

Call for Papers

W(h)ither Identity - Positioning the Self and Transforming the Social

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

Date: January 23-24, 2014

Deadline for Abstracts: October 31, 2013

Contact: conference.whitheridentity@gcsc.uni-giessen.de

Website: http://gcsc.uni-giessen.de/wps/pgn/home/GCSC_eng/whither-identity/

Identity, both as a whole and in relation to categories of social difference including, but not limited to, race, class, ability, sex/gender, sexuality, indigeneity, citizenship, etc., has been an increasingly contested concept in academic criticism, aesthetic practice, and political activism over the past quarter century – longer, if we consider experimental creative texts or the poststructuralist challenge to the subject. In political contexts, identity is framed, at times, as potentially reductivist and, at others, as necessary for self-positioning within networks of oppressive power and privilege. In aesthetic and performance practices, identity is divergently approached as crucial for interpellating potentially marginalised subjects into a sense of community/recognition and criticised as, again, reductive, insular, and/or tied to a dated notion of subjective coherence. Various dismissed, within the academia, as critically and/or politically unproductive and defended as at least prospectively necessary or useful as an always partial locus, mixed with disidentificatory practices, but never fully discardable, identity sits at the nexus of debates about formulations of the self, community, and the self's position within social formations.

This conference asks whether identity has gone. Is it still a critically, personally, aesthetically, socially, and/or politically useful concept? Or is it withering? If so, should we let it? Is it necessary to community, the social, and/or transformative social and/or artistic/performative/performance practices? Or can these functions be (potentially better) accomplished without it? We are especially interested in questions of the relationship between identity, disidentity, and/or non-identitarian formulations and sociality and/or social transformation. A list of possible, but non-exclusive, foci follows below.

We welcome submissions from a range of disciplinary frameworks within the humanities and social sciences from scholars at all career and postgraduate stages, as well as from

practitioners of the performing and creative arts and from activists. Proposals for individual papers, including an abstract of 300 words and a brief contributor bio, or full panels, including a brief panel description as well as abstracts and bios for each participant, should be submitted in English or German by **October 31st, 2013** to: conference.whitheridentity@gcsc.uni-giessen.de

We are offering two grants of 200 Euros each to lecturers.

Possible questions to consider include:

- Are processes of identification empirically and/or normatively necessary to establishing (political, aesthetic, affective, etc.) community?
- To what extent do processes of identitarian social formation inherently entail practices of exclusion?
- Does identity wither without (political, social, legal etc.) recognition?
- Is a non-identitarian process of community formation/social transformation possible? What might one look like?
- What do processes of disidentification (from a community, social category, etc) entail, and what are their political, social, aesthetic, and/or subjective effects?
- How do place and space factor into dis/non-/identificatory processes? How does language?
- Is it possible to disentangle the perceived link between identity and the body in performance or the represented body? If so, how and to what end?
- What is the importance, if any, of the distinction between self-attributed identities and ones that are externally imposed for (marginalised) subjects and communities in lived experience and in aesthetic production?
- To what extent do contemporary identity discourses, which are spread out in diverse media, proceed, modify, or reapprove historical discursive knowledge?