



Call for Papers

**“Identity and Difference Research Group”
in collaboration with
“Strategies of Cultural Industries, Communication and Social Research Lab”**

Is hosting an International conference on:

“ The Post-Pandemic and the digital turn in Higher Education ”

7-8 December, 2023

The Covid 19 pandemic and its aftermath seems to have ushered in a reality that no one was able to predict. Causing an extreme shock that shook the normal running of life in the world, the Covid-19 pandemic precipitated the digital turn in almost every aspect of our lives no matter which part of the world we are located in. For one thing, it does reflect the surrealist atmosphere that seems to have wrapped the world during the past three years. With everything from work and economy to social relations and human interactions entering a new era of distancing and self-distancing, it almost sounds as if we are living a sci-fi or an AI futuristic movie. The digital and the virtual have thus become the condition of life in 21st century.

Already on a fast track to everything digital, the social and economic world today is on a bullet train to becoming almost entirely virtual. This sharp turn, is more than just the beginning of that which many were until very recently reluctant to join, rather it seems like an end, at least of something already remotely familiar.

Using Naomi Klein’s central argument --in her famous book *The Shock Doctrine*-- that Capitalism exploits “the public’s disorientation following massive collective shocks – wars, terrorist attacks, or natural disasters — to achieve control by imposing economic shock therapy,” (*The Shock Doctrine, The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Knopf, 2007), the Covid pandemic and its aftermath is triggering the same pattern in imposing radical reforms that will drastically alter our lives.

In higher education, the covid-19 crisis has highlighted the role of digital technologies and in particular those pertaining to online education as an inevitable paradigm. Emerging in full force during the “shock” of the pandemic, the all-digital turn is creating a challenging situation where

these “Intellectual Technologies” to use Jack Goody’s expression, are forever altering “Knowledge.” As Bernard Stiegler stated, “Digital technology is in this respect an “intellectual technology” [...] in which the industrialization, automation, and performance of speed radically transform the conditions of intellectual life in all aspects: psycho-affective, economic, geopolitical, social, cultural, artistic, intellectual, and scientific.”

In this perspective, universities are compelled to accelerate their digital transition after a period of slackening pace of (often optional and complementary) digital contents in the form of moocs, and other online classes. The Covid 19 Pandemic had the effect of jumpstarting the digital machine, and this time it’s pretty serious, judging by the sums of money invested in infrastructure and training for faculty and students everywhere. The spotlight is on online teaching and learning platforms once again, except that this time it sanctions the legitimacy of the virtual classroom where students and teachers are geographically distant, but where the sought for IRL class interaction becomes virtual, impersonal and *deferred*.

This conference aims at triggering reflection and debate on issues related to the “forced” digital conversion that the pandemic and post-pandemic imposed on everyone and how the humanities scholars, as practitioners of critical thinking, are supposed to heed Bernard Stiegler’s 2012 call for a digital studies that “[...]should not be limited to the study of digital technologies [but] their generic object should be the study of intellectual techniques and technologies in general from the perspective of their effects on knowledge in general.”

While topics are free, preference will be given to papers that address digital technology from a critical perspective:

Suggested but not limited topics:

- Challenges, advantages and pitfalls of the new technology-driven pedagogy in higher education.
- Virtual teaching and the (transformed? updated? renewed? Or just abandoned?) mission of the university in the 21st C.
- The digital conversion and the implementation of critical thinking or lack thereof.
- Digitally-required reforms? Who reaps the benefits, the public or the IT corporates?
- The digital and the transformation of human knowledge.
- The digital turn and the ecological imperative.
- The digital turn and the digital gap.
- The digital turn and the issues of power and control
- The digital muse of “Artificial Intelligence” and the prospects for an algorithm tyranny.
- The digital turn and human agency.
- The digital turn and social justice.
- AI and the future of education and the teaching profession

Conference Format:

- Discussion Panels
- Round table discussions

Conference Venue:

- Mohammed I University, Faculty of Letters, Oujda

Important Dates:

- abstracts submissions (250 words in Word Format): 30 May, 2023.
- Conference dates 7-8 December, 2023.
- Submission deadline May 15, 2023
- Acceptance/rejection notifications: 15 June 2023
- Completed paper submission deadline: 15 November 2023
- Conference registration fees:
 - 500 Dh faculty members
 - 200 Dh employed and sponsored doctoral students
 - 00 Dh Unemployed and unsponsored Doctoral students
- Travel and accommodation expenses are the responsibility of participants
- Limited campus accommodation is available on the basis of first come first served (due to limited capacity)

Please send your proposals by email to:

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- Please note that the reading time in panel discussions is limited to 15 minutes per paper (7-8 typed pages).
- All papers are expected to be submitted prior to the conference date
- A number of selected articles will be considered for publication after necessary modifications and improvements. Participants are therefore requested to comply with the articles in the Chicago Style Guide.
- A website for the conference will be available shortly.