

Negotiating Human Rights: Aesthetic, Cultural, and Political Framings

Arr. by *Humanistic Studies of Human Rights*

Aarhus University, Denmark, January 23.-25. 2014

The aim of this conference is to focus on the multiple ways that human rights are framed through specific aesthetic, cultural and political discourses. The conference will facilitate an interdisciplinary discussion about this in a both historical and contemporary context.

The conference is motivated by the increasing use of human rights in global, political and cultural contexts and the simultaneous lack of consensus regarding their precise definition and function. Human rights discourses are used in the construction of cultural identity and political communities but at the same time, a question is raised regarding the nature of communality: we are all human beings but what is human about human rights and how does this human nature qualify us as bearers of rights within specific cultural and political contexts?

We invite papers on the rhetorical, aesthetic, and mediatised framing of human rights: how do human rights-narrations work, how are they used to create empathy, what is the form and function of *atrocity tales* or tales of victimhood, what is the relation between documentary and fictional strategies, how do we talk about human rights in political debates and in television shows, literature, movies, on the net etc.? There is a constant translation-process going on between law, politics, and culture. This 'translation' is not pure and neutral but motivated and based on selection and rhetorical choices. This conference focuses on the changes – losses and gains – of concrete mediatised human rights discourses in specific contexts.

Furthermore, in order to understand the function of human rights discourses, this conference invites papers that focus both on historical and contemporary contexts. If we talk about human rights in a very strict sense in the western world, they only go back to 1948 but all modern human rights discourses draw on a much older heritage. In order to understand the implications and constitution of modern human rights discourses we welcome studies on their development within global history, from antiquity till today and from different parts of the world.

Confirmed keynote-speakers:

Costas Douzinas (Professor of Law and Director of Birkbeck Institute for Humanities, Birkbeck, University of London)

Susan Maslan (Associate Professor, Dep. of French, University of California, Berkeley, USA)

Joseph Slaughter (Associate Professor, Dep. of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University, New York, USA)

Lena Halldenius (Professor of Human Rights, and Director of Human Rights Program, Dep. of History, University of Lund, Sweden)

We invite papers on the following (or related) subjects:

- Cultural contextualizations of human rights
- The relationship between universality and particularity in concrete human rights discourses
- Political uses of human rights
- Human rights in intercultural dialogue in a global world
- Styles of human rights: rhetorical framings, narrativization, aesthetization, fictionalization
- Human rights in art, literature, movies etc.
- Human rights and global history
- Human rights in different media
- Gains and losses in the process of 'translation' from one field of knowledge to another.

Fee: Participation fee will be 100 Euros.

Paper-suggestions should be no more than 400 words and should be sent before September 1, 2013 to Karen-Margrethe Simonsen, Associate Professor, Comparative Literature, Director of Humanistic Studies in Human Rights, Aarhus University, Denmark: negotiatinghumanrights2014@hum.au.dk