

Call for Papers:

Rutgers University Graduate Student Conference in German Studies

Ecstasy Ekstase Rausch

26-27 March, 2020

Keynote Speaker: Wayne Koestenbaum (Graduate Center, City University of New York)

Stemming from the ancient Greek, the term “ecstasy” conveys a mode of being or standing outside oneself. A state of intense excitement, overwhelming joy, unrestrained euphoria, unbridled jubilation or frenzied desire, ecstasy is linked to the moment when physical or spiritual thresholds are crossed. While intensely pleasant experiences and states of expanded consciousness are often taken for granted as desirable, ecstasy nonetheless operates somewhere at or even beyond the limits of desire – at the point at which its intoxicating force overtakes any act of desiring that would be rooted in the subject. For this reason, ecstatic experiences are often conflicting, making it difficult to capture them in words and images. What happens, then, to the medium charged with representing ecstasy? And to what ends? At the conceptual level, in moments of ecstasy there is no longer a clear distinction between pleasure and pain, soaring and falling, spiritual awakening and physical self-harm, liberation and dependency, and even life and death. Ecstatic peaks may be fleeting and intangible, but they also open up the possibility of questioning societal boundaries while calling for new forms, often oscillating between transcendence and critique.

We welcome submissions probing the stakes of ecstasy’s figurations, effects, and/or mobilized incursions across a variety of mediums and relevant disciplines, including but not limited to Language and Literature Studies, Cinema Studies, Gender Studies, Performance Studies, Religious Studies, Philosophy, Art History, Media Studies and Music.

Possible paper/panel topics:

- Ecstatic texts; ecstatic speech
- Filmic and visual representations of ecstasy
- Ecstasy in music (opera, hymns, etc.)
- Ecstasy and theories of performance (especially acting and dance)
- Ecstasy in romanticism and expressionism
- The role of ecstasy in mystical traditions, texts or religious discourses
- The politics of ecstasy (theories of charisma, rhetoric)
- Ecstasy and theories of the sublime
- Ecstasy in feminist approaches as well as in gender and sexuality studies (e.g. the stakes of feminine/feminized jouissance)
- Ecstasy and tragedy
- Ecstasy in psychoanalysis (e.g. in writings on psychosis, schizophrenia, or mania and mourning disorders)
- Ecstasy and pharmo-technological regimes of pleasure/addiction
- Theories of modernity and the libidinal economy of sensory overload

Please submit abstracts (250-300 words) for 20-minute presentations along with a brief biographical statement to christiane.fischer@rutgers.edu & aefior@scarletmail.rutgers.edu by 01/30/20. Selected participants will be notified by 02/26/20.