



Call for papers for an international conference:

Anti-gender campaigns and the politics of knowledge production

Date: 11-12.12.2025

Place: American Studies Center, University of Warsaw,

Dobra 55, Warsaw, Poland

Contemporary right-wing actors appear to have learned the lesson that ‘politics is downstream from culture’. Attacks on ‘gender’, ‘gender ideology’ - and more broadly, on ‘woke academia’ - have had an impact reaching far beyond the world of scholarship, feeding social and political polarization (Ayoub and Stoeckl 2024; Dietze and Roth 2020; Korolczuk, Graff and Kantola 2025; Kuhar and Paternotte 2017, Verloo 2018). While anti-intellectualism is not a new phenomenon, today’s struggles around education, universities, as well as the very definition of what constitutes scientific truth, are an important aspect of the current political crisis. The broadly defined sphere of knowledge production (academia, education, media, cultural production) has become a key site of struggle for political power, with “gender” as one of the main targets of the contemporary right (Ergas et al 2022; Eslen-Ziya and Giorgi 2022; Korolczuk 2020; Paternotte 2019; Paternotte and Verloo 2021). While anti-gender movements have been under scrutiny for over a decade, resulting in an internally diverse field of scholarship emerging around this phenomenon, the impact of anti-genderism on knowledge production needs to be investigated further. This conference strives to do so. While the main focus is on anti-gender politics in education and academia, we also invite contributions examining struggles around critical race theory, history, the arts, as well as research on climate change and medicine (e.g. vaccines). We also welcome reflection on current conflicts around the definition of scientific truth or the meaning of academic freedom, and on epistemic dynamics more broadly in anti-gender or anti-feminist politics.

Anti-gender movements constitute an important part of “the far right continuum” (Norocel 2023). As shown in the [Report on Anti-gender Mobilizations’ Interventions in Knowledge Production](#) published by researchers from the Horizon Europe CCINDLE project (Co-Creating Inclusive Intersectional Democratic Spaces Across Europe), the strategies of opposing what the right calls ‘gender’ include both repressive and productive initiatives. In various countries anti-gender actors and the political parties collaborating with them have strived to delegitimize concepts such as ‘gender-based violence’ or ‘systemic racism’; they have waged attacks on gender studies and/or critical race studies and they have closed down or cut funding for education programs dealing with these topics. Scholars working in these areas have been attacked either by activists disrupting their lectures or online, through cyberbullying and doxing. Simultaneously, anti-gender organizations and groups strive to promote their own set of truths regarding sex and gender, sexuality, reproduction, family



and identity. These actors publish books, articles and outcomes of academic studies; organize public debates and conferences and in some contexts also establish new institutions of higher learning with the goal of educating socially conservative elites. Scholars have argued that much of the knowledge produced by right-wing actors can be seen as counter-knowledge or troll-science (Eslén-Ziya and Giorgi 2022), and that is certainly true for anti-gender actors, whose aim is to undermine existing scholarship on gender and identity, rather than to produce new data and theoretical concepts. As part of these troublesome practices, ironically, efforts to undermine academic freedom are often framed as defenses of freedom.

Given these developments, there is a need to examine this trend in more detail and analyze not only attacks on gender and critical knowledge but also feminist strategies of opposing this trend. We invite contributions tackling the following questions:

- How and why has 'gender' become such a significant site of the struggle for hegemony?
- How do struggles over 'gender' overlap and intersect with attacks on critical race theory, climate research, and other epistemically contested issues?
- How can we situate the so-called TERF-wars in the context of attacks on 'gender'?
- What are the core ideological tenets and intellectual sources of 'anti-gender studies' and how are they legitimized as science?
- What are the local specificities and global trends in the anti-gender politics in academia (U.S. vs Europe; East vs West, etc.)
- What are the key strategies of de-legitimation of gender studies, critical race studies and other critical perspectives, and how do they vary depending on context?
- What is the impact of anti-gender attacks on academic freedom and freedom of expression, or on the material survival of fields of studies under attack?
- How have gender studies and research on intersectional inequalities been affected by these developments?
- How does the production of counter-science, pseudo-science and other forms of misinformation relate to political polarization?
- What are the pathways between interventions in knowledge production or transfer and political violence?
- What are the feminist and institutional responses in the field of knowledge production and dissemination and what can be said about the impact they have had?
- What is the relationship between anti-gender interventions and democratic decline?

We welcome case studies, comparative studies, and theoretical analyses of these trends, hoping to showcase a variety of disciplines, approaches and geographical contexts. Please send a 200-word abstract along with short bio (max 100 words) **until 1 of November, 2025** to antigender2025@gmail.com



The conference is organized as part of the Horizon Europe CCINDLE project (Co-Creating Inclusive Intersectional Democratic Spaces Across Europe) in cooperation with the Polarization Research Group at the American Studies Center, University of Warsaw, Poland.

The conference is free of charge, and there will be coffee/tea breaks, lunches and conference dinner provided to all presenters. The organizers offer 4 stipends for early stage or independent researchers covering travel and accommodation costs. Please send an email to: antigender2025@gmail.com

Organizing committee:

Elżbieta Korolczuk, Agnieszka Graff, Magdalena Gabrysiak and Hansalbin Sältenberg

References:

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