

CALL FOR PAPERS

Cultures of Skin: Skin in Literature and Culture, Past, Present, Future

7-8 July 2023, University of Surrey, UK

This conference brings together scholars working on literary and cultural representations of skin, across historical periods and transnational contexts, to create new dialogues on the cultural meanings of skin from the past through to the present day, and consider the current and future state of the field(s) of skin studies.

Building on an earlier set of enquiries that initiated skin studies in the early 2000s – with key works including Claudia Benthien’s *Skin: On the Cultural Border Between Self and the World* (1999); Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey’s *Thinking through the Skin* (2001); and Steven Connor’s *The Book of Skin* (2004) – in recent years there has been renewed interest in examining the cultural representations of skin within a variety of cultural texts and media. Scholars have worked across historical and contemporary time periods, engaging with key concepts around identity and embodiment, agency and performativity, temporality and spatiality, and in relation to discourses of race, class, gender, and sexuality, health and illness. Literary and cultural scholarship has been instrumental in advancing theoretical and methodological approaches to the skin as historically variable and culturally constituted, building up a rich picture of “cultures of skin” from the past to the present day. This represents an exciting moment to consider the state of skin studies now, and to anticipate future directions for the field.

In this conference we seek to establish international dialogue among scholars working on a range of contexts and concepts around the skin, to consider thematic and conceptual avenues as well as methodological and theoretical approaches to the skin. We invite scholars working on literary and cultural representations of skin, from any historical period or national/cultural perspective, to submit abstracts on themes including but by no means limited to:

- skin as text, texts as skin
- skin and/as the self, skin and identity
- skin texture, porosity, permeability
- skin colour and race
- skin as thing/material object and in relation to the material world
- animal/nonhuman skins
- skin care and cosmetics throughout history
- technologies of the skin, future skin
- skin as a medium of artistic representation/performance
- skin damage and modification – wounding, scarring, tattoos
- skin in relation to health and illness
- the geographies of skin moving through space
- methodological and theoretical approaches to studying and working on skin
- state of the field reflections, the future of skin studies

Abstracts of 250-300 words should be submitted by **20th February 2023 by emailing culturalskinstudies@gmail.com** Decisions will be communicated by early March.

The conference is being planned on a hybrid basis, with in-person attendance at the University of Surrey (Guildford, UK) accompanied by virtual attendance options. We gratefully acknowledge funding support from the British Academy.

Organised by Dr Charlotte Mathieson (Surrey) and Dr Nicole Nyffenegger (Bern), co-convenors of the Cultural Skin Studies network:

for more information and to join our mailing list or quarterly online reading group, please visit

<https://www.culturalskinstudies.com>