

PROGRAM IN EXPERIMENTAL CRITICAL THEORY
2023 WINTER-SPRING LECTURE SERIES

**“Reparations of the Republic: Champollion and French
Universalism”**

Jean-François Champollion is a hero of French republicanism, even though he is known today mainly for deciphering the hieroglyphs. Tellingly, his statue stands in front of France’s most important educational institution, the Collège de France, sculpted by none other than Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi of the Statue of Liberty in New York. Restored to shine brightly in white to mark the 200th anniversary of Champollion’s deciphering of hieroglyphs, it has long provoked fierce criticism from Egyptian intellectuals and politicians. Its visual claims appear to be as contradictory as Champollion’s own consciousness of the world: the universalism to which he owed his rise as the first professor of Egyptology did not blind him to the destruction originating in European modernity. Champollion and his statue thus serve as a focal point for fundamental questions about traditions and reparations of the French Republic.



With Markus Messling

*Professor of Romance Literatures and Comparative Literary and Cultural
Studies at Saarland University, Germany*

Markus Messling is Professor of Romance Literatures and Comparative Literary and Cultural Studies at Saarland University, Germany, where he is conducting a major research project on “Minor Universality: Narrative World Productions After Western Universalism,” funded by the European Research Council (ERC). His book on Jean-François Champollion has been translated into French and Arabic and is forthcoming in English as *Philology and the Appropriation of the World: Champollion’s Hieroglyphs*. His 2019 book *Universality After Universalism: On Francophone Literatures of the Present* is forthcoming in English and French with a new preface by Souleymane Bachir Diagne.

Monday, January 30th 12:00-1:00 PM PST via Zoom

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