

**Neurocultures: Brain Imaging and Imagining the Mind** – Second international and interdisciplinary conference organised by the Department of English Studies at the University of Bielsko-Biala.

**26-28 September 2016**

Keynote Speakers:

Patricia Pisters, Professor of Film Studies at the University of Amsterdam.

Fernando Vidal, Research Professor at ICREA (Catalan Institution for Research and Advanced Studies).

*The Brain — is wider than the Sky —  
For — put them side by side —  
The one the other will contain  
With ease — and You — beside —  
(Emily Dickinson)*

How do our brains give rise to minds? – is a question that has fascinated many generations of scientists, artists and writers. The aim of our interdisciplinary conference is to bring together specialists from various fields (humanities, social sciences, arts, medicine etc.) in order to explore mental processes and their relation to brain physiology and neural activity. We want to create a dialogue across different academic disciplines so we encourage papers that will be accessible to non-experts.

Considering that, for a while now, natural sciences have been making forays into domains traditionally perceived as reserved for humanist research, with neurology increasingly determining issues of ethics, identity, memory or normativity, we feel justified in revolting against being made a periphery of human inquiry: admitting that brain in its materiality shapes the realities we inhabit, we find growing evidence, confirmed by brain scientists themselves, that the phenomenal organ is in turn – materially – shaped by its abstract constructs such as culture, art or history. It is therefore perhaps time to pose a complementary question: How do our minds shape our brains?

Therefore, while aware of our limited knowledge in the field of natural studies, we dare return to the subject of the role of humanities in managing the discoveries of science, and invite a debate between the two areas of human activity, or, to quote Victoria Pitts-Taylor's Neurocultures Manifesto, an exploration into "the ineluctably social character of nature and the natural makeup of the social." This text, which has been an inspiration for our endeavour, is in fact part of a broader reaction on the side of non-scientists to the focus on the material foundation of our cultures, postulating a collapsing – or at the very least complicating – of the division between biology and culture. Keeping in mind that the line between material reductionism and appropriations of neuroscience ungrounded in proper understanding of the research is indeed a fine one, we invite a consideration of what mind has to offer to the brain and vice versa.

We, therefore, invite papers that will engage in disputes centring on the issues listed below – but by no means exclusively those – to be discussed in twenty-minute long presentations:

- exploration of various mental processes (perception, memory, language, cognition, emotion) in literature, arts and sciences,
- the relation between the mind and the brain,
- literary and cultural representations of the mind,
- a history of ideas about the mind/brain,
- identity and the brain,
- neurocultures,
- collapsing divisions between biology and culture,
- animal minds, animal cognition: philosophy, culture and life sciences,
- appropriations of neuroscience in humanities and social sciences,
- gendering of the mind/brain,
- the embodied mind,
- neurological disorders and how they affect the learning process and the perception of reality,
- the bilingual/ multilingual brain.

We welcome scholars from various academic fields to submit their proposals by **30 April 2016**. Abstracts of **300 words** in English should be sent to [neurocultures2016@gmail.com](mailto:neurocultures2016@gmail.com). Please include your name, email address, academic affiliation and a short biography.

Notifications of acceptance will be sent out by **15 May 2016**.

The conference fee is **420 PLN** (100 euro), and **350 PLN** ( 80 euro) for students. The fee includes lunch, coffee breaks and conference materials.

A selection of papers will be published. Details of publication will be announced during the conference.

Find us on:

[neurocultures2016.wordpress.com/](http://neurocultures2016.wordpress.com/)

[www.facebook.com/Neurocultures2016-440912389433239/?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/Neurocultures2016-440912389433239/?fref=ts)

Best regards,

Conference organisers: Maria Korusiewicz, Anita Jarczok, Alicja Bemben, Sławomir Konkol