Call for Papers: “Ideologies of Convenience: Cynicism and Irony”

University of Oregon, 13th-14th February 2020

Keynote speaker: Silke-Maria Weineck, University of Michigan

“I know what I’m doing but I’m doing it nevertheless” - Slavoj Žižek’s description of modern cynicism echoes its definition by German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk as “false enlightened consciousness”. The 20th century has turned cynicism into a mass phenomenon (Peter Sloterdijk), a “condition of disillusion” (Timothy Bewes). But cynicism can also be understood and theorized more generally as a general distrust of other’s motives; a subversion of conventional value systems and a keeping of distance through “a filter of insincerity” (William Barnes).

Cynicism has infiltrated both the arts and society: Cinematic, literary, political, media, educational, and social discourses are imbedded in a cynical mindset. In this mindset, it is however often accompanied by irony. Together, they constitute an asymmetrical couple, writes Žižek. Although they both inform many satirical, critical, or nihilistic expressions, they are often not theorized as structural powers of the Western mindset. The Graduate Conference “Ideologies of Convenience: Cynicism and Irony” is exploring the complexities of cynical and ironic thinking and their productions.

Because of both cynicism and irony’s manifold prevalence, our conference is open to many different fields of interest, from the study of literature and philosophy, to questions of societal behavior, environmental agency, popular culture, journalism, politics, and media. We want to bring cynicism and irony to the forefront of a discourse that mainly arises in modernity and postmodernity but can certainly be traced back throughout history.

We welcome proposals for individual papers and presentations. Graduate students from all universities and departments are encouraged to submit their abstracts.

Crossdisciplinary approaches to this topic are cordially invited. Themes may include but are not limited to:

- Cynicism and/or irony as topos or structure in literary work(s) (English, German, Spanish, Russian, Italian,…)

- Linguistics: cynicism and irony on the level of language

- Philosophy: Cynicism and/or irony as approach to life’s questions, as focal point for existentialism and especially in postmodern thought; as history of thought

- Cinema Studies & Media: TV series, movies, online media, journalism

- Art: cynicism and/or irony in different art forms and art subjects; caricatures, comics, mangas,…

- Politics: cynicism and/or irony in political discourses

- Sociology: cynicism and/or irony as a sociological phenomenon in society; gender relations

- Environmental studies: human resistance to climate change, changing environments, natural disasters, and epidemics; unwillingness to change personal behavior due to convenience
Please submit an abstract for your presentation of **max. 300 words by November 8, 2019**. Your submission should include the following information: title of proposal, presenter’s name, university and department affiliation, 100-word (max.) bio, technology requests, and email address.

**Proposals and questions may be directed to:** gerescangradconference@gmail.com. Please include the words “Conference Proposal” in the subject line of your email. We look forward to your submissions!