

Scuola di dottorato in
Letterature e Culture Classiche e Moderne

II Convegno Dottorale

15-16-17 ottobre 2025

CALL FOR PAPERS

Deadline: 30 giugno 2025

LA MATERIALITÀ DELL'ASSENZA

*Presenze negate, tracce silenziose,
memorie sospese*

THE MATERIALITY OF ABSENCE

*Denied presences, silent traces,
suspended memories*

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

Petros Bouras-Vallianatos

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Giuliana Calabrese

Università degli Studi di Milano

Barbara Huber

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Doctoral Program in Classical and Modern Literatures and Cultures

DOCTORAL CONFERENCE

Genoa, Ballroom of the Royal Palace

October 15th – 17th, 2025

THE MATERIALITY OF ABSENCE.

Denied Presences, Silent Traces, Suspended Memories

Call for Papers

The PhD candidates of the **Doctoral Program in Classical and Modern Literatures and Cultures** at the University of Genoa are pleased to announce the invitation to participate in the 2nd edition of the **doctoral conference**, organized by the Department of Italian Studies, Romance Studies, Ancient Studies, Arts, and Performance. This call is open to PhD students, young researchers, and graduates in the fields of **Ancient Studies, Archaeology, Italian Studies, and Modern and Contemporary Literatures**.

Absence has long been a central theme in artistic, literary, and social reflection. Within the humanities, what is missing — whether unsaid, unwritten, or unfound — assumes a crucial significance. Absence can manifest as a material loss, an intentional gap, or an unsaid that requires deeper interpretation to grasp underlying meanings or alternative senses, constituting a form of communication in itself that invites thorough studies.

In literary texts, both ancient and modern, this theme intertwines with essential concepts such as loss and memory, existential voids, and censorship, giving rise to narratives in which the reader is called to reflect on what is missing, filling the “gaps” with their own interpretative perspective.

In archaeological research, the recognition of the most fragile material traces and the interpretation of absences or negative evidence play a critical role in the study of past processes. Although these may lack tangible physicality, they harbor potentially rich information, essential for an accurate and scientifically grounded historical reconstruction of a context.

Absence thus becomes an intriguing key to understanding and studying the past, as well as exploring the mechanisms that have shaped our thinking and influenced our access to culture. Based on these considerations, the following, non-exhaustive suggestions are provided for various fields, specifying that both theoretical and experimental contributions will be welcomed, with particular attention to the value of a comparative and interdisciplinary approach.

ARCHAEOLOGY:

- **Negative evidence: a research methodology.** The analysis of archaeological traces as a key step in reconstructing historical processes;
- **Absence as an indicator of production and trade.** The lack of material data can provide useful information on the productions and trade circulating within a given historical context;
- **Archaeometry and diagnostics.** Tools and procedures for studying and interpreting both visible and more fragile data in the archaeological record;
- **Absence in the archaeology of mentality.** Material traces, even when incomplete or misleading, can allow the reconstruction of rituals and cultural habits;
- **Ethnography and Ethnoarchaeology** as tools for reading past and present traces.

The following are the SSD codes of the disciplinary sectors for which abstracts will be evaluated: **ARCH-01/A-G; STAA-01/F, K** (formerly L-ANT/01; L-ANT/04; L-ANT/06; L-ANT/07; L-ANT/08; L-ANT/09; L-ANT/10; L-OR/06; L-OR/11).

PHILOLOGY, LITERATURES AND HISTORY OF ANTIQUITY:

- **Philology, fragmentarity, and knowledge transmission.** Interpreting material gaps, deletions, and rewritings (palimpsests) in ancient texts (manuscripts, inscriptions, papyri); intentionally or accidentally empty spaces as clues to hidden meanings; indirect tradition revealing the absence of lost witnesses;

- **The absence of memory.** Deliberate interventions to erase the memory of individuals or events, such as instances of censorship in ancient and medieval texts or *damnatio memoriae*; intentional and unintentional omissions in historical narratives;
- **Manifestations of silence.** Silence as the result of an event with a significant emotional impact, such as fear or surprise; its symbolic value in social and religious conventions (the concept of *nefas* and the impossibility of the pronunciation of the name of God); silence in ancient theater (scenic absence, non-speaking characters, the dramatic effect of silence, narrative silence) and in literary texts (pauses, reticence, euphemism) as a communicative and expressive strategy; the use of gesture, posture, and other non-verbal codes for communication;
- **The verbal language of absence.** Linguistic expressions related to absence; linguistic potentials for expressing absence; the use of gesture, posture, and other non-verbal codes to communicate absence;
- **Literature of absence.** The physical absence of the author (writing in contexts of exile, prison, or distance) or the recipient (epistolary literature as a tool for bridging the distance between sender and recipient); absence as a structural element in a literary genre (e.g., consolatory poems);
- **Absence and cultural memory.** Mythological, literary, and historical figures associated with loss, absence, and oblivion; re-elaborations and reinterpretations of disappeared or forgotten events, characters, and traditions.

The following are the SSD codes of the disciplinary sectors for which abstracts will be evaluated: **FICP-01; FLMR-01/A; HELL-01/B-C; LATI-01/A; STAN-01; HIST-04/A-B, D; GLOT-01/A** (formerly L-FIL-LET/01-02, 04-08; L-ANT/02-03; M-STO/06-07, 09; L-LIN/01).

MODERN LITERATURES, TEXTUAL AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES:

- **Absence as the loss of something or someone.** Memorial evocation; materialization of physical absence through objects, photographs, images, landscapes, etc;
- **Existential void and lack of identity.** Lack of stimulation, absence of goals and objectives; failed attempts to fill the void (drugs, alcohol, etc.); alienation of the individual as the inability to occupy a role in society;

- **The theme of ineffability.** When reality surpasses ingenuity: Literary (metaphors, similes, circumlocutions, etc.) and performative (special effects, music, silence, scenography, etc.) strategies to render what cannot be said or represented;
- **Censorship in literature.** Forced elimination of passages, sentences, or chapters in a text; voluntary omission as a resistance strategy; complex narrative techniques, allusions, irony, sarcasm, fictitious names, etc;
- **Literary genres of absence.** Detective stories, horror, thrillers, epistolary novels, coming-of-age novels, memoirs, etc;
- **Non-verbal communication.** What is left unsaid in literature and the visual arts (cinema and theater); methods of expression through implicit indicators: performative acts in poetry and theatrical representations, proxemics, the position of the subject in the scene, posture and facial expression, gesture, and self-representation (makeup, hairstyle, clothing, accessories);
- **In linguistics and language history.** Implicit meanings and pauses; negation techniques; grammatical constructions (use of suffixes, prefixes, prepositions, etc.) to express absence or lack; paralinguistics (volume, tone of voice, hesitations, etc.);
- **In philology and tradition history.** Reconstructive approaches to uncover what has been lost; textual and mechanical gaps; the absence of error and textual correctness; indications to the miniaturist not realized; the *scriptio inferior* of palimpsests.

The following are the SSD codes of the disciplinary sectors for which abstracts will be evaluated: **ANGL-01/A; ANGL-01/B; FRAN-01/A; GERM-01/B; GERM-01/D; GLOT-01/A; SLAV-01/A; SPAN-01/A; COMP-01/A; FLMR-01/B; ITAL-01/A; LICO-01/A; LIFI-01/A; LIFI-01/B; PEMM-01/A-B** (formerly L-FIL-LET/09-14, L-ART/05-06, L-LIN/01, 03, 05, 10-11, 13, 15, 21).

GENERAL INFORMATION

PhD candidates, young researchers who have completed their PhD within three years of the CfP deadline, and Master's graduates are invited to submit their proposals to the following email address: convegno.phd.diraas@gmail.com by **June 30th, 2025**. Please specify in the subject line "Doctoral Conference Proposal," indicating the relevant section ("Archaeology", "Ancient Studies", "Italian, Textual and Performance Studies" or "Foreign Literatures"). A **PDF file** containing the title and abstract of the proposal, **not exceeding 300 words** (excluding

bibliography) should be attached. Proposals in both Italian and English are welcome. Please avoid including personal data in the document to ensure anonymity during the review process. Evaluation results will be communicated by **August 5th, 2025**. Each presentation will have a maximum duration of **20 minutes** and will preferably be held in person. Online participation will only be possible if attendance in person is not feasible; therefore, please specify in the email whether you intend to participate in person or remotely.

The conference program will be organized based on thematic or methodological affinities of the contributions. **Keynote speakers** affiliated with national and international academic institutions will be included: **Petros Bouras-Vallianatos** (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens), **Giuliana Calabrese** (University of Milan), **Barbara Huber** (Max Planck Institute for Geoanthropology), **Giuseppe Ledda** (University of Bologna). The conference will take place inside the Ballroom of the Royal Palace in Genoa **from October 15th to 17th, 2025**. No registration fee is required.

For further information, please contact the email address: convegno.phd.diraas@gmail.com.