

GSAH | Friedrich Dürrenmatt  
Gastprofessur für Weltliteratur

# Politics, poetics, positions – Negotiating (scholarly) writing and activism

A morning for doctoral students and interested parties with

**Abdourahman Waberi**

05.12.2023, 09:30–12:15, Mittelstrasse 43, Room 228

Moderation: Prof. Dr. Oliver Lubrich, University of Bern



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Abdourahman Waberi

5 December 2023

09:30–12:15  
(incl. break)

Room:  
Mittelstrasse 43  
Room 228

1 ECTS

Language: English

Registration: via  
KSL and E-Mail to  
[melanie.sampayo@unibe.ch](mailto:melanie.sampayo@unibe.ch)

«Ma place est ici» («I belong here»), said French writer Annie Ernaux on October 17th, 2022, in Paris, while demonstrating with Jean-Luc Mélenchon at the protest march against the high cost of living and climate inaction. Eleven days earlier Ernaux was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. The Swedish academy underlined rightfully how her class background and the reality of class divides shaped her writing. Annie Ernaux, Edouard Louis, Didier Eribon, Mati Diop, Eric Vuillard, and I were among the small group of French writers, thinkers and artists who dared to engage not only publicly with the electorate campaign but also to endorse the underdog candidate, Jean-Luc Mélenchon. Most prominent cultural figures supported either the status quo – Emmanuel Macron – or remained silent in their ivory tower. Writing fulfills different functions and the writer must deal with different roles and responsibilities as an artist, a scholar, a citizen, a human being guided by a set of values. From the earliest ages of my writing and my contribution to reflection, from the Tutsi Genocide of Rwanda to the Mélenchon 2022 campaign involvement, I have been navigating politics, poetics, and positions. In the workshop, through plenary discussions and reflection on our own projects, we will explore the question of how academic work and activism, or positioning in a broader sense, can be reconciled.

Abdourahman Waberi

Recommended readings:

*Moisson de cranes*. Textes pour le Rwanda, Paris: Le Serpent à plumes 2000. Harvest of Skulls, transl. by Dominic Thomas, Indiana UP 2016.

In the autumn semester of 2023, Abdourahman Waberi holds the Friedrich Dürrenmatt Guest Professorship for World Literature at the University of Bern. An acclaimed author from Djibouti, he has published several books of fiction (including *Aux Etats-Unis d'Afrique*, 2006, *Passage des larmes*, 2009), non-fiction, poetry and *Sankara*, a film script. His work has been translated into numerous languages, he has received many awards, including a Villa Médicis – Académie de France Rome fellowship and a DAAD Berliner Künstlerprogramm fellowship. A columnist for *Le Monde*, Waberi teaches Francophone Literature at George Washington University in Washington DC.