

# **The Poetics of Politics**

## **Textuality and Social Relevance in Contemporary American Literature and Culture**

**Leipzig University  
June 20-22, 2013**

Contemporary American literature has rediscovered politics. As scholars who proclaim an end of postmodernism, a post-postmodern turn, maintain, literature around the turn of the millennium has broken with the 'narcissist' playfulness of postmodernism and demonstrates a rekindled interest in addressing issues of social concern, an interest that it pursues by literary strategies nonetheless deeply shaped by postmodern aesthetics.

This 'political turn' in literature coincides with what we may call a 'poetic turn' in politics. Political (sub-)cultures show themselves increasingly conscious of their own textuality, which shows, for example, in their strategic development and use of specific genres of political 'writing' (in old as well as new media); in the extent to which political texts draw on the means and techniques of literature; or in instances of textual self-reflexivity.

This conference aims to interrogate the 'poetics of politics' at this crossroads of contemporary American literary and political cultures. It wants to shed light on the textual dynamics by which texts in and across the realms of literature, culture, and politics negotiate political issues and assert their own social relevance. Accordingly, we are interested in case studies of contemporary American texts of any genre or medium—fictional or non-fictional, literary, in film, television, new media—that address questions like:

- What textual strategies—genre conventions, modes, tropes, master-narratives, etc.—enable political discussions in these texts? How are the texts' politics shaped by the textual strategies they employ? What critical terminology is productive for exploring this interplay between textuality and political semantics?
- How do texts manage their social, political referentiality in the light of their own fictionality or factuality?
- In how far are contemporary metatextual strategies, spectacularly employed in new genres such as the mockumentary, politically charged?
- How does the aesthetic dimension of texts amplify/undermine/subvert their political trajectory?
- Does this renewed proximity of politics or ethics to literature and other forms of cultural expression imply any new complications?
- What do new theoretical frameworks like ethical criticism or ecocriticism, or new developments in, e.g., the minority studies contribute to an exploration of the poetics of politics?

Please submit a short abstract and biographical information to [mail@selbst-bewusste-erzaehlungen.de](mailto:mail@selbst-bewusste-erzaehlungen.de) by 20 November 2012. The conference is part of a joint Dresden-Leipzig research initiative. Please see [www.selbst-bewusste-erzaehlungen.de](http://www.selbst-bewusste-erzaehlungen.de) for more information.