

# CENTRE FOR SENSORY STUDIES

## SENSATION LECTURE SERIES

### Feeling Alive with the Far Right: Fight Club Culture and Fascist Vitalism

Christopher E. Forth

Friday, 02 December 2022

11:00-12:40 EST, [Webinar Registration Link](#)

Virtual and In-person (Room H-1120, Hall Building)



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In 2019 *The New Yorker* ran a short piece entitled ‘The Men Who Still Love “Fight Club”’ referencing the enduring legacy of the 1996 novel by Chuck Palahniuk and its 1999 film adaptation by David Fincher. Focused primarily on American society, the article fails to mention *Fight Club's* appeal to many in Europe and elsewhere who have also been attracted by its aggressive masculinity and critique of consumer lifestyles. As a first step into a strange and sometimes disturbing world – what I refer to as ‘Planet Fight Club’ – this presentation explores how Palahniuk’s narrative features in far-right political culture in Europe and America today. Using selective examples from France, Germany, Austria, Italy, and the United States, particularly from representatives of the pan-European youth movement Generation Identity, it proposes that ‘fight club culture’ articulates enduring historical tensions between masculinity and modernity while inspiring practical methods of preserving – sometimes violently – the supposed integrity of white European culture. As opposed to what is often described as a slumbering society of devirilized white males, fight club culture promises a sensory and experiential regeneration of European manhood, a new vitalism in a modern world often described as ‘dead’.

**Christopher E. Forth** is the Dean’s Professor of History at the University of Kansas (USA). His interdisciplinary research concerns the cultural history of gender, sexuality, the body, and the senses (with an emphasis on modern France, Britain and America) as well as European intellectual and cultural history. The author or editor of twelve books, including *Zarathustra in Paris: The Nietzsche Vogue in France, 1891-1918* (2001), *The Dreyfus Affair and the Crisis of French Manhood* (2004) and *Masculinity in the Modern West* (2008), Forth’s most recent book is *Fat: A Cultural History of the Stuff of Life* (2019). He is currently working on two book projects tentatively entitled *Life is Elsewhere: Feeling Alive in the Modern World* and *Planet Fight Club: Masculinity, Modernity, and the Global Far Right*.

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