



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

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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 we have to build a complete new society. At the beginning, there is no agriculture, no industry, no schools. Science has never been heard of, and 'governance' is just a word... From this emptiness on all levels, we expect you to build a new, well-functioning society. Students will be divided into multidisciplinary groups. The Grand Finale will be the presentation and defence of your new Utopia.

Through this learning process, the students will acquire professional skills that can be used in a wide variety of situations, among which how to influence decision-making, communicate ideas, values and opinions more effectively. They will also get insight and appreciation of their own and other disciplines and become better professionals.

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

Level of students and suitable fields of study

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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