



**VIU**

PhD

academy

**THE IMPORTANCE  
OF INTERDISCIPLINARY  
COLLABORATION  
TO TACKLE SOCIETAL  
CHALLENGES**

**September 18-22, 2017**  
**Venice International University**  
**Isola di San Servolo, Venice**

# International PhD Academy

Venice International  
University

## The Importance of interdisciplinary collaboration to tackle societal challenges

September, 18-22, 2017

Scientific coordinator:  
Prof. Pol Ghesquière,  
KU Leuven (Belgium)

The PhD Academy will allow participants to deepen their knowledge and theoretical understanding as well as to gain hands-on experience in developing interdisciplinary/intersectoral collaboration.

Imagine you are invited to contribute to the solution of major present-day challenges, such as sustainable development, aging, global warming... During the PhD Academy you will be a member of an interdisciplinary team tackling these challenges. You will contribute to creative, imaginative and unexpected answers. At the Grand Finale your team will present and defend the result of your interdisciplinary collaboration.

Meanwhile, you will learn professional skills useful in a wide variety of situations. You will learn to influence decision-making, communicate ideas, values and opinions more effectively. You will obtain insight in and appreciation for your own and other disciplines. You will become a better professional.

This PhD Academy will be led by:  
- KU Leuven, Belgium

In partnership with:  
- CNR – National Research Council, Italy  
- Duke University, USA  
- European University at St. Petersburg, Russia  
- Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italy  
- Università degli Studi di Roma "Tor Vergata", Italy

### Methodology

At the start of the PhD Academy, the participants will be divided into multidisciplinary teams and they will be given an overall objective, i.e. to build a new society where there was none before (e.g. the colonization of Mars).

This assignment will be the common thread throughout the week and will lead up to a grand finale on Friday, when each team presents the blue print of its new society in the form of a Pecha Kucha presentation. During morning sessions, various keynote speakers will address major topics related to the objective, while afternoons will be used for hands-on training of different skills needed to accomplish the objective and to work on the objective in the assigned teams. Throughout the week the participants will receive support and feedback from a variety of coaches.

### Topics

#### – Organizing a society

From Plato onwards, political philosophy has articulated theories of justice. Theories of justice are normative theories that present accounts of how a political community ought to be organized. In this crash course, the most

important theories of justice that have been formulated in the history of mankind will be presented, analyzed, and evaluated.

– **Interpersonal relationships and skills**

Personality assessments, finding out your own strengths and weaknesses, verbal and non-verbal communication, and providing productive collegial feedback are only some of the skills that will be tackled.

– **Presentation skills and Pecha Kucha**

Pecha Kucha: 20 slides, 20 seconds per slide - an alternative, creative and fun way to present your research. In 6 min 40, you bring a to-the-point presentation.

– **Linking humanities, research and technology**

Cognitive psychology, social sciences, and the arts and humanities have shaped (evolutions in) its amalgam of perspectives and methods. Rather than considering the end-users of technology as passive human factors who confine themselves to processing bits and bytes, we will discuss how the end-users of technology are to be understood as actors as well as creators who shape the meaning-making of the interaction with technologies in response to emergent values.

The second part of the session consists of a hands-on design thinking workshop.

– **The Role and Impact of Social Sciences and Humanities in big societal challenges**

How can studies in social sciences and humanities contribute to finding solutions to some of the significant challenges that today's society is facing. Among the topics addressed will be Sustainable Development; Ageing populations; Global Warming

PhD researchers from different disciplines are encouraged to apply; candidates should be in an advanced stage of the doctoral program and be highly motivated to work intensively on this project in an international and interdisciplinary team. Open to candidates from all the VIU Member Institutions.

Financial support is available to successful candidates from the Member Universities to support international travel and accommodation costs. Students from VIU member universities do not have to pay any fees.

Applications from excellent external candidates will be considered and evaluated, although these candidates will pay fees and are not eligible for financial support.

**The final program will be available on the VIU website.**

**Applications**

June 15 – July 7, 2017  
via the VIU website

Applicants must submit the application form, a letter of motivation – which should include a brief description of the candidate's PhD research project, a curriculum vitae and a photo.

The campus of Venice International University is located on the island of San Servolo, in Venice.



## **VIU International PhD Academies**

Venice International University holds two International PhD Academies each year. They are intensive training opportunities open to PhD candidates from the member universities of VIU.

A PhD is the highest diploma awarded by universities in the world, and PhDs are naturally expected to take on major responsibilities in their professional life. Apart from the disciplinary scientific skills acquired during doctoral study and research, it is the ability to respond to the requirements of creativity, innovation and project management, and in addition the ability to step aside, that produce the significant added value of a doctoral degree.

Whether they will work within or outside academia, PhDs must be able to develop a forward-looking vision of the challenges they have to face. The interdisciplinary approach of all VIU activities is adopted also in the PhD Academy, where the participants have the opportunity to meet their peers from all over the world, and to tackle transversal topics.



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