



המכללה האקדמית בית ברל
الكلية الأكاديمية بيت بيرل
Beit Berl College

Faculty of Society and Culture

Call for Presentations

Conference of the Faculty of Society and Culture

“Freedom in Crisis”

Relations between the individual and society, questions about the limits of freedom, and philosophical issues derived from the tension between freedom of will and necessity have been at the material foundations of Western political, social, and cultural discourse since time immemorial.

The diverse facets and manifestations of freedom have been visible all along the course of history: Athenian democracy was predicated on the principle of freedom of speech as a mainstay of personal freedom, countered by laws binding on the individual. The question of personal freedom in the Bible branches from God’s commandments to the individual to different worldviews about social institutions such as slavery and the attitude to take toward a foreign conqueror’s rule. In the Modern Era, the Enlightenment specified freedom as its prime concern as both a means and an end. In the early nineteenth century, the growth of liberalism lent the question of freedom, in its various complexions, even greater political and social validity. The Romantic stream in literature, poetry, and plastic arts lionized individual freedom and uniqueness.

The ongoing centrality of freedom in politics, philosophy, and art has also subjected freedom to attacks and restrictions, manifested in tensions that seethe with particular intensity at times of crisis. In the years of the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution, freedom was trampled in order to defend it and, in the late nineteenth century, tuberculosis and smallpox epidemics forced European countries to put their devotion to the principles of freedom to the test and to weigh restrictions on personal freedom for the general welfare.

The current global pandemic has stirred these and other issues to vigorous life everywhere and, in particular, in Israel. The intellectual debate over the lengthy history of freedom, with its diverse facets and manifestations, its restrictions and limits, and the attacks it has sustained, are of immense importance in understanding the challenges we face today and devising ways of contending with them. At the “Freedom in Crisis” conference, we will probe this diverse range of issues from different perspectives and disciplines.

Submission of Proposals

This year’s faculty-level conference will take place on May 13, 2021. Those interested in presenting at the conference are invited to contact and submit proposals to:

yifaat.leider@beitberl.ac.il

Please submit an abstract of the lecture and a brief biography of the lecturer.

*Please note that Lecturers from abroad will be able to participate and lecture in the conference online.

Submission deadline: January 1st, 2021.

Responses will be received by: January 31st, 2021.

The Conference Committee



We will be pleased to receive lecture abstracts on the following topics:

Freedom, Society, and State

- ➔ Society's attitude toward freedom
- ➔ General welfare vs. individual rights: Do we as individuals have a commitment to society?
- ➔ Individual rights vs. state coercive mechanisms: How far may the state go in infringing on its citizens' basic rights? How far may the state go in exploiting a composite crisis to strengthen its coercive mechanisms?
- ➔ Does maintaining individual freedom impair operating efficiency and security (e.g., China's methods in coping with the coronavirus epidemic vs. those in Western Europe)
- ➔ Leadership in crisis—do crises reveal authoritative leaders' dishonor?
- ➔ Liberalism in mass society
- ➔ Minority and majority at times of crisis
- ➔ The right to freedom vs. commitment to society
- ➔ Freedom, otherness, and mutual responsibility
- ➔ Trust as a key to regulating the tension between individual freedom and state coercion

Freedom and violence

- ➔ Violence as a product of loss in crisis
- ➔ Compliance and noncompliance—the duty to disobey
- ➔ Citizens and civil rebellion
- ➔ Violence and protest
- ➔ The coronavirus trauma and police violence
- ➔ Violence precipitated by the restriction of freedom
- ➔ The violence of freedom
- ➔ Political correctness and the limits of discourse
- ➔ Racism in states of crisis

Freedom and change

- ➔ Change as crisis and change as a response to crisis
- ➔ Responding to change
- ➔ Protest and social change
- ➔ Adjustment to change in a dynamic world

Freedom and crisis through the prism of culture

- ➔ Individual freedom in literature and the arts
- ➔ Cultural manifestations of protest
- ➔ Totalitarian societies through the prism of literature
- ➔ Utopianism and dystopianism

Freedom and the individual

- ➔ Individual freedom in times of crisis
- ➔ The individual who exceptions him/herself
- ➔ Do crises leave room for the individual?
- ➔ Freedom and dependency
- ➔ Individualism vs. society
- ➔ The authoritative personality
- ➔ Freedom of expression