



Universität
Basel

Forum Basiliense



Theorizing the Ambivalences of Care

Workshop
June 6, 2025

University of Basel, Switzerland



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This interdisciplinary workshop seeks to grapple with the complex, often contradictory dimensions of care by attending to the tensions between affirmation and subjugation embedded in contemporary caregiving institutions. Focusing on spaces where care intersects with control—such as safehouses for victims of human trafficking, violence prevention programs, and child protection facilities—the workshop will explore how caregivers and care receivers navigate and make sense of the power dynamics implicated in care relationships shaped by structural forms of abuse and neglect rooted in white supremacy, capitalist dispossession, exploitation, and cisheteropatriarchy.

By interrogating how concepts like safety, security, protection, support, and well-being are navigated, imposed, and reshaped within these environments, the workshop will probe methodological and theoretical questions about how to move beyond the prevailing notion—shared by both post-Foucauldian thinkers and feminist philosophers of care—that care is dual, simultaneously sustaining and confining lives. Drawing from marginalized traditions of thought such as critical disability and childhood studies, as well as Black feminist and queer/trans perspectives on care work, it will center the creative strategies of those caught within these institutions. The workshop will ask how individuals reshape, refuse, and re-signify their positions, transforming both themselves and the structures through which care is mediated.

Through this lens, the workshop aims to open up critical discussions about the possibilities and limits of current frameworks for a feminist ethics and politics of care, as well as how to enrich and nuance our understanding of the entangled dynamics of power, agency, and vulnerability that shape the lives of those whose support is structurally intertwined with domination.

This one-day workshop will be structured around feedback sessions on first drafts submitted by scholars whose work critically engages with the ambivalences of care, alongside collective readings of key texts by authors who have thoughtfully and innovatively explored these themes. Participants are invited to contribute drafts of their own projects for discussion or to propose readings that align with the workshop's focus. We especially welcome contributions that bring to light feminist, queer, trans, disabled, decolonial, and/or cross-cultural perspectives, as well as those that examine the intersections of class and care.

If you are interested in participating, please submit your abstract (of no more than 500 words, for a presentation of about 20 minutes) to Dina Bolokan (bolokan@protonmail.com) and Lucile Richard (lucile.richard@sciencespo.fr) by April 15, 2025.

Organizers:

Dr. Dina BOLOKAN, Postdoctoral Researcher and Visiting Fellow at the University of Bath, Department of Politics, Languages & International Studies

Dr. Lucile RICHARD, OxPo Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Oxford, Nuffield College, Associate Researcher, Sciences Po, CEVIPOF