

Call for papers

Caring, Taking care

*University of Palermo, Italy
Cultures and Societies Department*

*International Conference
4th, 5th October 2024*

Deadline for abstracts: September 10th, 2024

What do ‘caring’ and ‘taking care of’ mean? To what extent are ‘caring’ and ‘taking care of’ similar or different from a theoretical and practical point of view? In which contexts are they situated and to what extent do they depend on other contexts? In this conference, we will consider questions about ‘caring’ and ‘taking care of’ – possibly connecting or differentiating them – in a broad sense, by opening a dialogue about their definitions in different disciplines and subjects, on their roles in various contexts with both humans and non-human actors, and on the way in which ‘caring’ and ‘taking care of’ establish relationships with other features that define existence, the ordinary and the extraordinary facts of living. More specifically, what are these features and what possibilities do they hold? One of the classic fields of investigation concerns the experience of sickness and its expression, the processes that characterize it, the communication between patients and doctors, the symbolic effectiveness of the treatment, the social interactions, the relationship with the body, and the ways of observing it from the inside or the outside. This field certainly needs to be problematized by taking into account the role played by language and its related narrative forms. How does language intervene in the caring and taking care of people, things and other non-humans? How does narrative participate in healing processes with its symbolic, descriptive and rhetorical effects? How are rituals and narratives combined for therapeutic purposes? Even though we recognize the importance of this field of study, actually we do not intend to limit the question of ‘caring’ and ‘taking care of’ only to medicine and to the corresponding narratives of disease/illness, well-being, and healing. We think that the domain of ‘caring’ and ‘taking care of’ should be explored in all its aspects, even in the apparently more superficial ones, in order to have a better understanding of the individual in his/her social and cultural declinations. ‘Caring’ and ‘taking care of’, in fact, have to do with the wide breadth of interactions between individuals – friends, relatives, strangers, as well as between humans and non-humans – in which the practices of attention and gift are involved, as well as the practices of commitment and concern for others. How are these interactions regulated, socially and individually, when ‘caring’ and ‘taking care of’ are most clearly manifested? To what extent, for example, does the gift establish a relationship of reciprocity which configures particular areas of ‘care’ and ‘taking care of’? ‘Caring’ and ‘taking care of’ are associated, for the most part, with individual well-being and the common good. To better understand these aspects and the process of caring itself, is it appropriate to take into account those practices in which indifference and frustration are also involved? Which relationships and conceptual elements, in ‘caring’ and ‘taking care of’, prevail – or should prevail – over others in order to better focus on individual and common well-being? Recalling the universe of ‘caring’ and ‘taking care of’ also means recalling several concepts – such as fragility, vulnerability, relationship, attending, thoughtfulness, etc. – in their social and cultural dynamics. From this perspective, it is then legitimate to focus on the narratives – ethnographic or otherwise – according to which these concepts are connected not only in extraordinary moments of existence but

also in daily and ordinary life. We expect proposals that address the topic of ‘caring’ and ‘taking care of’ in specific ways, according to various perspectives and methods. Authors across disciplines and people outside of academic institutions, including artists, are encouraged to submit. Some possible subjects to research:

- similarities and differences between ‘caring’ and ‘taking care of’
- meaning of living
- the body and the person
- medical and other narratives
- health and disease/illness
- language and symbolic effectiveness
- rituals and performative acts
- ethnographies and autoethnographies of ‘caring’ and ‘taking care’
- spaces of ‘caring’ and ‘taking care’
- shamanisms
- work and/or leisure
- identity/otherness
- affectivity, intimacy
- conflict, crisis, indifference towards care
- the daily and the ordinary
- power and knowledge
- literary forms and representations
- agency/performativity
- migrations
- socio-cultural epistemologies
- curate an exhibition or installation
- art and aesthetics
- etc.

Modalities of participation and deadline:

Send abstracts by September 10th, 2024 to Stefano Montes (stefano.montes@unipa.it) and Gaetano Sabato (gaetano.sabato@unipa.it). Abstracts, max 300 words, include title, 3 key-words and a short biography (max 5 lines, not to be counted among the 300 words). Applicants will be notified by September 12th. The conference will take place, in-person, in Palermo. Admitted languages are English and Italian. Each speech is 20 minutes. Registration to the Conference is free of cost. Grants are not foreseen. Travel, accommodation and food costs are to be covered by participants.

Scientific responsible:

Stefano Montes, University of Palermo, Italy

Scientific board:

Jacob Bessen, University of Toronto, Canada

Silvio Buscemi, University of Palermo, Italy

Massimo Canevacci, University of Roma “La Sapienza”, Italy

Roberto Cipriani, University of Roma Tre, Italy

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Ray Zammit, University of Malta, Malta

Organizing committee:

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