

Forms of Life in the Eighteenth Century (Bloomington, 12-14 May 10)

VOLTAIRE

12-14 May 10)

The Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies at Indiana University is pleased to announce the ninth Bloomington Eighteenth-Century Workshop, to be held on May 12-14 2010. The workshop is part of a series of annual interdisciplinary events that has been running since 2002, with 12-15 scholars presenting and discussing papers on a broad topic in a congenial setting.

Our topic for 2010 is "The Forms of Life." We'd like to consider the implications of the 18th-century debate about the nature of life and the turn to vitalist proposals of an animating force, broadening beyond the discourses of physiology and the natural sciences, where many of these ideas originate, to consider their connections elsewhere in the period. Why does the idea of a life force emerge (or re-emerge) at this moment? How are living forms distinguished from each other? What sorts of decisions create the hierarchies of animate forms (and, for instance, what gets called "animal")? Which lives matter and which don't? How might we reconsider eighteenth-century answers to these questions in light of twenty-first-century rethinking of life and animality? How is the line drawn distinguishing the living and the non-living, animate being and thing? Participants might also consider the implications of contemporary thinking about life for the discourse of political economy, in its treatment of populations, masses, collective life and the role of hunger in history and also for developments in the religious sphere. One might also turn to the numerous Pygmalionic fantasies of animation in art and criticism, from "tableaux vivants," illuminated statuary, life-like automata and still lives to critical pronouncements on the living body as the highest achievement of true art.

Papers might address topics such as:

- organisms and organization, self-organization
- animals and animation
- the life sciences and the social sciences

- the culture of sensibility and irritative physiology
- monstrosity
- aesthetic and living form
- the "life" of the imagination
- competing notions of life

The workshop format will consist of focused discussion of four to six papers a day, amid socializing and refreshment. The workshop will draw both on the wide community of eighteenth-century scholars and on those working in this field at Indiana University-Bloomington. The workshop will cover most expenses of those scholars chosen to present their work: accommodations, travel (up to a certain limit), and most meals.

We are asking for applications to be sent to us by Friday, January 8, 2010. The application consists of a two-page description of the proposed paper as well as a current brief CV (no longer than three pages).

Please email or send your application to Dr. Barbara Truesdell, Weatherly Hall North, room 122, Bloomington, IN 47405, Telephone 812/855-2856, email voltaire@indiana.edu <<mailto:voltaire@indiana.edu>>.

Papers will be selected by an interdisciplinary committee. All submissions will be acknowledged by e-mail within a fortnight: if you have not received an acknowledgment by Jan. 22, 2010, please contact Barbara Truesdell or Dror Wahrman.

Further information can be found on our website, <http://www.indiana.edu/~voltaire/>, or you can find us on Facebook <<http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Center-for-Eighteenth-Century-Studies-at-Indiana-University/129787018885>>.

For additional details and queries please contact the director of the Center, Dror Wahrman, Dept. of History, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405, e-mail dwahrman@indiana.edu <<mailto:dwahrman@indiana.edu>>.

Reference:

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