

Session 6 'European Crises'

Time: 16:00-17:30

Location: tba

Convenor: Dr. Florian Lippert (f.j.lippert@rug.nl)

Crises are omnipresent in today's discourses on Europe – from the 2008 financial breakdown to the current debates on migration, democracy, history and cultural memory. In this panel, contributors will discuss and exemplify how Literary Studies, and the Humanities and Social Sciences as a whole, can contribute to the critical analyses of the conflicts and discourses underlying these scenarios.'

The panel will consist of three presentations of approx. 15 minutes each, followed by discussions with the audience.

Prof. Dr. Maria Boletsi (University of Amsterdam / University of Leiden):

Languages of Resistance and Futurity: Street Art in the Greek Crisis-Scape

Since the outbreak of the financial crisis in Greece in 2009, Athenian streets have become a dynamic art gallery, turning Athens, according to the *New York Times*, "into a contemporary mecca for street art in Europe." This talk offers a glimpse into how this art form became one of the most innovative aesthetic responses to crisis. How did street art intervene in the popular rhetoric on the Greek crisis? While many street artworks and wall-writings issued straightforward forms of critique towards sites of political power (e.g., anti-austerity graffiti), others explored new visual and linguistic 'grammars' to articulate alternative narratives of the present and the future, and other conceptions of subjectivity and agency to those on which the crisis-rhetoric hinges. This talk offers a glimpse into how street art can become a dynamic cultural force and theorizing agent, triggering a crisis in established modes of representing the crisis and its subjects.

Dr. Ansgar Mohnkern (University of Amsterdam):

Money Crisis - Goethe's "Faust" and the Monetary Order

Since the abolishment of the Bretton Wood agreement in the 1970s, the international monetary system works on the basis of free-floating currencies that lacks a 'real' referent (traditionally gold). While the new monetary world order unleashed a dramatic cyclical structure of 'boom and bust' resulting in a series of financial crises (of which the crisis in 2008 was only the latest, while certainly not the last one), the situation is by no means unprecedented. In fact, Goethe's *Faust II* gives a famous analysis of a monetary order that shifts away from a 'gold standard', while perpetuating a crisis of both economic as well as political dimension. The talk will focus on reading Goethe's analysis as a contribution to the understanding of modern financial (and political) crises in general.

Dr. Christian Kirchmeier (University of Groningen):

The Crisis of the Republic of Letters. Reflections on Poetic Critique after Koselleck

European literature has often been considered as a means of critique to address or even solve social crises. In his book "Critique and Crisis" (1959), Reinhart Koselleck strongly rejected this notion with regard to the "pathogenesis of modern society". According to Koselleck, the republic of letters was just as much the cause of the crisis of modernity as it was an attempt to overcome it. The talk will reflect on the highly ambiguous relation between crisis and literature.