LAUGHTER

Interdisciplinary German Studies Conference
University of California, Berkeley
March 8-10, 2013

Laughter occurs at the threshold between what language means, what language does and what lies beyond language’s grasp. This conference invites research that interrogates laughter in German literature and film, from jest and ridicule in courtly culture to reports of Kafka's macabre laughter to Werner Herzog's chuckle. We welcome proposals that focus not only on humor as genre, but also explore the affective dimensions of reading, watching and participating in the comical. Can we understand laughter within the parameters of language and representation, or is laughter the moment when language becomes other to itself? How has laughter become a symptom of cynicism and ironic detachment? How might laughter become a body's critical intervention?

For the conference, we encourage an interdisciplinary approach, seeking papers from scholars of modern and medieval literature, film and philosophy, history and art history, linguistics and sociology, and related disciplines.

Keynote speaker: To be announced

The conference will be held in Dwinelle Hall at the University of California, Berkeley, March 8-10, 2013. Please submit a 300-word abstract for a 15-20 minute paper by January 10, 2013 to berkeleygermanconference@gmail.com.

Possible paper topics include but are not limited to laughter's relation to the following:

- Affect theory
- Parody and performativity
- Semiotics and protosemiotics
- Psychoanalysis
- Theater and catharsis
- Theories of incongruity and superiority
- Cynical reason vs. kynicism
- The sacred and profane
- Satire and poetry
- Self-referentiality and Web 2.0
- The Culture Industry, 'Infotainment'
- Vergangenheitsbewältigung
- Comedy and politics
- German-language comedy

Conference organizers: Jacob Johnson, Alexander Lambrow, Seth Elliott Meyer
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