

3rd AHSN WEBINAR 3 February 2023

'The Laughing Matter of Spirit'

Dr Rachel Aumiller



"The Laughing Matter of Spirit"

An AHSN pre-conference zoominar with

Dr Rachel Aumiller
Department of English and Comparative Literature
Columbia University

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY



UNITED STATES
STUDIES CENTRE



[Rachel Aumiller](#) is interested in the ethical and political dimensions of emotions, sensations, and desire. She specifically analyzes touch as the site of disorientation and crisis. The crisis of touch ranges from ethical ambiguities surrounding sexual intimacy, to the tension between experiences of pleasure and cultural norms, to the politics of proximity and distance in response to epidemics.

In her forthcoming book *The Laughing Matter of Spirit* (under contract with Northwestern University Press), Rachel asks, "What changes when nothing changes?" *The Laughing Matter of Spirit* looks backwards in defeat with Hegel and Marx at the repeated failure of revolution. It looks upon the grotesque in comic horror with Benjamin and the Yugoslavian partisan resistance. And it locates a kind of political action that can only begin to take place from a position of absolute defeat, in the recognition that I have been determined as being nothing from the beginning: in the proletariat's cry, "I am nothing, but I must be everything!"

Join us for a fascinating talk and Q&A with a remarkable scholar! (Moderators: Rodney Taveira & Ben Nickl, University of Sydney)

A recording of this event is available [here](#).