

Visual History in the Twentieth Century: Bodies, Practices and Emotions

Spring School of the ERC-project "The Healthy Self as Body Capital"

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Max Planck Institute for Human Development (Center for the History of Emotions)
Berlin, Germany

The twentieth century is the century in which modern mass media irreversibly permeated and transformed nearly all aspects of politics and society. This can be exemplified by the impact that film and television had on medicine, health policy and education, from early medical films that made new images of illness and therapy accessible to health experts, to the "Kulturfilme" of the 1920s that propagated a modern conception of the body to cinema-goers, to educational films produced by the state for use in schools, to ads informing people about AIDS prevention and health talk shows on TV. Visual mass media are constantly reflecting and shaping our conceptions and perceptions of the body and health, as well as the bodily and health practices we engage in. For their part, they are often influenced by economics. Seen in this way, a history of the body, embodiment and emotions in the twentieth century is also a history of the mass media.

The spring school **Visual History in the Twentieth Century: Bodies, Practices, and Emotions** invites participants to engage in five days of intensive discussion on the relation between the history of the body, body politics, and film and television in the twentieth century. The spring school will take a transnational perspective and focus particular on developments in Germany, France and Great Britain.

The spring school is organized as part of the research project "The Healthy Self as Body Capital: Individuals, Market-Based Societies, and Body Politics in Visual Twentieth Century Europe" funded by the European Research Council (ERC) and led by Christian Bonah (University of Strasbourg) and Anja Laukötter (Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin).

The ERC project researchers, in Berlin and Strasbourg, are working on a comparative history between Germany, France and Great Britain and the transformative processes that led to a shift from comprehensive healthcare in the "welfare state" model to new ideas of human capital and the healthy body as a form of individual capital. In particular, they focus on the economic factors driving these transformations. The primary source material is visual mass media, from historical non-fiction films to television shows and internet videos. Amateur films are additionally considered, which offers a point of comparison and potentially reveals a different medial logic.

The project draws, in part, on the work of Michel Foucault and his critique of the modern state. Working from the hypothesis that our understanding of the body in an era of neoliberalism is formed by neoliberal theories, the project aims to historicize the developments that have led to this. It asks how the rise of the ideology of the "healthy self" can be better described and historically situated, and inquires into the social, political, and economic contexts that have contributed to and furthered this development.

The project focuses on four topics:

- The history of food and nutrition;
- The history of exercise and sports;

- The history of sexuality and reproduction;
- The history of dependence and addiction (medicine, drugs, alcohol).

The spring school seeks to familiarize young scholars with the topic “Visual History in the Twentieth Century: Bodies, Practices, and Emotions” and bring them into contact with experts in the field. It will introduce them to relevant theoretical approaches and they will discuss source material together in order to tackle questions like:

- What theories and approaches of media analysis and historical contextualization are useful for work on this topic?
- What primary and secondary sources are relevant and how can we get access to them?
- How can we identify and analyze emotions, forms of subjectivation, and perceptions of the body in historical media?
- What can we say about audiences and their use and reception of the various media discussed?

The spring school includes talks and workshops with experts, a field trip to the technical collection of the Potsdam Film Museum, a roundtable discussion, and film viewings. Further, the springschool will benefit from a cooperation with the French Institut National de l’Audiovisuel (INA) and will be attended by the director of the INAthèque, Claude Mussou. Additionally, Prof. Dr. Frank Bösch (Director of the Center for Historical Research (ZZF), Potsdam) will hold a keynote lecture on “War, Films, and Emotions, 1895–1960.” Participants will also be invited to present on their own research projects.

The spring school will be held at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin. It will be held in English. Participants can apply for funding for travel costs, and housing can be provided if needed.

Interested master’s students, doctoral students, post-docs, and scholars in the fields of modern history, the history of medicine and science, and film studies, media studies, and communications are invited to apply with a cover letter and CV.

Please send applications and any questions to Philipp Stiasny: stiasny@mpib-berlin.mpg.de

The deadline for applications is 18 February 2018 and applicants will be contacted by 26 February 2018. Early applications are welcome!

The ERC project will send out a call for applications for doctoral positions in spring 2018. Participation in the spring school is not a requirement for applying, but it will give those interested a chance to become familiar with the project’s work and source material and meet the scholars working on it.

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