19th Annual German Graduate Studies Conference at the University of Virginia: Wasted Spaces
February 17-19, 2012

Call for Papers:

In an age of increased awareness over the depletion of natural resources pitted against an ever-growing and increasingly interconnected global population, the problematics of space have assumed a prominent position in contemporary discourse. The issue of space, including its definitions and uses, manifests itself locally and globally. On an individual level, a person’s private sphere has become public in the age of social networking. These changes to one’s personal life come at a time in which current and future human endeavors face the challenge of a rapidly changing natural world, affecting ecosystems, people, and systems of order.

Our conference aims to explore different approaches towards space in discourse, culture, and the natural world. The term “wasted spaces” can refer not only to the destruction of the material world through natural and man-made forces, but also the potential to transform existing spaces: what is deemed “wasted” or “useless” can be reshaped through actions and language, as space has both a material and immaterial side. Even if technological developments in the recent decades have radically accelerated the need to redefine the areas in which we live, the challenge itself is not a new one.

We invite graduate students from all disciplines to submit papers in English or German on the creation, definition, and destruction of space(s). While this conference is being hosted by the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at the University of Virginia, students in other fields, including the natural sciences, engineering, and architecture, are encouraged to submit an abstract. Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- environmentalism in literature
- definitions of space on the micro and/or macro level
- gendered spaces
- the depiction of space in a visual medium such as photography, film, or theatre
- the relationship of the human being to his natural (and unnatural) surroundings
- depictions of nature in art and literature
- fantastic/futuristic spaces and spatial fantasies
- utopias and other non-places
- the human body as a delineated and defined space
- the competition over the control of space
- reading of spaces vs. reading in spaces
- spaces of memory
- virtual space
- the alteration of space through art and architecture
- spaces of domesticity

Submissions: The deadline for submissions is December 10, 2011. Please send an abstract of not more than 250 words, along with the proposed title, author’s name, affiliation, and email, to:

Charles Taggart and Rebekah Slodounik
Email: uvagermangradconference2012@gmail.com
For more information, please visit: www.uvagermangradconference2012.wordpress.com