

UPDATE: DEADLINE EXTENDED TO JANUARY 15, 2018

WHAT IS ?

UNIVERSE

COMMUNICATION • COMPLEXITY • COHERENCE

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON IN PORTLAND • APRIL 19 – 21, 2018

“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” — Martin Luther King, Jr.†

The eighth annual *What is...?* conference-experience, *What is Universe?* examines communication, complexity/simplicity, coherence/incoherence and how they may or may not contribute to “a pluralistic universe”—networks of relationships. It addresses some of the most pressing issues of our time, including how do societies move forward when there is less shared agreement about the nature of our world, the problems confronting it, and/or the solutions necessary to improve it?

Scholars, practitioners, and other participants will explore universes—from reality bubbles, immersive virtual environments, and alternate histories, to agential realism, media genealogy and archaeology, to bio-inspired, urban and ecological design, to universal rights, disabilities studies, multicultural communities and cosmologies.

This conference marks the third collaboration among scholars from the natural sciences, social sciences, communication, media, law, design, and art. We invite proposals for scholarly papers, panels, exhibits and installations on a wide variety of issues and topics. Please see whatis.uoregon.edu for more details.

Proposals may address the following questions (as well as others):

- What are communication, science, media, design, and philosophy universes today, and how are they informing each other?
- What constitutes universes in the disciplines and how do they overlap and/or open relationships?
- How are citizens increasingly being drawn into alternate, fictional, cinematic, and comic book universes, social networks, immersive worlds, and augmented realities?
- How is journalism overcoming vernaculars of real/fake news in a “post-truth” era, while still actively seeking solutions?
- What are the values and/or criteria that demarcate/circumscribe a universe? Why is it important to identify and mark off universes (e.g. *life-worlds*, *info-spheres*, *meta-verses*, discourses, and systems)?
- In an age of increasing communicative complexities/oversimplifications, what is truth and what is reality?
- How do physical/virtual and analogue/digital domains combine and dissolve?
- What constitutes material universes in antiquity and contemporary culture?
- How do technological and/or cosmological universes transform theory-practice?
- What is posthumanism? How are ecological/environmental futures emerging?
- How are emerging systems, environments, architectures, the sciences and the arts converging/diverging into new fields, societies, and universes? What is design for all?
- What are groupthink and collective intelligence? What are universes of meanings and values?

With definitions of “universe” continuing to multiply, important questions abound. We will address a sweeping range of issues next April in Portland, Oregon.

Conference Organizers:

Janet Wasko and Jeremy Swartz (University of Oregon)

Send 100–150 word abstracts or installations by **JANUARY 15, 2018**, to Janet Wasko • jwasko@uoregon.edu

School of Journalism and Communication • University of Oregon • Eugene, OR 97403-1275 • USA.