MECANO Workshop III in Helsinki

Models of Canonicity

28-30 October 2026, Helsinki and Tallinn

Workshop III brings the MECANO network together in Helsinki to examine how canons form, change and acquire authority. The programme approaches models of canonicity through intellectual and cultural history, while a digital humanities development sprint turns the discussion into a shared working model for the project.

At a glance

Workshop detail	Information
Dates	28-30 October 2026
Location	Helsinki, with a working day in Tallinn on 29 October
Focus	Models of canonicity in intellectual and cultural history
Format	Keynotes, selected readings, doctoral presentations, plenary discussion and a collaborative development sprint
Keynote speakers	Jari Kaukua, University of Jyväskylä; Mark J. Hill, King's College London
Organisers	Marjo Vierros, Mikko Tolonen and Filipe Pereira da Silva

Workshop purpose

The workshop gives doctoral researchers space to present the central challenges, opportunities and open questions emerging from their projects. Keynotes and selected readings provide common ground for discussion across philosophy, the history of ideas and cultural history.

The development sprint connects this historical work with digital humanities practice. Participants will use discussion and group work to formulate a MECANO model of canonicity that can support later comparison across the network.

Programme

The programme below reflects the current workshop plan. Readings are listed in the workshop content section; the Borges text suggested for Hill's keynote is optional.

Wednesday 28 October

Morning venue. Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Fabianinkatu 24 A, room 531, fifth floor. Map

Afternoon venue. Topelia A205, Unioninkatu 38 B, second floor of wing A. Use the entrance at the rear of the building. Map

Time	Programme
10:00-11:00	Keynote by Jari Kaukua, University of Jyväskylä
11:00-11:30	Coffee break
11:30-13:00	Plenary discussion on canon and the goals of the workshop
13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00-18:00	Presentations by doctoral researchers, with breaks. The sessions focus on challenges, opportunities and open questions in their research projects.

Thursday 29 October - Tallinn working day

Departure point. Katajanokka ferry terminal, Katajanokanlaituri 8. Map

Important. Please arrive at the ferry terminal by 10:00, at least 30 minutes before boarding, and bring a valid national identity card or passport.

Time	Programme
10:30	Boarding for Tallinn
10:30-13:00	Development sprint, part 1: opening discussion and group work
13:10-14:30	Free time in Tallinn
14:30-16:20	Development sprint, part 2: group work and discussion of the MECANO model of canonicity
17:00-19:30	Return boat to Helsinki, with dinner and informal discussion

Friday 30 October

Venue. University of Helsinki Language Centre, Fabianinkatu 26, Kielikeskus seminar room 105, first floor. Map

Time	Programme
10:00-11:00	Keynote by Mark J. Hill, King's College London: *Familiar Texts, Unfamiliar Contexts: Canonicity in Computational Cultural Analysis*
11:00-11:30	Coffee break
11:30-13:00	Concluding plenary discussion
13:00-14:00	Lunch

Workshop content

Keynotes and shared readings

Jari Kaukua

Jari Kaukua will open the workshop with a keynote connected to canons of Islamic thought. Mark J. Hill of King's College London will give the second keynote on the final day. The keynotes will be followed by discussion, with selected texts proposed by the speakers providing shared points of reference.

Readings for Kaukua: Nastassja Pugliese and Renato Matoso, "Teaching non-canonical texts: discussing concepts as the minimal unit of analysis", *BJHP* 34/5 (2026): https://doi.org/10.1080/09608788.2026.2694436; Jari Kaukua, "Post-Classical Islamic Philosophy: A Contradiction in Terms?" *Nazariyat* 6/2 (2020):dx.doi.org/10.12658/Nazariyat.6.2.M0110en

Mark J. Hill

Familiar Texts, Unfamiliar Contexts: Canonicity in Computational Cultural Analysis

Canonicity is not reducible to the historical evidence (or patterns) through which it becomes observable. Those patterns are produced across historical contexts. What is more, prior 'canonical' status impacts the probability that any given work will be (re)produced, transmitted, recognised, and preserved. That is, canonicity is endogenous to its own evidence: the condition we seek to infer helps generate the observations from which we infer it. The result is a canon so present in culture that it shapes how we see it, making it harder to know than we may think. Computational methods for canon studies should, therefore, model the historical context(s) around any given surviving record, rather than treating that record itself as a measure of canonical status. This paper presents a framework for doing a type of computational contextual analytics that asks researchers to explicitly model context via five dimensions in which cultural objects exist (the semiotic, temporal, spatial, social, and relational).

Optional reading for Hill: Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote". Hill will refer to the story in his talk. Reading it in advance is optional, and no detailed preparation is expected.

Doctoral researcher presentations

The Wednesday afternoon sessions are reserved for doctoral researchers. Presentations should address both challenges and opportunities in their research projects and foreground an issue that matters to the wider

network. This might be a conceptual difficulty, a challenge in the evidence, a promising method or direction, or an open question about how canonicity operates in the research material.

Development sprint

The Tallinn working day centres on a collaborative digital humanities sprint. Participants will work in groups, compare approaches and develop a shared MECANO model of canonicity. The Friday plenary will review this work and identify what should be carried forward.

Practical information

Arrival. Participants may arrive on 27 or 28 October. The programme begins at 10:00 on Wednesday 28 October.

Travel from Helsinki Airport. Take commuter train I or P to the city centre; the journey takes approximately 30 minutes. From Helsinki Central Railway Station, buses, trams and metro services connect with the rest of the city.

HSL tickets. Helsinki public transport uses fare zones. An ABC ticket is required between the airport and the city centre; an AB ticket covers journeys within the inner city.

Buying and using tickets. Buy tickets in the HSL app or, for single tickets, select the zones and tap a contactless payment card or device on a blue reader. A single ticket is valid for 90 minutes and permits unlimited travel within the selected zones. Use the same payment card or device when transferring. Metro readers are at the entrances to the station platforms rather than inside the trains.

Tallinn. Thursday 29 October is a working day in Tallinn. The return boat is scheduled to reach Helsinki at 21:00.

Departure. The workshop finishes after lunch on Friday 30 October.