

Call for Papers: Hematopolitics Symposium 2

The Politics of Blood Donation and Transfusion: Histories, Controversies, and Futures

6 June 2025, Thackray Museum of Medicine (Leeds, UK)
Keynote Speaker: Dr Jenny Bangham (University of Edinburgh)

From early transfusion experiments and wartime blood banking to contemporary controversies over donor eligibility and the global plasma economy, blood has been a site of both solidarity and division. At the same time, new developments in synthetic blood, xenotransfusion, and bioengineered alternatives challenge existing frameworks of donation and transfusion, raising questions about the future of blood governance, ethics, and access.

This symposium seeks to examine the historical, social, and political dimensions of blood donation and transfusion, focusing on how they have been governed, contested, and reimagined across time and space. We invite contributions from scholars in anthropology, history, sociology, medical humanities, Science and Technology Studies, bioethics, and related fields.

This symposium is held in conjunction with the special exhibition *Blood: Ties and Tensions* at the Thackray Museum of Medicine and will feature a keynote lecture by Dr. Jenny Bangham, author of *Blood Relations: Transfusion and the Making of Human Genetics* (2020, University of Chicago Press). Panellists will also have the opportunity to explore the exhibition, fostering further discussions around its curated themes. A limited number of bursaries will be available to support domestic travel for postgraduate, early career researchers, and independent scholars.

Some key questions we seek to explore:

- How have the politics of blood donation and transfusion changed over time, and how do these shifts reflect broader transformations in biomedicine, nationalism, and social imaginaries?
- How has the history of blood banking shaped knowledge and discourses on race and ethnicity, class and caste, gender, sex, sexuality, and citizenship?
- How do infrastructures of blood banking and the commercialization of blood products reproduce or mitigate global health inequalities?
- What ethical and political challenges emerge with new blood technologies, such as synthetic blood, xenotransfusion, and stem cell-based alternatives?
- How do patients, donors, and medical professionals experience and navigate the evolving landscape of blood donation and transfusion?
- How do artistic, literary, and activist engagements with blood expose or reimagine the politics of donation and transfusion?

Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

- Historical and contemporary shifts in donor eligibility and exclusion
- National blood donation policies and their political and ethical stakes
- Racialised and gendered discourses surrounding blood donation and transfusion
- Ethics and governance of blood banking, plasma economies, and commercialised donation
- Technological futures: synthetic blood, xenotransfusion, and regenerative medicine
- Stigma and discrimination in blood donation and patients receiving transfusion
- Political, aesthetic, and activist engagements with blood donation and transfusion in media, art, and literature

To apply:

Please submit a 200–300 word abstract and a brief bio (100-150 word) via the **Submission Point** by 25 April.

We hope the symposium will lead to contributions to a special issue or edited volume. For any inquiries, please contact Dr Jieun Kim (j.e.kim@leeds.ac.uk) or Dr Claire Turner (c.o.turner@leeds.ac.uk).

This symposium follows the success of the first Hematopolitics Symposium in May 2022, organised as part of the Hematopolitics Project (currently funded by the AHRC). For updates, visit our **website** and follow us on **BlueSky**.