



Call for Applications

Two Fully Funded PhD Fellowships  
at Central European University, Vienna-Budapest  
in

**History and Philosophy**  
in the Thematic Area of:

**Understanding Humanity**

Central European University invites applications for two new and fully funded interdisciplinary Joint PhD Fellowships starting in the 2020/2021 academic year in the thematic area of Understanding Humanity.

**The Joint PhD Fellowship Scheme**

The CEU Joint PhD Fellowship Scheme entails co-supervision by expert faculty members from the Department of Philosophy and Department of History, who are already engaged in ongoing research in the designated thematic area, e.g., as part of the project The Epistemology of the In/Human. One Fellow will pursue a PhD in Philosophy and the other one a PhD in Comparative History.

**Enrollment and Funding**

Selected applicants will receive a fully funded standard CEU PhD Scholarship, see: <https://www.ceu.edu/node/13714>. In addition to these scholarships, the selected PhD students will be eligible for all the additional funding opportunities available for CEU PhD students, see: <https://www.ceu.edu/funding-fees/grants-enrolled>.

**Details about the Thematic Area**

What does it mean to be human? This is an age-old question that has been answered in diverse ways in different historical and cultural contexts, depending on biological and social ontology assumed.

The core concepts involved – human, humanity, human nature, and humanism – have always been and still are contested in many ways:

- The **universalism** underlying the core concepts has been and still is challenged: on the one hand from a racist ontology, and on the other hand from a culturalist-constructivist, if not postmodern epistemology.
- The **essentialism** related to versions of the core concepts is hotly debated in a diversity of corners of the social sciences and humanities.
- References to **innateness or naturalness** with respect to what it means to be human have been and still are challenged, via pointing to the interaction between nature and nurture, developmentally as well as evolutionarily.
- The whereabouts of the involved categories – the **historical invention** of humanity, humanism and human nature – are historically still contested.

Questions related to ethics, morality, politics and religion arise too:

- Do the involved categories assume a **speciesism** that is akin to racism? What is the scope of justice and should we take out the ‘human’ from ‘human rights’?

- Are the core concepts involved relevant for furthering **justice**? Do they and should they ground **identities, empathy and solidarity**?
- How do these categories ground the phenomenon of **dehumanization**, i.e. that some people are still regarded as less human, if not less than human, e.g. refugees or homeless people?
- Is **posthumanism and enhancement** just a new liberal eugenics, reviving the inhuman horrors of the past in a subtler but still inhuman manner?
- Finally, what can we say about the history and philosophical assumptions of a **secular humanism**?

We invite applications that address such issues from a point of view that connects historical and philosophical perspectives.

Applicants should exhibit sufficient background in either intellectual history, cultural history, history and philosophy of science, historical or philosophical anthropology, social philosophy, philosophy of mind, metaethics, animal ethics, disability studies or critical racism studies.

Successful applicants in history will have some flexibility in mobility between the Vienna and the Budapest campus. Successful applicants in philosophy will reside in Vienna.

### Application Process

Interested candidates are invited to apply to one of the listed PhD programs (PhD in Philosophy or PhD in Comparative History), clearly indicating in the application that they are applying for the Joint PhD Fellowship funded by the Intellectual Themes Initiative in the above thematic area.

Please add a detailed research proposal (2-3 pages text, single spaced, page-count excluding list of references)!

Applicants should follow the usual online application process (see links below) and in addition write to Mónika Nagy ([nagymo@ceu.edu](mailto:nagymo@ceu.edu)), including only the research proposal and an anonymized CV (for anonymous review).

### Application Deadline

January 30, 2020

### Most Important Links and Contacts:

- CEU application call: <https://www.ceu.edu/article/2018-10-05/ceu-applications-now-open-2019-2020>
- Application page: <https://www.ceu.edu/apply>
- For the respective doctoral programs and application procedures, see departmental webpages: <https://philosophy.ceu.edu/phd-philosophy> and <https://history.ceu.edu/node/19>.
- For more information on the thematic area, contact Laszlo Kontler (History) [kontlerl@ceu.edu](mailto:kontlerl@ceu.edu) and Maria Kronfeldner (Philosophy) [kronfeldnerm@ceu.edu](mailto:kronfeldnerm@ceu.edu)
- For more general inquiries about the Joint PhD Fellowship scheme, please contact us at [iti@ceu.edu](mailto:iti@ceu.edu)

Central European University is a graduate institution of advanced research and teaching, dedicated to socially and morally responsible intellectual inquiry. CEU's distinctive educational program builds on the research tradition of the great American universities; on the most valuable Central European intellectual traditions; on the international diversity of its faculty and students; on its commitment to social service; and on its own history of academic and policy achievements in transforming the closed communist inheritance. CEU is committed to promoting the values of open society and self-reflective critical thinking. It aims at excellence in the mastery of established knowledge, courage to pursue the creation of new knowledge in the humanities, the social sciences, law and management, and engagement in promoting applications for each, in particular through their policy implications. CEU is a new model for international education, a center for study of contemporary economic, social and political challenges, and a source of support for building open and democratic societies that respect human rights and human dignity.