



Call for Applications

4rd STS Italia Summer School

Almost Humans: Robotics, Healthcare and STS

September 5th– 9th, 2017 Catania, Italy

STS Italia, the Italian Society of Science and Technology Studies – in collaboration with the Department of Political and Social Sciences and the Department of Mathematics and Informatics of the University of Catania is organizing its 4rd Summer School, “Almost Human: Robotics, Healthcare and STS”, to be held in Catania (Italy) from September 5th to 9th, 2017.

Goals and main topics

Robotics in its various applications and research fields (work, leisure, medicine, care, education, military use, etc.) emerges as a set of technological innovations designed to have a disruptive impact on the economy, politics, and society. Technological artifacts pervasively permeate different spheres of personal and professional life, reconfiguring the relationship between humans and humans and artifacts. Robots, in their various forms, are a “presence” which calls/solicits our attention. After colonizing factories and research laboratories, robots, humanoid or animal, “dispersed” in our technological environments as meta-media (the chatbot, for example), or as professionals of care, are already living among us, populating our cities, inhabiting our homes, taking care of us, and even observing what we do. Consequently, the development of robotics raises new questions in a great number of ethical, legal, social and anthropological issues.

The STS Italia Summer School aims to address the challenges posed by recent developments in robotics and artificial intelligence through a variety of approaches, theoretical frameworks and methodological insights. PhD students and early career researchers in Science and Technology Studies (STS) are invited to participate in a joint reflection that will try to trace some interdisciplinary interpretative frameworks and to propose a space of exchange between social sciences and scientific research.

A particular attention will be given to the role of robotics in the field of health and care. We would like to question the relationship between technological innovation and new practices, or relationships, of care; to question the professional reconfigurations and skills modified by the introduction of assistive technological devices to the cure gesture (surgery, for example) and care practices (in homes and hospitals); to highlight the different concepts of care receivers and care givers that emerge in the contexts of innovation and in always singular and specific contexts of practices and

everyday life (prosthetics, assistive robotics, etc.). These issues can be addressed more politically and institutionally (issues of surveillance, infrastructures, social, economic and research policies); at an intermediate level, in the boundaries between private and public sector (in particular as regards the transfer of skills and practices between place of cure – hospital - and place of life - home); at individual level in familiar and professional relationships of care. A question that surely crosses the technological, sociological, institutional and ethical aspects is the concept of autonomy (of person, of patient, of devices, of familiar or professional collectives), which increasingly includes the human and non-human relationship in its definition, in particular in the healthcare field.

This summer school introduces participants to major approaches, exploring new research frontiers and emerging themes under ethical, cultural and socio-technical perspectives:

- Autonomy (of technological devices, of person, of systems), which includes the notion of enable/disable, empowerment, accessibility, dependency;
- Robotics in work's contexts (in particular in healthcare);
- Human/non human relationship (in particular in healthcare, which includes non human animals);
- Imaginaries of the body, the machine, the hybrid (cyborg);
- Ethical and legal approaches;
- Technological innovation in healthcare: state of the art, perspectives, problems;
- Epistemological and theoretical approaches to robotics and AI;
- Technological innovation in healthcare and disabilities and gender studies;

The Summer School will offer PhD students and early career researchers the opportunity to interact with STS international scholars with a transdisciplinary background in social studies of science and technology.

Confirmed speakers

- Nathanael Jarassé (ISIR Paris)
- Louis Neven (Avans University of Applied Sciences, The Netherlands)
- Giovanni Muscato (University of Catania, Italy)
- Fiorella Operto (Scuola di Robotica and CNR, Genoa, Italy)
- Michael Schillmeier (University of Exeter, GB)
- Bruno Siciliano (University of Naples, Italy)
- Guglielmo Tamburrini (University of Naples, Italy)

Organization

The Summer School will be organized around lectures and seminars. To make lessons more responsive, the participants will be engaged in seminars and workshops in which they will investigate the main themes of the Summer School working in small groups, through activities, discussions, inputs and examples. Moreover, the School will include a tour at the “Città della Scienza” (Science City) of Catania

to offer further inspiration for workshop activities. All lectures and seminars will be in English. A final tour to volcano Etna will be organized (the ticket is not included in the Summer School fee).

Schedule, costs, and accommodation

All participants are expected to attend the entire duration of the Summer School and a Certificate of Attendance will be provided at the end. The **fee for participation is 250 €**. The fee includes:

- access to all lectures and workshops;
- lunches and coffee breaks;
- a welcome aperitif and social dinner
- the visit to the Città della Scienza.

Accommodation is not included in the fee. A list of selected hotels, B&B and budget accommodations will be provided to participants.

Who should attend?

This Summer School is intended for PhD students and junior researchers from different fields and disciplines (including science and technology studies, social study of health and medicine, sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, and or related fields) whose research is related to robotics, IT and healthcare and who are interested in developing a STS sensibility toward this field of study. We also invite applications from students in engineering, robotics and AI sciences, who are interested in exploring the relation between robotics and society. The number of participants is limited to 15 people. The minimum number of participants required to activate the Summer School is 10. The selection of candidates will be based on CV and research interests, maintaining a balanced participation in terms of gender and nationality of candidates.

Scholarships

Three scholarships (covering the participation fee) will be available for talented students. Scholarship applicants must send a **statement of purpose** (maximum 500 words) explaining why attending this summer school would be important for their academic studies or career, outlining also the reasons why a scholarship is required. Scholarships will be awarded on the basis of documented academic performance, personal achievements and financial needs.

Benefits from attending

Through both attending lectures and practicing concepts, theories and empirical methods in group discussions and workshops, students will gain insights and suggestions on how to develop STS sensibility in relation to the study of Robotics, IT and Healthcare. Moreover, the school is intended to act as an intellectually and socially stimulating environment. Drawing upon previous experience, the school is organized to foster informal learning opportunities, sharing ideas, and developing networks among participants.

How to apply

The application form is available here. After space for personal details, the form includes a place to upload **a short scientific CV** (maximum 2 pages) and **a statement of interest** (maximum 500 words), which should describe the applicant's current research and its relevance to the aims of the summer school. Finally, a **statement of purpose** (maximum 500 words) is mandatory only for scholarship applications.

Applications must be submitted electronically to the Summer School Organizing Committee at: summerschool@stsitalia.org. Applications deadline is **June 15th**.

Important dates

June 15th, 2017: Applications deadline.

June 25th, 2017: Notification for participation and for scholarship eligibility.

July 10th, 2017: Registration deadline.

Scientific and Organizing Committee

- Maria Carmela Agodi, University of Napoli
- Marina Maestrutti, University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne
- Paolo Magaudda, University of Padova
- Giovanni Muscato, University of Catania
- Federico Neresini, University of Padova
- Guido Nicolosi, University of Catania

Please do not hesitate to contact the Organizing Committee via email at summerschool@stsitalia.org for any further questions regarding the school.