Marxist traditions operate according to a dialectical opposition between technology and nature, a contradiction which contemporary ecological Marxism is working to undo. What can queer Marxism add to these theorisations to ensure that eco-Marxism is sensitive to questions of race, gender, and sexuality?
- What is the critical import of the term 'technology' for queer materialists? What do alternative formulations of technology—such as Michel Foucault's 'technique of the self' and Bernard Stiegler's 'technics' offer to queer-materialist analysis?

Please submit abstracts of no more than 300 words to nsuqueermaterialism@gmail.com by no later than 22nd November 2026. We will notify you of the outcome of your submission by 27th November. When submitting your abstract, please indicate if you would like to be considered for funding to attend this symposium, and how much you would need (travel, accommodation, conference fees, etc.). We have a very small amount set aside for contributing participants without institutional funding to attend.

Please see below the prices for attendance, each of which includes a one-year membership to the NSU:

60EUR - fee for students and precariously employed participants without access to institutional funding

130EUR - fee for securely employed participants without access to institutional funding

200EUR - fee for participants with access to institutional funding

We will not be asking for proof of employment or income; when registering, please choose the price bracket with which you feel most comfortable.

About NSU

The Nordic Summer University (NSU) is a Swedish non-profit organisation. Since 1950, NSU has been an independent academic institution which organises winter and summer symposia that draw international participants across disciplines in the Nordic and Baltic regions and beyond. NSU is organised into interdisciplinary research networks called ‘study circles’. These circles pay particular attention to cross-disciplinary areas not yet targeted by larger research institutions. The practice of NSU addresses two fundamental premises of a knowledge-based welfare state: production of knowledge based on academic freedom and democratic practice of self-governance.

Please find the NSU’s statement in solidarity with Gaza here:

<https://www.nsuweb.org/nordic-summer-university-statement-on-the-genocide-in-gaza/>

About Study Circle 8: ‘Queer Materialism’

Study circle 8—‘Queer Materialism’—focuses on the tensions and overlaps between queer and Marxist theory. Despite often sharing similar objects of study and working together for similar liberatory goals, the divergences between these two schools of thought often produce unresolved methodological contradictions. It is these contradictions from which our circle will begin to consider the limits of both queer and Marxist thought, as well as the possibilities for synthesising them in new, politically generative ways. The circle meets twice a year and will run for three years in total (2025–7). Throughout our meetings and symposia, our central questions will be: To what extent can the differing methodologies of queer and Marxist thought be used in mutually informative ways? How might we approach perceived tensions between queer theory and Marxist thought as generative intersections? How might we use these contradictions as productive starting points for analysing key subject matters for both schools of thought? What might be the limits of thinking these two methodologies together? What can a queer-materialist method illuminate about contemporary systems of oppression?