

## **AFFINITIES: AESTHETICS, ETHICS, POLITICS**

**APRIL 10–12, UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY (SUNY)**

### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

The “Affinities” conference will explore the complex intersections among aesthetics, ethics and politics in contemporary cultural theory. The conference hosts an interdisciplinary discussion of the ways in which aesthetic sensibilities, moral concepts, and modes of political life are mutually formed, inviting papers that address these intersections across a range of historical periods. How does the concept of “sympathy” or “moral sentiment” play out, from Rousseau, Adam Smith and David Hume, through Romanticism and the rise of the sentimental novel, to more contemporary forms “sentiment” that ambiguously straddle the domains of moral, political and aesthetic thought? What is the relation between affect, moral judgment, and political “rights”? What relations can be traced between the borders of “taste” (aesthetic taste and disgust), legal forms of judgment (pornography, free speech, dress codes, acceptable or illicit behavior), and the shifting political norms that often adjudicate these borders by reference to forms of belonging, identity and community? What is the meaning of “cosmopolitanism” from the late Enlightenment to the present, and what conceptions of “community” are possible in the face of cultural difference, and in view of the poverty of both nationalism and moral universality? How is the concept of “subjectivity” configured in the intersections of esthetic pleasure, moral belief and political identity? Is it the same subject who feels, believes and belongs? Do aesthetic forms contest moral ideas, or produce them? Is there really a difference between art and propaganda? What are the historical dynamics or logics by which each of these domains – aesthetic, ethical and political – undergoes rupture, transformation, revolution? Which contemporary thinkers are best equipped to cast light on these issues?

We invite papers from a variety of disciplines that speak to the above questions. The conference will take place April 10–12 at the State University of New York–Albany. Titles and abstracts of 300 words should be sent to Charles Shepherdson ([cshepherdson@albany.edu](mailto:cshepherdson@albany.edu)) by Feb. 10, 2014.

The conference is organized by the Liberal Studies Program at the University at Albany, in collaboration with the Department of English, and with the support of the Upstate New York Humanities Corridor Project, a Mellon Foundation initiative directed by the Humanities Center at Syracuse University.