

## The German Graphic Novel (GSA, Washington DC, 1–4 Oct 15)

German Studies Association Conference, Washington, DC, Oct 1–04, 2015

Deadline: Jan 19, 2015

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German Studies Association Conference

Panel Series: The German Graphic Novel

This Announcement contains Calls for Papers for the Three Panels in the Series:

1. The German Graphic Novel I: History (bsterli@uark.edu)
2. The German Graphic Novel II: Adaptations (kutch@kutztown.edu)
3. The German Graphic Novel III: Pedagogy (enijdam@umich.edu)

### 1. The German Graphic Novel I: History

The medium of comics provides unique opportunities for exploring the concepts of time and history. Within comics, history can be a central concern of the narrative or serve as background to more personal stories; it can be investigated, augmented, challenged, or reimagined both visually and textually. Historical comics approach and represent history in a number of modes – from non-fiction to fantastical – and across genres – (auto)biography, comedy, historical fiction, alternative history, crime and war fiction, science fiction, etc.. In recent years, historical comics have grown to constitute a large subset of German comics production, most notably in conjunction with major anniversaries of the Fall of the Berlin Wall (2009, 2014). The flood of largely critical works on the GDR, but also the near absence of German comics on the Holocaust, raises questions about the function of history for the German comics scene and individual artists. This panel invites submissions on a range of topics related to the role of history in German comics today. The panel will focus primarily on recent production, but papers that address history as a concept in earlier works will also be considered.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Representations of Germany/Austria/Switzerland's history in comics
- Interpretations of key historical events (World Wars I and II, the Holocaust, 1968, the Wende, etc.)
- Depictions of historical figures
- The importance of perspective/ Alternative perspectives (feminist, queer, multicultural)
- Reimagining/Reframing/Retelling/Reinventing history
- History as a construction
- Time in comics
- Nostalgia
- Memory (fallibility and /or reliability), accuracy, accountability, honesty, truth
- Myth

Please send abstract submissions of 350 words as well as a short bio to Brett Sterling (bsterli@uark.edu) by January 19th, 2015.

## 2. The German Graphic Novel II: Adaptations

Over the past decade in Germany, several independent, and more recently larger publishing houses, have produced an astonishing number of graphic novel titles, as is evident from their increasing presence at venues like the Frankfurter Buchmesse. In fact, comic adaptations of literary works have comprised an impressively diverse sub-genre, encompassing works by ETA Hoffmann, Franz Kafka, Thomas Bernhard and Arthur Schnitzler, to name a few.

Various angles of debate have often accompanied adaptations of classic or literary works, including their fidelity to the source text, the artistic liberties that the new authors take, and the aesthetic implications of these creative decisions. However, these arguments have largely structured the study of film adaptation; and only a minimal amount of scholarship has appeared to date on graphic or comic adaptation.

Research in the field of German-language comic adaptation is even more limited, yet the increasing prevalence of these adaptations on the German comics scene and their aesthetic innovations merit serious critical inquiry. This panel seeks to establish an analytical framework for discussing comic adaptations and to strengthen and expand this field of scholarship.

Possible topics may include but are not limited to:

- Literary Criticism and the Comic Adaptation
- Illustration versus Adaptation
- The artistic merits of graphic adaptations of classic or literary German-language texts
- The artistic challenges of graphic adaptations of classic or literary German-language texts
- The role of interpretation in creating adaptations
- Comic adaptation as a form of literary translation
- Reevaluating the German-language literary canon
- Graphic adaptations of German film
- The role of graphic novel adaptations in German visual culture

Please send abstract submissions of 350 words as well as a short bio to Lynn M. Kutch (kutch@kutztown.edu) by January 19, 2015.

## 3. The German Graphic Novel III: Pedagogy

While commenting on the sequential art of Rodolphe Töpffer, the Swiss father of modern comics, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe made an insightful observation on the potential of the medium. He reflected that “[i]f Töpffer did not have such an insignificant text before him, he would invent things which would surpass all our expectations”. Since that fateful remark in 1830, Goethe’s prediction has become a reality, and comics have developed into a well-respected medium that is becoming established within the Academy. However, while scholarship continues to illustrate the pedagogical value of integrating comics in literature, history and language syllabi, the role of graphic narrative in the contemporary university classroom is still contested, and German Studies is slow to adopt pedagogical trends in Comics Studies. This panel seeks to incite conversation on this lacuna in our discipline and interrogate the emergent role of Comics Studies in teaching German history, culture, literature and language. With a specific emphasis on pedagogy, we are soliciting papers that engage debates on the merits and challenges of integrating comics into the

German Studies classroom.

Possible topics may include but are not limited to:

- Comics Studies in German Studies: interrogating the position of Comics Studies in the Academy and advocating for its place in German Studies
- Methods of Reading: strategies for reading and analyzing graphic narrative
- The past, present and future of graphic novel scholarship
- Teaching Language with Comics: integrating comics into the language classroom, L2 success stories and syllabus suggestions
- Teaching History with Comics: using graphic novels to teach German history
- Using Comics to Teach German Classics (Faust, Im Westen nichts neues, Flughunde)
- Teaching Medium Specificity: cross-comparisons with comics, literature and film (Die Welle, Die Wolke)

Please send abstract submissions of 350 words as well as a short bio to Elizabeth (Biz) Nijdam (enijdam@umich.edu) by January 19, 2015.

Please note that presenters must be members of the German Studies Association (see [www.thegsa.org](http://www.thegsa.org) for membership information), and no one individual may give more than one paper or participate in more than two public roles.

Reference:

CFP: The German Graphic Novel (GSA, Washington DC, 1-4 Oct 15). In: ArtHist.net, Jan 6, 2015 (accessed Aug 4, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/9162>>.