

CALL FOR PAPERS

Cincinnati, October 19-20, 2012

The German Graduate Student Governance Association of the University of Cincinnati and the editors of the graduate student journal *Focus on German Studies* present the Seventeenth Annual Focus Graduate Student Conference to be held October 19-20, 2012 at the University of Cincinnati.

Sponsored by the Charles Phelps Taft Research Center, the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst, and the Graduate Student Government Association of the University of Cincinnati.

WANNA RACE?: CONSTRUCTIONS AND CONTESTATIONS OF “RACE” IN GERMAN CULTURAL HISTORY

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: TINA CAMPT, BARNARD COLLEGE

Centuries before the word race was used to refer to what was falsely believed to be differing biological human species, the desire to delineate individuals based on physiognomies and skin color had already been present as a means of establishing a so-called “us” vs. “them” binary in literary and academic texts. Medieval and early modern literature presented its readers with stereotypical images of “Moors,” “Zigeuner,” and Jews, casting them as “contested Germans” or simply marking them as “Other.” The enlightenment philosophy and theories of Kant, Herder and Hegel, as well as Darwin’s *On the Origins of Species*, furthered the development of racial hierarchies and later the field of eugenics in nineteenth-century Germany. The longing to categorize humans according to race was evidenced in imperialist ideologies and the colonial conquest that marked the turn of the twentieth century, which both produced Germany’s first genocide in Namibia, and lead to the institution of German racial purity laws. These laws would later be reflected in what is considered the twentieth century’s most devastating event, the Holocaust. Despite its proven invalidity, race as a category has persisted nonetheless through its transition from a biological to a culturally positioned construction. Thus, the trajectory of racial discourse in Germany and its continued presence, as evidenced in the more recent

Sarrazin debate and beyond, evince the impossibility of evaluating German national identity, history, and contemporary political and social trends, without examining the role race has played and continues to play. Furthermore, in an attempt to deconstruct established notions of race, a number of minorities and marginalized groups in Germany have responded through means of cultural production in the form of music, theater, film, and literature, negating and contesting the limitations of a strictly “white” homogenized German identity.

This conference seeks to investigate the ways in which the implied stereotypes and social constructs inhabiting the term “race” have been excogitated and perpetuated, as well as recently contested in Germany and the more broadly defined German-speaking world. How have authors, filmmakers, musicians, dramaturges, politicians, historians, artists, and scientists approached, interrogated, and problematized the concept of “race” within German cultural history?

In continuing the interdisciplinarity of last year’s conference, we encourage critical and reflective papers from all areas of study with a focus on the German contribution to the conception and contestation of “race.”

Possible topics include, but are not limited to the following:

- The intersection of philosophy and “race”
- “Contested” German identities (German-Jews, Afro-Germans, etc.)
- The impact of science and eugenics on German racial theory
- Critical approaches to constructing whiteness
- Human zoos and ethnological exhibits in Germany
- Racism and Anti-Semitism in contemporary German society
- Representations of “race”
- Asians/Native Americans in the German imaginary
- Imperialism/colonialism, fascism, and racial policies
- Gender and “race”
- Racial images in German visual culture
- The Holocaust and its aftermath
- “Race” in the GDR
- Portrayals of Sinti and Roma
- Comparative/Transnational studies of “race” (German/European, German/American etc.)

- Constructions and performances of “race”
- Racial “Othering” and the marked body

Revised conference papers can also be submitted for publication in our Focus on German Studies journal. Please send an abstract of 250-300 words in either English or German as an MS Word attachment by **June 01, 2012** to Vanessa Plumly and Sasha Parks at **fogs.editor@gmail.com** (ATTN: Focus on GS Conference). **Please include your university affiliation in your email when you submit your abstract.**

**Please Note: Conference participants have the option of housing with UC graduate students.*

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