

Program ENG

The right to have rights. Hannah Arendt in today's world



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XVIII WALTER BENJAMIN INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM, 2026

Portbou

25, 26 and 27 September 2026

WALTER BENJAMIN INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM, 2026

This annual gathering, inspired by Walter Benjamin, is conceived both as a platform for discussion on topics and authors aligned with Walter Benjamin's theoretical production and as a framework to consider issues related that affect the present which can be analysed and treated with the tools inherited from Walter Benjamin and other intellectual figures who knew him, had a relationship with him or who were his contemporaries. This was the case of the philosopher Hannah Arendt.

December 2025 marked the 50th anniversary of the death of this Jewish-German intellectual. Through the colloquium, half a century later, we take her memory back to Portbou, the place where, in 1941, she managed to cross the border from France to Spain in order to continue her journey of exile to the United States. Portbou is, therefore, a physical cross-border intersection and at the same time a key symbolic location for critically mapping our present. Taking advantage of this unique symbolic framework, we plan to revisit the thoughts and career of Hannah Arendt, as well as their validity in contemporary critical theory and political practice.

In a world like the one we see today, within the framework of a profound crisis of discourses linked to democracy, humanism and critical political cultures, in which having 'the right to have rights', as Hannah Arendt put it, is questioned, we believe it is necessary to revisit and debate certain aspects of her legacy. The status of refugees, totalitarianism, power, violence, freedom, public space and the meaning of political action are just a few of these themes in her body of thought, often in dialogue with Walter Benjamin

*There will be simultaneous translation from English to Catalan/French/Spanish and from Catalan/Spanish to English/French.

PROGRAM

Friday 25 September. Portbou. Sala La Congesta

Inaugural session

6.30 p.m. Institutional presentations / tribute at the cemetery

7.00 p.m. Opening conference. 'We Are Saved.' Hannah Arendt's Journey from Paris to New York". **Thomas Meyer** (essayist and philosopher)

8.00 p.m. Debate and questions.

8.30 p.m. Opening of the exhibition "The Dreams of Walter Benjamin", by **Gemma Romero Goday** (attendees move to the Walter Benjamin Room)

Saturday 26 September. Portbou. Sala La Congesta

Morning session

10.00 a.m. 'Lying as a form of government: Hannah Arendt facing the collapse of the common world' **Máriam Martínez-Bascuñán** (Autonomous University of Madrid)

11.00 a.m. Coffee break

11.30 a.m. 'Illuminations of Hope in Authoritarian Times'. **Judith Butler** (University of California, Berkeley, USA)

1.30 p.m. **Institutional act of tribute to Walter Benjamin.** *Portbou Cemetery*

Afternoon session

4.00 p.m. 'The relevance of concept of totalitarianism in the post-totalitarian era'. **Agustín Serrano de Haro Martínez** (Institute of Philosophy - CSIC)

5.00 p.m. Coffee break

5.30 p.m. 'The right to (not) migrate'. **Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas**. CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs)

8.30 p.m. Theatre 'To Fall' By **Helena Tornero**. Ad Hoc Theatre Company

To Fall, from director and playwright Helena Tornero, proposes a journey through the life, events and emotions of a woman who is many women at the same time. The play is constructed as a scenic battle with time jumps that span several decades of Franco's regime, from the 1940s to the 1970s. It is a Memorial Democràtic initiative within the framework of the European **WIRE (Women in Resistance)** project led by the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)

Sunday 27 September. Portbou

08.00 a.m. Walter Benjamin Route. A walking tour from Banyuls to Portbou. With an artistic performance by the winner of the 14th **Nau Còclea** and MUME Artistic Creation Scholarship

Registration: Before 21 September 2026

T. (0034) 972 556 533 - info@museuexili.cat

Meeting point: Portbou Tourist Information Office. Passeig Lluís Companys, s/n

Free transfer to the departure point

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