

20th ANNUAL SOCIETY FOR RICOEUR STUDIES CONFERENCE

October 22–24, 2026

**Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, California, USA**

Theme: “Refiguring the Human”

Keynote Speaker:

**Maureen Junker-Kenny
Trinity College, Dublin
The University of Dublin**

**David Pellauer
Depaul University
Chicago, Illinois**

CALL FOR PAPERS

ORIGINAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE: APRIL 30, 2026

EXTENDED SUBMISSION DEADLINE: MAY 29, 2026

The Society for Ricoeur Studies (<http://www.ricoeursociety.org/>) is pleased to announce its 20th annual conference, which will be hosted at Santa Clara University (<https://www.scu.edu/>) in Santa Clara, California, in partnership with the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education (<https://www.scu.edu/ic/>).

Conference Theme: “Refiguring the Human”

The 2026 conference invites critical reflection on what it means to be human in an era of profound technological, ecological, and political transformation. Drawing on Paul Ricoeur’s philosophical anthropology — from the fragility and disproportion of the human person in *Fallible Man* to the “capable human being” in *Oneself as Another* who speaks, acts, narrates, and takes responsibility — the conference explores how hermeneutical, phenomenological, rhetorical, and theological traditions can engage the contemporary challenges of posthumanism,

transhumanism, and antihumanism. It welcomes dialogue across the diverse forms of humanism (classical, religious, secular, civic, incarnational, and ecological) and emerging currents in material phenomenology, postphenomenology, affect theory, new materialism, and critical social theory. It also invites reflection on traditions of spiritual and ethical formation, the Levinasian ethics of alterity, and the contested question of whether refiguring the human requires moving beyond the human altogether or calls for a deepened understanding of the human as a fragile, capable, and interpretive being. (A full description of the theme of the conference is available below.)

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The conference welcomes papers on these and related topics, including (but not limited to):

Philosophical and Theological Anthropologies

- Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology: fallibility, capability, affectivity, and the question of the human
- Hermeneutical, phenomenological, narrative, and rhetorical approaches to human identity and selfhood
- Hermeneutics and the human sciences: critical social theory, the explanatory social sciences, and the explanation/understanding dialectic
- Theological anthropologies: the human as *imago Dei*, incarnation, and the sacred
- Classical, civic, secular, and religious humanisms in dialogue
- Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, and interreligious perspectives on human nature and destiny
- Posthumanism, transhumanism, and antihumanism: challenges to the humanist tradition
- Refiguring as posthumanist assemblage or hermeneutical transformation: contested meanings of the human
- Levinas, the humanism of the other, and Ricoeur on hospitality, vulnerability, and translation
- Imagination, metaphor, and narrative as resources for refiguring the human
- The politics of the human: recognition, dignity, rights, and justice
- Ricoeur and contemporary interlocutors (e.g., Latour, Stiegler, Haraway, Taylor, Braidotti, Deleuze, etc.)

Technology, Materiality, and Affect

- The capable human being in an age of artificial intelligence and digital technology
- Digital hermeneutics and the reconfiguration of human self-understanding

- Postphenomenology, technological mediation, and the constitution of the human subject
- Material phenomenology, affective life, and the embodied self (e.g., Henry, Merleau-Ponty, psychoanalytic, Deleuze, immanentism)
- The affective turn: affect theory, trauma studies, social imaginaries, and the politics of feeling and Ricoeur's anticipations of the turn
- New materialisms, actor-network theory, and non-human agency
- The human and the non-human: animals, technology, and more-than-human worlds
- Ecological and environmental perspectives on the human: beyond anthropocentrism
- Enactivism, extended cognition, and the boundaries of the human mind
- Feminist phenomenology, intersectional studies, critical race studies, and critical philosophies of the body

Embodiment, Formation, and Practice

- Embodiment, disability, illness, and the vulnerable human
- Spiritual exercises, discernment, and the formation of the self (Ignatian, Hadot, Foucault, Murdoch)
- Practices of attention, contemplation, and moral perception
- Affectivity across the disciplines: aesthetics, psychoanalysis, pedagogy, cognitive theory, neuroscience, performance studies, and musicology

We further welcome submissions that address the influence of Ricoeur's thought inside and outside of philosophy, in all those disciplines where his work has application. We particularly welcome proposals that relate Ricoeur's thought to current issues and themes, such as the environmental crisis, healthcare crisis, intersectionality, womanism, immigrant justice, postcolonial studies, ecological challenges, or the challenges of democracy that we face today.

The society also encourages submissions that explore Ricoeur's philosophy and/or hermeneutics in relation to specific applied areas of practice *in real life*, such as: architecture, intersectionality, anti-oppression, education, economics, environmental concerns, artificial intelligence, digital technology, digital humanities, law, feminist philosophy, literature and literary theory, music, art, narrative medicine, nursing, medical humanities, biomedical ethics, translation, politics, trauma studies, peacebuilding, social media, etc. For more ideas, see the Hermeneutics in Real Life project website (<https://www.hinrl.org>) and resources page (<https://www.hinrl.org/resources>).

Conference Theme: Extended Description

The theme of the 2026 conference, "*Refiguring the Human*," invites critical reflection on what it means to be human in an era of profound transformation. As emerging technologies, ecological crises, and new forms of social and political life reshape the boundaries of the human, philosophical and theological traditions face the urgent task of reimagining and reinterpreting our

understandings of human existence, agency, and community, or, in Ricoeur's words, *configuring and refiguring* the human.

Paul Ricoeur's work offers rich resources for this task. From his early philosophical anthropology in *Fallible Man*, which explores the fragility and disproportion at the heart of human existence, to his later formulation of the "capable human being"—the self who can speak, act, narrate, and take responsibility—Ricoeur develops a philosophical anthropology attentive to both the grandeur and vulnerability of the human condition. Throughout his career, affectivity remains a constant concern — from the dialectics of the voluntary and the involuntary, capability and fallibility, through action and passivity, to his mature analyses of memory, justice, and recognition — pursued in dialogue with psychology, psychoanalysis, cognitive theory, and the neurosciences. His hermeneutical approach, mediating between explanation and understanding, self and other, and tradition and critique, provides a framework capable of engaging contemporary debates about the meaning and future of the human.

Broadly construed, the theme engages the diverse traditions of humanism — classical, religious, secular, civic, incarnational, and ecological — alongside their most searching contemporary challengers: posthumanism, which questions the centrality of the human subject altogether; transhumanism, which seeks to surpass human biological and cognitive limitations through technological enhancement; and antihumanism, which contends that "the human" is not a timeless essence but a historically constructed category shaped by language, power, and metaphysical presupposition. It invites dialogue across theological anthropologies of the human as created, fallen, and redeemed, philosophical traditions including phenomenology, hermeneutics, and existentialism, and broader currents in rhetorical thought and critical social theory. It also encourages reflection on how artificial intelligence, biotechnology, digital culture, and the environmental crisis are reconfiguring our understanding of human life.

The conference further welcomes engagement with the "material turn" and "affective turn" that are reshaping contemporary thought about human embodiment, agency, and social life. From material phenomenology's grounding of subjectivity in the pre-intentional *pathos* of embodied flesh, through postphenomenological analyses of how technologies mediate and constitute human experience, to affect theory's foregrounding (often drawing on Spinozist and immanentist traditions) of the pre-reflective and relational dimensions of existence, these approaches both extend and challenge Ricoeur's own attention to the *pathétique* of the human condition — an attention that in many respects anticipated the affective turn itself. New materialisms and actor-network approaches further press the question of non-human agency and material entanglement, inviting fresh dialogue with Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self and the social imaginary. Related contributions are welcome in critical theory of technology, enactivism, feminist phenomenology, and phenomenologies of race and disability.

Hosted at the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education, the conference also invites reflection on traditions of spiritual and ethical formation that shape the human through practices of discernment, attention, and encounter with the other. The Ignatian tradition of spiritual exercises

resonates with broader philosophical reflections on the formation of the self, including Pierre Hadot's account of philosophy as spiritual exercise, Foucault's work on the care of the self, and Iris Murdoch's ethics of attention. At the same time, Emmanuel Levinas's humanism of the other—locating the human in ethical responsibility before the face of the other—provides an important interlocutor for Ricoeur's reflections on selfhood, vulnerability, hospitality, and translation.

Finally, the title "*Refiguring the Human*" itself invites debate. From a posthumanist perspective, the human is increasingly entangled with technological, biological, social, and ecological systems that blur the boundaries between human and non-human life. Yet within the hermeneutical tradition, refiguration evokes Ricoeur's notion of narrative refiguration—the transformation of lived experience through new configurations of meaning. The conference thus invites a productive dialogue between these perspectives: does refiguring the human require moving beyond the human altogether, or does it call for a deeper and more chastened understanding of the human as a fragile, capable, interpretive being constituted through relations with others, institutions, and technologies?

In summary: We welcome papers that consider questions such as: What does Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology contribute to contemporary debates about the human and the posthuman? How might the hermeneutical tradition help us think critically about technological transformation and artificial intelligence? What does Ricoeur's philosophy of text, narrative, imagination and threefold mimesis offer to the task of refiguring the human? What resources do philosophical and theological anthropologies offer for understanding the human in relation to the ecological, the animal, and the machinic? What forms of humanism remain viable—or newly necessary—in a world increasingly skeptical of anthropocentrism?

Special Session: Refiguring the Human

The conference will feature a special session devoted to the Bloomsbury Academic series *Studies in the Thought of Paul Ricoeur* (<https://www.bloomsbury.com/us/series/studies-in-the-thought-of-paul-ricoeur/>). Recent publications in this series include works on Ricoeur's philosophical anthropology, hermeneutics of liberation, moral anthropology, and the renewal of philosophical anthropology in relation to vulnerability, capability, and justice. We invite submissions on related topics or panel proposals engaging these and other recent publications in Ricoeur studies.

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SUBMISSIONS GUIDELINES

We welcome submissions in the following formats. Papers and panels can be submitted in English, French, German, Portuguese, Italian, or Spanish,

- **Individual papers.** Please submit an abstract of approximately 300-500 words without any author-identifying information. In your email, please include the paper's title, the author's name, institutional affiliation, mailing address, and email address.

- **Panel proposals.** Please submit a brief description (300-500 words) of the panel topic, the names of the panel members, and, as a separate document, the abstracts for each presentation (300-500 words). Please include the panel's title along with the panel members' names, institutional affiliations, mailing addresses, and email addresses.
- **Book panels** on recent monographs or edited volumes focusing on Ricoeur's thought. Proposals should follow the instructions for regular panel proposals.
- **Book discussions** of primary texts by Ricoeur. Proposals must identify a moderator, the text selection, and a sketch of guiding questions or talking points for participants.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

This year we are using Oxford Abstracts for all paper and panel proposal abstract submissions. To submit your abstract, use this link: <https://app.oxfordabstracts.com/stages/78737/submitter>

If you do not already have an Oxford Abstracts account, you will need to create one. Click "Sign up to Oxford Abstracts," set up your account, and then complete the abstract submission form. Please note that all mandatory fields (marked with an asterisk) must be completed. If not all mandatory fields are filled in, you can still press submit but your submission will be marked as "incomplete." You can return to edit and complete your form later using the same link. There is a 500-word limit for your abstract.

We recommend preparing your abstract in a separate Word document before submission, then copying and pasting it into the form. If you need to pause, press "Submit" to save your work — your submission will be marked as "incomplete" and you can return to edit it later (use the same submitter link). However, if you navigate away from the page without pressing Submit, any text you have entered will be lost. You will receive an email confirmation once your submission has been received. **If you have additional proposal materials** — for example, panel descriptions, individual abstracts for panel members, or book discussion proposals — **please send these by email** to SRS vice-president Héctor Acero Ferrer (HAceroferrer@icscanada.edu).

NEW SCHOLAR AND GRADUATE STUDENT SUBMISSIONS:

New scholars and graduate students are encouraged to send in paper abstracts (300-500 words) around the theme of the conference, or any other theme related to the work of Paul Ricoeur. If you are in this category, we ask that you include "New Scholar/Graduate Submission" in the first line of your submission abstract.

This year the Society for Ricoeur Studies plans to offer partial financial support for travel or housing accommodations for graduate students attending the conference in person. After the proposals are reviewed, we will ask for graduate students needing travel support funds to apply for them.

FEES:

Participation in the conference requires membership in the Society for Ricoeur Studies and payment of the conference fee (for both in-person or online participation). Members must be in good standing (i.e. paid current on their membership fees) to present at the Society's conference (whether in person or online). Membership dues are valid from September 1 to August 31. Members who paid membership dues prior to or at last year's conference will remain in good standing until August 31, 2026. If your membership dues are not currently up to date, you can pay them through PayPal on the Society's website (<http://www.ricoeursociety.org/>). N.B. you do not need to have a PayPal account to pay via PayPal. Conference fees can be paid using the same method.

ONLINE PARTICIPATION:

This year's conference will be held and conducted in person, but we will also make room for a **limited number of proposals for online participation** in the conference. The schedule may include a few fully online sessions. In addition, we anticipate having one or two rooms with technology enabling some hybrid panel sessions. If you are submitting your proposal for consideration in one of the online or hybrid sessions, please indicate this in your submission.

SUBMISSION DEADLINE: April 30, 2026 (Notification by May 31, 2026)

SEND SUBMISSIONS TO: All abstract submissions should be made through Oxford Abstracts using the link above. Additional proposal materials — such as additional panel or book discussion details or individual abstracts for panel members — should be sent by email to SRS vice-president Héctor Acero Ferrer (HAceroFerrer@icscanada.edu). Abstracts and panel proposals accepted for conference presentations will be published on the Society's website prior to the conference. If you prefer not to have your submission published there, please indicate this in the Oxford Abstracts form or inform Héctor by email. All submissions will be blind reviewed by a committee. Notification of acceptance will be given via email by May 31, 2026.

CONFERENCE VENUE:

Santa Clara University

500 El Camino Real

Santa Clara, CA 95053, USA

<https://www.scu.edu/>

Hosted in partnership with the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education

<https://www.scu.edu/ic/>

Hotel and accommodations information will be sent out in May or June.

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