

The Shaping Power of Risk: Literature, Culture, Environment

Since the 1980s, one of the most productively employed categories of social and cultural analysis has been the category of "risk." While concepts of risk point toward a whole spectrum of notions that range from chance and probability to loss and threat, the culturally shaping power of current environmental risks has largely been the result of a concept of risk as threat: the nuclear risk, toxic risks, the risk of global warming and climate change, the risk of species extinction, risks such as earthquakes, tsunamis or volcanic eruptions have all figured as perceptual and cognitive schemata in situations that are characterized by the openness and uncertainty of the future.

Based on the premise that cultural artifacts such as literary texts, films, or video games participate in processes of risk communication in very specific ways, this conference intends to broaden our understanding of the culturally shaping power of risk by featuring keynote lectures and papers that investigate the participation of a variety of texts in the processes of environmental risk communication.

Conference organization: Prof. Dr. Sylvia Mayer and the teams of BIFAS and the Chair of American Studies/Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

Sponsors



Bayreuth Institute for American Studies (BIFAS)

The Bayreuth Institute for American Studies (BIFAS) is an interdisciplinary research institution at the University of Bayreuth that promotes research and teaching activities with a focus on North America (the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean) and the circumatlantic world. It coordinates the work of scholars from a variety of disciplines, currently bringing together members of four of the six faculties of the University of Bayreuth.

Founded in 2010, BIFAS is part of the unique research environment that the University of Bayreuth provides with its programmatic support for interdisciplinary research cooperation and its dedication to international cooperation. The university's six faculties and its many research centers are devoted to a number of highly innovative interdisciplinary research areas such as ecology and the environmental sciences and humanities, comparative cultural studies and intercultural processes, and African Studies. BIFAS provides a forum that serves to promote and channel new and existing creative synergies in this rich and dynamic research environment.

For further information visit the BIFAS website at www.bifas.uni-bayreuth.de/en/index.html



THE SHAPING POWER OF RISK

International Conference
Friday 24 February 2012 - Sunday 26 February 2012



Program

Friday, 24 February 2012

12.00 -14.00 **Registration** (GW 1, 2nd floor, S 120)

14.00 **Conference Opening**

Prof. Dr. Sylvia Mayer (BIFAS,
University of Bayreuth)

– Topic Area 1: “Environmental Risk
and Genre” –

14.30 **Keynote Lecture**

Ursula K. Heise

(Stanford University)

Species at Risk: Narrative, Red Lists,
and the Biodiversity Crisis

16.00 **Coffee Break**

16.15 **Panel I**

Chair: Christian Schmidt (University of Bayreuth)

Christine Gerhardt (University of Bamberg)

“We know nothing of the universe we move
through”: Risk, Nature, and Migration in
Contemporary American Poetry

Oliver Lindner (University of Kiel)

Broken Futures, Broken Narratives: the
Construction of Environmental Dystopias in
Recent Anglophone Fiction

Nicole Schröder (University of Paderborn)

“It’s theoretically possible”:

Risk, Sacrifice, and Disaster Narrative
in American Film

20.00 **Conference Dinner**

Saturday, 25 February 2012

– Topic Area 2: “Environmental Risks and the
Affective/Emotional Power of Texts” –

9.00 **Keynote Lecture**

Colin Milburn

(University of California, Davis)

Green Gaming: Video Games and the Affect of
Environmental Risk

10.30 **Coffee Break**

11.00 **Panel II**

Chair: Claudia Deetjen (University of Bayreuth)

Alexa Weik von Mossner

(University of Fribourg)

Ecotopia at Risk: Troubling Feelings in
James Cameron’s *Avatar*

Axel Goodbody (University of Bath)

Affect and Risk in German Environmental Novels

13.00 **Lunch Break**

– Topic Area 3: “Environmental Risk and the
Moral Power of Texts” –

14.30 **Keynote Lecture**

Bronislaw Szerszynski

(Lancaster University)

Recasting Forecasting: Climate Change
Ethics, and the Future

16.00 **Coffee Break**

16.30 **Panel III**

Chair: Sylvia Mayer (University of Bayreuth)

Rüdiger Kunow (University of Potsdam)

Bodies at Risk: Susceptibility and Enhancement
as Cultural Narratives of Personhood

Karin Höpker

(University of Erlangen-Nürnberg)

A Sense of an Ending – Post/Humanism
Narratives of Risk in Margaret Atwood’s
Oryx and Crake

Dinner

Sunday, 26 February 2012

9.00 **Panel IV**

Chair: Jeanne Cortiel (University of Bayreuth)

Anna Thiemann (University of Münster)

Risk and Responsibility in
Elizabeth Stuckey-French’s

The Revenge of the Radioactive Lady

Holger Kersten (University of Magdeburg)

“Try it at our risk”: The Promises, Profits,
and Problems of Radium in the Early Decades
of the 20th Century

Coffee Break

11.30 **Conclusory Roundtable**

**“Literary and Cultural Studies and
the Shaping Power of Risk”**

Ursula K. Heise, Colin Milburn,

Bronislaw Szerszynski

Chair: Sylvia Mayer

12.30 **End of Conference**

**The keynote lectures and the panels all take place in
room S 120 (GW 1, 2nd floor).**