

Université de Strasbourg
Societies, actors and government in Europe, SAGE UMR7363

ERC BodyCapital

Call for PhD funding applications*

The ERC Advanced Grant programme “The healthy self as body capital: individuals, market-based societies and body politics in visual twentieth century Europe (BodyCapital)” led by Christian Bonah (Université de Strasbourg) and Anja Laukötter (MPIHD, Berlin) on the understanding of body capital and its history, through the twentieth century history of visual mass media (film, TV, Internet) and inédits (amateur, family and private visuals) is now accepting applications for up to **3 three-year PhD positions**.

The application deadline is 20 May 2017.

Interviews will be scheduled on the Monday 26 June 2017 in Strasbourg (in-person interviews will be preferential, with some travel funding provided upon request).

The contracts will begin 1 September 2017.

Project Description

Do you know how much rapid eye movement (REM) sleep you need to work efficiently, do you look at food labels to ensure that you are getting all the required vitamins and minerals or know someone who uses a step counter to know if they are getting enough physical activity? These are just a few examples of our perceptions of health and the resulting individual practices in twentieth century Europe. In fact, this century may be characterized by the development of products and techniques for the body and its health. Bodily health has evolved as a new form of capital (Bourdieu 1979): a form of symbolic capital that can be transformed into economic capital. These are not only witnessed by, but contributed to and were affected by, a flood of visual media that circulated transnationally in the advent of a media society. Thus at the center of the research group investigations are moving images that are oriented towards the idea of informing, improving or educating on life and health.

The timeframe of the project (1895-2005) starts with the invention of public health, the rapid emergence and diffusion of mechanically produced images and moving pictures and the conception of liberal economic theory and practices at the beginning of the twentieth century and extends to the reinvention of *new* public health, the Internet revolution and the economic crisis nurturing economic neo-liberalism in the 1990s. It stops before the emergence of YouTube (2005) transforming visual Internet practices and the financial crisis in 2007/08. At the center of the period lie the industry-based therapeutic revolution and the invention of television coupled with the epidemiological transition (increasing life expectancy and chronic disease emergence) and the golden age of the welfare state.

The research group aims to provide a socio-historical understanding of how an autonomous, self-optimizing, health-managing individual has emerged as a dominating self-identity in light of sanitary knowledge and practices in European societies at the end of the twentieth century. To achieve this, we compare developments in three European countries that are central to the economy and to visual production, but which differ in their visual culture and their embrace of neo-liberal market policies during the twentieth century: France, Germany and Great Britain.

The research group has identified four central subject entries that the thesis project proposals

should address in one way or another (at least one):

- history of food/ nutrition;
- history of movement/exercise/sports;
- history of sexuality/reproduction/infant;
- history of dependency/addiction/overconsumption
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These themes are simultaneously physiological bodily functions and traditional public health objectives. They are fundamental human needs and correspond to particular economic sectors. As such, all four subjects combine concepts and practices spanning across the health and life sciences, individual and public health, body history and economic history and are therefore ideally suited to study historical transformations leading to market-based societies and body politics in visual twentieth century Europe.

At the core of the BodyCapital programme three analytical issues are being addressed: a) How can the internalization of body capital and health demand be better understood from a visual perspective? b) How can we historically understand the production of body capital as a general trend, which at the same time acts as a marker of social difference and class-boundedness in an age of global and freely circulating information, mobility and education? Are the social determinations of relationships with the body and health stable or do they undergo historical changes? c) How do technical transformations and the diversification of visuals in television and digital media participate in body capital internalization? These questions are to be considered through case studies conducted with a double comparative/entangled history approach in order to establish similarities, differences and transfers between the three countries (France, Germany, Great Britain) and three major time periods (film, TV, Internet).

The 3 PhD thesis projects are to be case studies focusing on topics related to one or more of the project's four subject entries (history of food/nutrition; movement/exercise/sports; sexuality/reproduction/infant; dependency/addiction/overconsumption) in the frame of the project's three national contexts (France, Germany, Great Britain) and three major media ages (film, TV, internet). At least one grant will be attributed to a project focusing on Great Britain. And one project will focus on recent media and the Internet. Projects may take a comparative approach with respect to and beyond the above topics.

Context and working conditions

The PhD funding is in the form of a salary and not a scholarship. The PhD student will be employed for the duration of 36 months (1 September 2017- 31 August 2020).

The thesis will be directed (or co-directed) by Christian Bonah (Professor of medical history) or Anja Laukötter (PhD in history). Students will be enrolled in the Social and Human Sciences doctoral school at the University of Strasbourg and will be associated members of the UMR research group SAGE (*Societies, actors and government in Europe*).

The project may be conducted as a co-direction with another European university, please indicate in the motivation letter if a co-direction with another university would be relevant or advantageous for your project and why.

Requirements and research skills

The candidate must be a holder of a master's degree from a highly recognized university in the history of medicine, history, media history, sociology/history of science, media or communication studies, economic history, or related discipline.

The candidate must demonstrate a mastery of research techniques in social sciences: archival work and sound analysis of textual and audiovisual sources and good knowledge of the literature related to their field of study.

The candidate must be able to work and write in English (writing skills in French or German are also highly welcome). The thesis must be written in English, French or German.

Application

Candidates are asked to send

- a motivation letter,
- a detailed CV
- a 3-4 page thesis project outline
- a chapter of their Masters thesis or a major article publication
- a letter of recommendation and two complementary reference names

by email to Christian Bonah (bonah@unistra.fr), Anja Laukötter (laukoetter@mpib-berlin.mpg.de) and Tricia Close-Koenig (tkoenig@unistra.fr).

For further information or details on salary, please contact Tricia Close-Koenig.

* Note that, in addition, we are also accepting applications for a Post-doc position.