

Emotions
Autumn School 2026
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University of Strasbourg

The Autumn School 2026 is jointly organized by two Interdisciplinary Thematic Institutes of the University of Strasbourg: ITI Lethica (lethica.unistra.fr) and ITI LiRiC (liric.unistra.fr). Its goal is to create a forum for discussion around a fundamentally interdisciplinary theme: emotions.

With their triple physiological, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions, emotions are, by nature, a cross-disciplinary research object, situated at the intersection of multiple fields including linguistics, psychology, literature, philosophy, theology, art, and the social sciences. This plurality of approaches nonetheless encounters the difficulty of establishing a unified definition and taxonomy, ranging from the so-called “basic emotions,” assumed to be universal and listed in Paul Ekman’s work (1972), to the “moral emotions” defined by Jonathan Haidt (2003).

Through the joint work of these different disciplines, the Autumn School aims to deepen various aspects of research on emotions, building on the lines of inquiry developed within both Interdisciplinary Thematic Institutes.

Within LETHICA, the question of emotion is central, whether in relation to the ethical value of emotions (such as empathy) or to the emotional power of literary and artistic works (Booth, 1987; Nussbaum, 1990). The role of emotion in triage decisions also represents a key theme, since processes of valuing or ranking lives are inseparable from affective issues. Researchers at LETHICA are likewise interested in the representation of excess or absence of emotion (impulsivity, apathy) as well as in the dynamics of “moral revolutions” (Appiah, 2010).

At LiRiC, reflection on the expression of emotion has led to investigations into its nature, categorization, and verbalization, through interdisciplinary and participatory studies focusing on emotional dysregulation in patients with acquired brain injuries (in collaboration with the Strasbourg University Hospitals and the Clémenceau University Institute of Rehabilitation; Kuppelin et al., 2023; Klein et al., 2024; Briand et al., forthcoming). Research conducted at LiRiC also includes sociological studies on the role of emotions in work organizations and/or in situations of violence (Amadio, 2022; Amadio & Montassir, 2025), studies of emotional activation in bilingual subjects and of the role of emotional variables in language processing (Errajaji & Commissaire, 2021, 2024), as well as investigations into the influence of cultural factors on affective expression in communication sciences (Zeller & Chevy Pebayle, 2025).

Emotions...

The topic of emotions is a complex one: it belongs to that category of phenomena that everyone can intuitively grasp, yet no one can fully or satisfactorily define. Dictionaries describe emotion as a *“reactive, reflexive, involuntary behavior experienced simultaneously at the bodily level, to a greater or lesser degree of intensity, and affectively as pleasure or pain”* (TLFi). The phenomenon thus combines at least two dimensions – a physical and a cognitive one – and is expressed in terms of positive and negative feelings. Emotions therefore constitute physio-psychological manifestations: actions or

behaviors that produce gestures, facial expressions, or internal physiological changes that can be quantified (Damasio 2002, 2010; Scherer 2000, 2003, 2005). This corresponds to the etymology of the word *emotion*, derived from the Latin *motio* (“movement”), a sense that can be linked to the uncontrollable gestures triggered by intense feelings – such as shivers of fear, recoil movements, facial expressions, or body language.

Anglophone psychological research generally uses *emotion* as a generic term encompassing *suffering* and *tears*, *dejection*, *sorrow*, *anxiety*, *joy* and *cheerfulness*, *reflection*, *bad mood*, *hatred* and *anger*, *contempt* and *disgust*, *surprise*, *astonishment*, *fear*, *horror*, and *shame* (Rimé, 1993). Linguists, for their part, sometimes speak in terms of affective manifestations, or draw fine distinctions between emotion and feeling: feelings are oriented toward an external object of experience (*Paul feels love for X*), whereas emotions are not directed toward an external object (*Paul feels great sadness*; see Anscombe, 1995; Le Pesant, 2023).

The Autumn School does not aim to provide a single, definitive definition of emotions. Rather, it seeks to foster discussion of the main psychological, ethical, and cognitive issues raised by the phenomenon, from the standpoint of multiple disciplines.

Target Audience

The Autumn School is intended for Master’s and doctoral students from all disciplines who wish to deepen their understanding of “emotions” through a fully interdisciplinary approach, by discovering and applying concepts, resources, and methods from other fields. The program will include plenary lectures, round tables, workshops, and a performance, all designed to foster this integrative reflection.

Research Axes

The Autumn School proposes to explore emotions through the research developed within the two ITIs:

1. **Identifying and naming emotions.** Across disciplines, the study of emotions shifts established boundaries and divisions: between body and mind, the social and the individual, or the cultural and the universal (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2000; Viano, 2014). [LiRiC & LETHICA]
2. **Emotional regulation and dysregulation.** Reflections on the impact of emotional dysregulation phenomena and the question of “free will”; ethical implications of emotion; representations of emotional excess or absence (impulsivity or apathy) and their link with decision-making (Bouju & Gefen, 2013). [LiRiC & LETHICA]
3. **Moral emotions.** This axis will consider *primary emotions*, which do not require the understanding of others’ mental states (Ekman, 1993), in relation to more complex *moral or social emotions* (e.g. self-giving emotions – *pride*, *shame*, *guilt*; emotions of possibility – *repentance*, *hope*, *despair*; and emotions of otherness – *trust*, *love*, *humility*; Lewis, 2000; Haidt, 2003; Palama et al., 2017). [LETHICA & LiRiC]
4. **Emotions, literature, and the arts.** Drawing on the experience of theatrical spectatorship, this axis invites reflection on how emotions are articulated, intertwined, or transformed within aesthetic, moral, or cognitive experience (Campeggiani, 2023). [LETHICA & LiRiC]

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