

# 3<sup>rd</sup> International Interdisciplinary Boredom Conference

16-17 JUNE 2017

16th June 2017 (Friday)	
10:30 - 12:00	<b>Małgorzata Kubacka</b> ( <i>Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland</i> ) Time and Meaning in the Experience of Boredom <b>Mariusz Finkielsztein</b> ( <i>University of Warsaw, Poland</i> ) Boredom in the Work of Scientists
<b>COFFEE BREAK (15 min)</b>	
12:15- 13:45	<b>KEYNOTE LECTURE: Erik Ringmar</b> ( <i>Lund University, Sweden</i> ) What are Public Moods?
<b>LUNCH (75 min)</b>	
15:00 - 17:00	<b>Joyce Conings</b> ( <i>University of Leuven, Belgium</i> ) Siri, I'm Bored? <b>Evelien Van Beeck</b> ( <i>University of Leuven, Belgium</i> ) Re-enchantment as a Solution for Boredom <b>Anna Kuszmiruk</b> ( <i>Nikolaus Copernicus University, Toruń, Poland</i> ) Boredom in Regard to Suffering in Arthur Schopenhauer's Philosophy <b>Marina Christodoulou</b> ( <i>Alpen-Adria-Universität, Austria</i> ) Boredom as a Therapy for the Addiction to Life
<b>COFFEE BREAK (15 min)</b>	

17:15- 18:30	<b>Linda Caldwell, Edward Smith</b> ( <i>Pennsylvania State University, USA</i> ) Conceptualizing Boredom in Leisure among Adolescents
<b>WINE RECEPTION</b>	

17th June (Saturday)	
11.00- 12:30	<b>Monika Chylińska</b> ( <i>Catholic University of Lublin, Poland</i> ) Counterfactual Imagination and Boredom <b>Agata Mrowiec</b> ( <i>Jagiellonian University, Kraków, Poland</i> ) Why Is Boredom Essential in a Chemical Laboratory? – The Chemistry of Boredom <b>Elif Gezgin, Abrek Canbolat</b> ( <i>Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Turkey</i> ) Winter Sleep: Three Facets of Boredom
<b>LUNCH (60 min)</b>	
13:30 - 15:00	<b>Małgorzata Tyszkowska</b> ( <i>Kazimierz Wielki University, Bydgoszcz, Poland</i> ) Emotions Experienced in the Classroom during the Adaptation Process <b>Keith Walker</b> ( <i>University of Liverpool, Great Britain</i> ) Boredom – Discursive Psychology (DP) as an Analytical Tool <b>Rasa Pranskuniene</b> ( <i>Aleksandras Stulginskis University, Lithuania</i> ) Through Boredom to the Wheel of Boredom
15:00 -	<b>COFFEE BREAK</b>

Małgorzata Kubacka

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## **Time and Meaning in the Experience of Boredom**

Boredom is widely seen as a complex phenomenon without a clear definition. However, throughout the disciplines, there are three ways of conceptualizing boredom: (1) as an emotion, (2) as a state, (3) as a condition of modern society.

When time is taken into account, boredom is argued to have emerged in response to changing (1) conditions of leisure, (2) perception of time, and (3) invention of the modern concept of time. Although these origins of boredom are not only showing what the place of boredom in the contemporary world is but, at the same time, they build up the definition of boredom.

The purpose of my presentation is to show how ‘suspended time’ moulds boredom, through micro and macro perspective. Thus, I will show boredom in three main time-related areas:

### (1) Temporality

Boredom is connected to the peculiar temporal experiences that seem to emerge from the patterns and arrangements of modern everyday and working life.

### (2) The emptying of time

The experience of boredom is deeply rooted in the perception of time: time slows down, became tense and unbearable. Boredom is experienced as a waste of time: activities which do not bring meaningful results to the individual.

### (3) ‘Lifeless’ future and the dense mist of present

Boredom links the present and the future. It is a sort of suspension in the present moment, the lack of anticipation of foreseeable future (in which actions influence results).

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## **Boredom in the Work of Scientists**

Science (in the broad sense of either natural sciences or social sciences and humanities) is frequently associated with passion, curiosity and mission and is believed to require dedication, devotion and calling. However, realities of everyday work in the nowadays, rationalized, parametrical university reveal another, more negative aspects of performing this profession. Scientists, aside from abovementioned positive emotions and attitudes, experience also negative states like boredom, frustration, dissatisfaction, which might eventuate even in burn out syndrome (cynicism, disengagement, decreased efficacy) and seriously influence the process of ‘doing science’.

The presentation aims to diagnose main causes and give examples of boredom in scientific work as well as show significance of that socially-neglected emotion for scientific endeavour. The paper is based on qualitative research among academic staff from one of the main Polish universities. The methods employed include individual in-depth interviews with scientists, participant observation during staff meetings, university classes and scientific conferences and auto-ethnography - scrutinising researcher’s own experience as a scholar. The study spans most of the faculties of the University and embraces main activities of employed academic staff, especially, researching, sharing results (publication process and scientific conferences), and bureaucratic duties.

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## **What are Public Moods?**

In newspapers and everyday conversations references are frequently made to "public moods," but social scientists have never really discussed what public moods are or how they might be invoked in social explanations. Public moods are important, but ephemeral and hard to capture. In this talk, I will suggest a few ways to think about public moods and how to use them in our analyses of society. Moods, I will argue, are not features of individuals, and not of the situations in which individuals find themselves but instead of the interaction between individuals and situations. Moods are way of finding oneself in the world. Boredom is an obvious example. To be bored is to find oneself in the world in a certain fashion. The question to be addressed is how this analysis originating with individuals can be applied to social wholes. Can a group be bored, a society? Can a certain age be boring?

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## **Siri, I'm Bored?**

A conception of boredom is not new to philosophy. Modern technology nevertheless changed the meaning of boredom. Nowadays it can be conceived as a consequence of modern technology.

The Enlightenment introduced the idea that human beings are not simply observers of the world, they can also construct and transform it. Modern technology serves as a means to fulfil the human privilege to construct the world. It gradually transforms everything, including human beings, into instruments or cogs that serve the purpose of efficiency. The human being in a modern technological world is not considered as a person, neither are its achievements evaluated on craftsmanship. Their value coincides with the degree of efficiency. Eventually, all spheres of life are aimed at the economical use of time.

In this paper, I argue that the orientation on efficiency associated with modern technology results in a novel manifestation of boredom. Specifically, I will show that modern technology is an opportunity for boredom to arise. It creates free time that cannot be spent meaningfully. In previous ages, boredom seldom occurred because free time was filled with traditions and rituals. Nowadays, every sphere of life is posited in function of efficiency; changing the meaning of free time. It has become almost impossible to meaningfully fill the free time in this human realization of technology. I shall argue that exactly this shift in significance and interpretation of free time gives rise to modern boredom.

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## **RE-ENCHANTMENT AS A SOLUTION FOR BOREDOM**

Max Weber, examining current society, concludes that the world is *disenchanted*. Modernity ended up in a mechanized worldview – which led to a domination of rationality. (1917/1919).

Many writers and philosophers have taken up this notion. They associate it with the modern existential experience of boredom, caused by a loss of sense. For example, Dostoevsky described this phenomenon in ‘Notes from Underground’ (1864). The main character of this novel takes on what I call ‘an underground identity’ as a reaction against the enlightened, rational egotism (cfr. Levinas) that goes along with the ‘mechanical turn’ in metaphysics. This underground identity is explicated in a tormented, emotional outburst (Dostoevsky, 2010), which can be considered as a direct critique to the scientific claim of the rationalists. However, Dostoevsky was not opposed to science as such, but to the fact that science does not have eye for the unique and the unrepeatable – what he calls: ‘the bigger frame’ (Copleston, 1986). Such a dimension can only be found in a *hermeneutic worldview* (Gadamer, 1960) that acknowledges the human need for sense-giving, for example offered by narratives (Kearney, 2011).

I argue that Dostoevsky evokes a philosophical view on reality which is constructive for the existential experience of sense. The underground man shows us the consequences of a culture that is ill. This illness can be diagnosed in a Nietzschean way (1882) and, what is more, - can also be cured from this illness. This is what I would call ‘re-enchantment’.

Re-enchantment can be a philosophical solution for the modern existential phenomenon of boredom. In my presentation I will elaborate on this possibility.

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## **Boredom in Regard to Suffering in Arthur Schopenhauer's Philosophy**

An interesting view on the relation between boredom and suffering was presented by Arthur Schopenhauer. He perceives suffering as inseparably related to boredom. This philosopher defines suffering as non-appearance of satisfaction, an obstacle which stands in a way to gain one's purpose or desire. Boredom, on the other hand, is an empty longing for a new desire. This philosophy presents our life as a struggle between boredom and suffering. According to Schopenhauer the intensity of these two depends on, among other things, one's level of intelligence. However, neither boredom nor suffering is removable from our life. Furthermore, what may appear to be a simple mechanism is actually a very complicated relation between these two: suffering and boredom. In my presentation, I am trying to capture and analyse this mysterious relation. For, what's even more interesting, it seems like boredom, in this philosophy, can be considered as more painful than the suffering itself.

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## **Boredom as a Therapy for the Addiction to Life**

I define boredom as the symptom of the twofold disease of not-finding meaning and of over-finding meaning. In the latter case, it collides with the phenomenon of burnout. Over-finding meaning results to over-appreciating and over-engaging into work, which results in getting burnout. The first part of the definition of boredom can become the therapy for the second, and the second can become the therapy for the first. This leads nowhere, as the disease keeps transforming itself from its first manifestation to the second and vice versa. So, boredom seems to be an incurable disease, which only mutates, like a virus.

However, as I am going to argue this disease is the therapy for itself. It is a disease that treats itself only with itself, like a vaccination. Moreover, it also treats or is the therapy of another, much more severe disease: the addiction to life. This addiction to life is the main thematic of my doctoral thesis (still in progress). The general argument goes like this: Life is a habit, or better said an addiction, or even better an obsession. Philosophy per se can help to the moderation of this obsession, or at least to a more bearable experience of it. More specifically, a philosophical approach to leisure - laziness (and boredom), to sleep and especially to death, might be the antidote to this obsession, which is the therapy that can be offered to the obsession to life. (For this conference, I will focus on the boredom therapy).

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## **Counterfactual Imagination and Boredom**

If we believed Susan Ertz, “boredom comes simply from ignorance and lack of imagination” (1943). That seems reasonable, as we can easily visualize someone with high imaginative skills who can permanently think up new and original things to create – never exposed to be bored. Nevertheless, is it really that simple that the relationship between imagination and boredom is constantly asymmetric? What if our precious human ability in imagining WHAT IF turned out to be an essential trigger of existential or situative boredom?

My presentation aims to specifically investigate the counterfactual imagination – this one peculiar cognitive ability whereby we imagine alternative (counterfactual) states of affairs (Byrne 2005), which is perceived as a particular evolutionary precedent and as a potential explanation of some unique human cognitive attributes (Suddendorf 2013). I will explore if this mental ability could be also responsible for our unique experience of acedia. Agreeing with Lars Svendsen (2005) who stated that “boredom always contains an awareness of being trapped, either in a particular situation or in the world as a whole”, we may suspect that the abuse of WHAT IF specific type of imaginings [WHAT IF something was different than it is] could mentally transform someone into a 'prisoner of the present' or 'prisoner of the real' – so into someone aware of being trapped in the actual situation or world. So – as Svendsen said – into someone situationally or existentially bored.

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## **Why Is Boredom Essential in a Chemical Laboratory? – The Chemistry of Boredom**

Would Alexander Fleming have discovered penicillin if he had not been bored? The phenomenon of boredom has many side effects, therefore why would someone call it essential? It can be a serious problem concerning our health, principally, it can cause serious accidents in a place such as a chemical laboratory where safety depends on continuous vigilance. To conduct an experiment and to be sure that its results are credible, a chemist performs a myriad of trials. Therefore, hardly anyone does not get bored in a chemical laboratory. When performing for the thousandth time the same procedure which demands a high degree of precision or taking a measurement for several hours. In fact, this type of circumstances often results in a positive outcome leading to an increased creativity. In a situation when we cannot escape physically from doing a task which is not engaging enough for us, our attention focuses more on internal thoughts, feelings and experiences. Being bored enables scientists to come up with new ideas as well as to break the routine and to be more innovative in their work. In my paper, I present a chemical point of view on the feeling of boredom, which is experienced by people when the level of neurotransmitter dopamine is lowered. I also argue that long-lasting boredom can be beneficial for scientific work.

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## **Winter Sleep: Three Facets of Boredom**

In this work, we focus on the movie *Winter Sleep* (2014) by Nuri Bilge Ceylan, whose works have a special emphasis on various aspects of boredom. As one of the main figures of slow cinema, Ceylan, in this influential work of art, stresses on boredom through three main characters; Aydın, Nihal, and Necla. Taking a closer look at *Winter Sleep* we analyze both symbolism and the behavioural side of boredom which come to terms with the main characters who —we think— experience and represent distinct types of boredom. In this framework, we examine the issue of boredom and sometimes —relevantly— despair as a result of social change. At the same time, this work concentrates on the aspects of the socio-cultural structure of Turkey via the analysis of main characters' sufferings.

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## **Emotions Experienced in the Classroom during the Adaptation Process**

Everyday in the classroom students and teachers face the variety of emotions. These emotions might be positive or negative. Emotions influence on the interpersonal relations in the classroom. They also affect teaching and learning process. It might be joy or sadness, trust or fear, interest or ... boredom. In my speech, I will focus on the meaning of the particular emotions in the classroom, their influence on the learning process and the place of boredom in the range of students' emotions. In my research, I am interested in the critical moments of human development connected to the transition from one educational level to another – from kindergarten to school and from primary education to subject education.

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## **Boredom - Discursive Psychology (DP) as an Analytical Tool**

This presentation aims to outline the use of Discursive Psychology (DP) as an analytical tool for research of secondary education and invite comments for possible developments.

Discursive psychology (Potter and Wetherell 1987; Edwards 1997) (DP) can be defined as the analysis of psychological concepts in everyday talk. There is a number of overlapping key assumptions underpinning this perspective. Firstly, language can be researched as a legitimate subject in its own right rather than a conduit to a hidden inner world. Secondly, language can be researched from an action orientation. Finally, language is constructive. When speaking, we are building our world, rather than merely describing it, often this involves rhetoric and contestation.

Secondly, I will use small extracts of classroom talk taken from Breidenstein's (2007) ethnography into the 'meaning of being a pupil' in German schools to illustrate the potential of DP as an analytical tool in examining boredom. I will hopefully demonstrate how these examples of classroom talk construct boredom as normal; situational (rather than dispositional); causal, and existing at higher and lower intensities.

Finally, I will outline my proposed focus group methodology to illicit boredom talk which can be analysed in the manner demonstrated.

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## **Through Boredom to the Wheel of Boredom**

Educational role in the nowadays museum is very changeable, so it is important to discuss the main concern of museum education. The strategy of classic grounded theory was selected for this PhD dissertation research. Classic grounded theory provides the possibility to the researcher to “emerge” the theory, which reveals the main concern and explains how it is solved, by conceptualizing the authentic experiences of research participants. The data collection methods (interviews, observation, informal conversations, virtual comments, essays, drawings, documents), used in research, and application of classic grounded theory procedures helped to reveal the main concern in museum education. Data analysis has shown, that the main concern in modern museum education is boredom. The problem of boredom in museum education is resolved by submerging interactivity, revealing the processes of floating and immersing. Floating as the process of the superficial museum is disclosed by turning the wheel of boredom (when solving the boredom problem, it is sought to avoid boredom by activation, which leads to overdosing and results in a return to the initial condition of boredom). Then it seems that museum visitor floats on the surface of museum, which leads to partial and temporal solving of boredom problem and promotes museum visitors to avoid museum even more in the future. Immersing (revealed by hooking, (self-)involving and wakening of the doubt) is formed as the process of in-depth museum experience, offering an in-depth solution of the problem, caused by boredom.

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## **"But What If They Say They Are Bored?": Boredom as A Key Word at The Israeli Children's Museum**

Drawing on fieldwork conducted at the Israeli children's museum, located in Holon, Israel, this paper aims to explore the various meanings attached to the notion of boredom invoked by children and adults at the museum.

The Children's Museum was founded in Holon as part of its urban regeneration program and is the flagship of the city's cultural entrepreneurship campaign which was designed to brand the city of Holon as a "children's city". This was realized by establishing many kinds of organized activities for children all over the city.

Working with the concept of "key-words" as linguistically encoded symbols of culture, an approach informed by the field of the Ethnography of Communication, I propose to look at the ways different social actors in the museum – children and adults, staff and visitors – use the term "boredom" as a key-word in discussing children's experiences and conduct, and in negotiating their meanings. As will be shown, these negotiations are conducted in a context of inter-generational relationships, that are characterized by differential access to power and different levels of autonomy for the participants in the museum encounter. Furthermore, the notion of boredom as used in this context invokes meanings of fun and purpose in a way that blurs the boundaries between education and consumerism in the museum experience. It can, therefore, provide a unique point of entry into studying the learning climate in this – and potentially other – pedagogical contexts.

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## **Pictures of Boredom**

We all know that children get bored at school. It is so obvious that one could say there is no need to investigate this fact. However, there are some questions about children's boredom that have to be answered like the most important whether boredom is caused by the school system or it is a permanent pupil's disposition. We still have no knowledge what kind of situations are labeled by pupils as a boredom, how they feel when they experience it, what other factors are active together with boredom. During my speech I will try to show and describe the boredom phenomenon as a cultural element of the school system, I will emphasize how descriptions of boredom depend on the age of the students. Also, I would like to present images – visualizations created by the students. I will also discuss the ways of teachers' reaction to the boredom of their pupils. I will also refer to the most important research written on school boredom, combining them with the results of my research work.

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## **Boring Face of Socialization. Child - Adult Interaction at the Party Table as Empty Rituals**

In the talk, we would like to present the results of our research that tries to explain reasons of the boredom appearance in young family members on family's celebrations.

Following Randall Collins, we assume that satisfaction in an interaction is a result of emotional engagement, mutual attention and common symbolic dimension. Lack of any of these particles leads to failing of ritual coupling. Boredom is emerging if a reason of ritual fail is a lack of emotional energy by the symbolic discrepancy between interaction participants.

At the example of family celebrations, children's symbolic capital is low and their participation in celebrations can be sociologically treated as a form of socialization and as an acquirement of symbolic capital. Their participation in celebrations can be sociologically treated as a form of socialization from the one hand and as an acquirement of symbolic capital from the other.

We proposed that lack of knowledge of rituals at the table makes children uncomfortable and absent in interactions. Children, because of the lower level of social knowledge, **look for similar to them**, to cope with celebrations full of unknown rituals.

We try to corroborate our hypothesis using empirical data and qualitative analysis. We choose 16 video recordings of Holy Communion party in Poland diverse in terms of family's socioeconomic status, period (1993-2016) and intensity of religious character of the celebration to

research interactional and symbolic elements at the Polish Communion tables. We pay attention to techniques of fighting boredom, comfort-zone creating and channels of social rules implementation.

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## **Millennials and the Problem of Time: Educational Reflections on Positive Boredom**

Almost three centuries ago, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant said that “our human worth depends on the measure of our achievements” (Kant, 1997, 154). That is, the more we do, the better we are. That idea has dominated the educational discourse ever since. Our children must be occupied, otherwise, they could fall into idleness, the mother of all the vices. To be idle has also been traditionally related to the state of being bored, a situation in which one has nothing to do, to say, to be interested in or to be worried about. The idle and bored person is capable of everything due to only emptiness can be found in their inner self. That is because we are asked to prevent our children from both states. However, to be bored also means to disconnect, to be just with oneself, which is necessary for the development of an authentic personality. There is a positive boredom that we should not forget.

This paper will address the important role of boredom in our current overstimulated world. First, we will point out the educational potentialities of positive boredom. Second, we will analyze the millennials' (or digital natives) way of life and the difficulty for them of being positively bored. Finally, we will discuss some educational practices that could promote this experience among them.

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## **On the Relationship between Boredom and Creativity**

Mann and Cadman (2014) showed initially that induced boredom can increase subsequent aspects of creativity. It remains unclear however how this association is effectuated psychologically. Two hypotheses can be formulated accounting for these initial results: A simple motivational account as well as an information processing account. The first account argues that when participants are bored they will do better on any other subsequent task. In other words, boredom increases creativity in a non-specific way. The latter information processing account argues, however, that increased creativity is maybe due to changes in general information processing. Participants' mindset is changing perhaps through mind wandering making it more easy to form new associations in the task at hand. This argument is underlined by the finding that this increase in creativity is specifically found in divergent creativity tasks (emphasizing originality, flexibility, fluency, and elaboration) but not in convergent creativity tasks (emphasizing speed, accuracy, logic and focus on existing knowledge). Mann and Cadman did not found, however, any indication that mind wandering was mediating this relationship between boredom and creativity. I will present data showing this relationship between induced boredom and creativity again controlling at the same time for the motivational account as well as tapping into mind wandering more thoroughly. More specifically we obtained evidence for increased originality in a divergent creativity task but could not establish any mediation by mind wandering. These results will be discussed as well as future ideas on studying the relationship between boredom and creativity.

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## **Conceptualizing Boredom in Leisure among Adolescents**

Adolescence is a critical time for identity formation and the adoption of healthy behaviors and activities. Leisure offers many opportunities to achieve this; however, it also provides a context (time, place and space) for boredom. This is concerning as previous research has shown a correlation between boredom and risk behavior. In this paper, we offer a conceptualization of boredom in leisure by drawing on insights obtained from various research projects conducted over the last fifteen years involving school-going youth in South Africa. Primarily we focus on the HealthWise program, which is a comprehensive, evidence-based, prevention intervention that reduces risk behavior, and promotes healthy leisure through addressing boredom (among other things) in school-going youth. We provide research findings about the associations between boredom and risk behavior including substance use, sexual risk and school dropout. We share perspectives from young people about their experiences of boredom using photoelicitation. We highlight the importance and influence of the environment on adolescent development, boredom and risk behaviour, and address the challenging issue of measuring boredom in different cultural contexts. Finally, we offer evidence-based strategies for assisting young people to overcome boredom. This paper provides insights into adolescent boredom and the relationship with leisure for anyone working with young people in various contexts.