

emerging concepts for the study of culture @ gcsc #1

the re/turn of the nonhuman in the study of culture concepts – concerns – challenges

27-28 May 2013, Giessen, Germany

Confirmed keynote speakers

- § Ursula Heise, University of California Los Angeles (USA)
- § Jussi Parikka, Southampton (UK) / Turku (FIN)
- § Noortje Marres, Goldsmith College, London (UK)

Call for Papers

More often than not, academic research today tries to solve the issues of the 21st century with concepts of the 20th in institutional frameworks of the 19th. The humanities are a case in point: important as they have been in the past and continue to be in the present, the very term 'humanities' can be seen as somewhat problematic today, as it implies an exclusive focus on humans and humanity. There is, however, hardly an issue of cultural or social concern today, which does not involve complex entanglements of human *and* nonhuman actors.

Contemporary scholars draw our attention to matter, networks, affect, objects, and media in order to show how other entities act and shape our world. They argue that making these nonhuman entities visible helps us better engage with the contemporary moment and address 21st century problems such as global climate change, the collapse of financial markets, or nonhuman internet traffic. Approaches to the nonhuman have included such diverse fields as actor-network theory, affect theory, animal studies, assemblage theory, new media theory, new materialism, speculative and object-oriented realism or systems theory.

Turning towards the nonhuman in the study of culture, however, is not just about "contemporary thought"—it's about politics, knowledge, and embodied experience both in the present and throughout history. Thus a "*nonhuman turn*" in the study of culture might just as well be described as a "*re/turn of the nonhuman*", as research on the cultural and social relations of human and nonhuman actors can be traced to a variety of different intellectual and theoretical developments moving back through the last decades of the 20th century and well before.

Following the successful Center for 21st Century Studies (C21) 2012 conference on "The Nonhuman Turn", we would like to invite researchers from all fields of the humanities, social sciences and other areas of the study of culture to intensify the discussion about the implications of the nonhuman for the study of culture: Which concepts have been developed or need to be developed further in order to better observe, analyze or theorize the manifold relations of nonhumans and humans in the 21st century as well as historically? What are the most important cultural and social concerns regarding questions of the nonhuman which

need to be addressed by the academic study of culture? Which challenges do researchers in the study of culture face in light of the nonhuman?

While this conference also acknowledges the discourse on a “posthuman turn” as an important inspiration, we see the “nonhuman” as a distinct concept which differs from posthumanism in important ways. While the nonhuman also aims to widen the perspective to include other natural, cultural, and social actors than humans, it does not claim a historic shift from humanism to posthumanism, but rather advocates research which takes into account the various complex relations of humans and nonhumans in contemporary as well as historical cultural and social formations.

This is the first in a series of conferences at the International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC) designed to identify and discuss emerging topics for the study of culture. Together with C21, this first event is meant to address the future of 21st century studies by exploring how the re/turn of the nonhuman might provide a way forward for the contemporary study of culture in light of the difficult challenges of the 21st century.

Paper Submissions

Papers can be presented either in German or in English. Please send an abstract of about 250 words and a short bio note to Beatrice.Michaelis@gcsc.uni-giessen.de.
Deadline for submissions is March 15th, 2013

For more info please check our conference website: <http://gcsc.uni-giessen.de/nonhuman>

Conference co-organised by



International Graduate Centre
for the Study of Culture

International Graduate Centre for the Study of Culture (GCSC)
Justus Liebig University Giessen, Germany
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