

AUTUMN SCHOOL



LIMINALITY AND POWER

Overview

The Autumn School “Liminality and Power” explores the relationship between liminal experiences, cultural practices and political power. The concept of liminality, originating in religious and folklore studies in the early twentieth century, refers to transitional states between established conditions and is characterized by ambiguity, indeterminacy, and the suspension or transformation of ordinary social relations. Initially developed in the context of rites of passage, particularly through the work of Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, the concept of liminality has since become an important analytical tool for understanding moments of social, cultural and political transformation. Liminal situations can involve a “crisis of presence” and generate bodily and cultural techniques through which individuals and communities maintain, reconstruct, or transform a sense of continuity and identity. At the same time, liminality is deeply entangled with questions of power. Liminal states may challenge established political orders, but they can also become resources through which power is reproduced, negotiated, or contested. This relationship can be traced from the study of kingship and sovereignty, including Marc Bloch's seminal “The Royal Touch” (1924), to more recent reflections on political violence, totalitarianism, non-governance, and the possibilities of individual and collective autonomy.

Through lectures, reading groups, workshops, discussions, and film screenings, the Autumn School will examine different dimensions of liminality and its continuing relevance for understanding political and cultural life, while bringing together anthropologists, historians, philosophers, and filmmakers from **Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Austria, and Georgia**. The school is implemented in cooperation with scholars from the University of Bern, University of Cologne, Roma Tre University, University of Siegen, and Ilia State University.

The Autumn School “Liminality and Power” will take place **from 7 to 10 October 2026**. Autumn School is organized by Ilia State University and funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies of Ilia State University.



Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service



Objective and Thematic Focus

The Autumn School aims to examine liminality as both a cultural condition and a political force, bringing different disciplinary perspectives into dialogue. It seeks to explore how liminal situations shape experiences of identity, community, authority, and crisis, and how they can create spaces for negotiating, challenging, or reproducing relations of power.

The school focuses on liminality and politics in the Caucasus, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea; ritual, sovereignty and political power; violence and non-governance; ethnographic approaches to the liminal; and the relationship between liminality and film. Through theoretical readings, discussions, and visual materials, participants will critically engage with different interpretations of liminal experience and consider its relevance for understanding contemporary social and political life.

Who Should Join?

The Autumn School is open to **bachelor's (3rd and 4th study year), master's and PhD students, as well as early-career researchers from Ilia State University and other universities in Georgia**, with a strong interest in **anthropology, cultural studies, history, philosophy, political and social theory, film and visual studies, and related interdisciplinary fields**. We particularly welcome participants interested in questions of liminality, power, ritual, political and social transformation, violence, sovereignty, ethnography, and visual culture.

The school is intended for **highly motivated participants who are willing to actively engage with the readings, discussions, presentations and other program activities**. Full attendance throughout the four-day Autumn School is required. Participants will have the opportunity to engage in intensive interdisciplinary exchange with scholars and fellow students while beginning the 2026-27 academic year through intellectual rigor, open discussion and collegial exchange.

Program Structure

The four-day Autumn School **combines lectures, reading groups, presentations, discussions, workshops and film screenings**, bringing together scholars and participants from different disciplinary and national backgrounds. The program will explore liminality and power through perspectives on ritual and sovereignty, politics in the Caucasus, ethnographies of the liminal, film and visual culture, and the Mediterranean and Black Sea. Alongside academic sessions, the program includes documentary screenings, a city walk and a hiking excursion in Tbilisi, creating opportunities for informal exchange and discussion. The detailed program and reading list will be shared with selected participants.

Academic Contributors

The Autumn School brings together scholars from Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Austria, and Georgia, representing a range of disciplinary perspectives: Michaela Schäuble (University of Bern), Martin Zillinger (University of Cologne), Stefano de Matteis (Roma Tre University), Erhard Schüttpelz (University of Siegen), Giorgi Maisuradze, Luka Nakhutsrishvili, Florian Mühlfried, Martin Tremel, and Ulrich van Loyen (Ilia State University).

Key Details



Dates: 7–10 October 2026



Location: Tbilisi, Georgia



Format: Lectures, reading groups, presentations, discussions, workshops, film screenings and informal activities, combining academic sessions with opportunities for interdisciplinary exchange.



Participants: Bachelor's (3rd and 4th year), master's and PhD students, and early-career researchers from Ilia State University and other universities in Georgia.



Language of instruction: English



Certification: Participants who meet the attendance and participation requirements will receive a certificate of participation.

How to Apply

Interested students and early-career researchers are invited to **apply through the online form:** <https://forms.gle/yoNZZECYZCvveuZS6>

Application will be **open until 10 September 2026**. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to interviews on 18–19 September 2026. Selected participants will be notified by 25 September 2026. Please note that a detailed program, reading list and practical information will be shared with selected participants following the selection process. Applicants selected for the Autumn School must confirm their **availability to participate throughout the full four-day program, from 7 to 10 October 2026**.



Coordination

Academic Lead:

Prof. Dr. Ulrich van Loyen (Ilia State University)

Organizational Coordination:

Mary Kate Ugrekhelidze (Ilia State University)



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Mary Kate Ugrekhelidze, Ilia State University

Join Us! We look forward to welcoming you to the Autumn School “Liminality and Power”!