

Off the Radar: Periodical Print Media Outside Mainstream Culture, 1800 – Today

Postgraduate Conference in Comparative Literature and Culture

Abseitiges: Magazine und Zeitungen außerhalb des Mainstreams, 1800 – heute

Komparatistische Nachwuchstagung

July 24-25, 2020 at Goettingen University, Germany

Conference languages: English, German

This interdisciplinary conference is dedicated to periodical print media (newspapers, magazines, zines) that thrive(d) outside the ‘mainstream,’ i.e., that are not backed by big publishers and/or geared towards a commercially defined majority in terms of taste, politics, and language. We invite advanced graduate students, PhD students, and postdocs/ECRs to consider periodicals as ‘autonomous objects of study’ (Latham/Scholes) and seek discussions of new aspects in well-researched genres like little magazines together with papers on hitherto neglected titles.

Periodicals are low-threshold media that lend themselves to grass-roots activism and avant-garde experimentation: from the lifting of stamp duties in 19th-century Britain to advances in printing technology and the introduction of desktop publishing software in the 20th century on a global scale, they are widely available to communicate, experiment, agitate, and represent diverse voices and communities. The conference considers periodicals that are, in one way or another, off the radar of a widespread audience and cater to more select readerships as ‘alternative,’ ‘underground,’ ‘radical,’ ‘niche,’ ‘diasporic,’ ‘minority,’ ‘avant-garde,’ ‘pulp,’ ‘independent,’ or ‘subcultural’ media. We expressly do not limit inquiries to North America and Europe.

To enable an understanding of these print media landscapes in specific historical moments in their constellations of mainstream and periphery/avant-garde, we seek papers addressing not only single issues, but also entire runs, contexts, networks, infrastructures, seriality, materiality, and other aspects. The procedural development of print media and a changing understanding of what constitutes the realm ‘outside the mainstream’ (and how these print media participate(d) in a broader, ongoing cultural discussion) are aspects to consider: We are, for example, interested in 19th and early 20th century developments of chartist, spiritualist, indigenous, revolutionary, suffragette, and abolitionist periodicals, the little magazines of modernism, the first fanzines and pulp magazines of the 30s and 40s, the alternative and underground press of the (mid-)20th-century, the style press of the late 20th century, and the current boom of indie magazines. In short: the constellation of newspapers and magazines finding readers outside the mainstream, economically, aesthetically, or ideologically—and depending on how the mainstream press is defined—from 1800 to today.

Topics may include but are not limited to

The politics of the (digital) archive

Histories of specific periodicals

Censorship

Questions of terminology: ‘alternative,’ ‘independent,’ ‘little,’ ‘underground,’ ‘mainstream,’ ‘pulp’ as applicable to periodicals

The periodicals of subcultures/scenes/neo-tribes
(Fan)zines
Dissident periodicals
Scrapbooking/repurposing/recycling
Independent magazines today and authenticity
Feminist and gay periodicals
Ethnic and indigenous periodicals
Periodicals of diaspora communities
Avant-garde networks through and aesthetic experiments with periodicals
Periodicals in minority languages
Specialist periodicals with small readerships

Please send abstracts of no more than 300 words and a short bio note in English or German to

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and

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by **January 31, 2020**.

We especially encourage advanced graduate students, PhD students, and ECR to apply.

Pending approval, accommodation and travel expenses will be partly covered.
Please note that we will take until February 29, 2020 to review the proposals.

Organisers: Dr. Sabina Fazli, Seminar für Englische Philologie, Georg-August-Universität
Göttingen
Frank E. Newton, Obama Institute, Johannes-Gutenberg Universität Mainz