

## CALL FOR PAPERS

University of Trier – University of Manitoba – University of Greifswald  
Biennial Partnership Conference

June 7-9, 2012  
University of Trier, Germany

### **"Food, Health, and Fitness: A Comparative View on Social Practices and Cultural Images in Canada and Germany"**

Hopes for a good, carefree, and long life characterize human civilizations across time. Among the richer nations, Canada and Germany are currently focusing on how health, food, and fitness interact. In both countries, political debates on the feasibilities of the respective health insurance systems abound, and the implications of population aging (based on chronically low reproduction rates) are discussed, while the necessary measures (especially in an immigration-reluctant Germany) remain hard to effect; the media propagate images of (eternal) youth in relation to active – and regenerative – lifestyles centered around regular workouts and conscious dieting, with proliferating guidebooks (e.g. *Food Matters*) and online tutorials, manuals and magazines (e.g. *Fit For Fun* or *Men's Health*), while ubiquitous cooking TV shows sumptuously overfeed their audiences. In such a scenario of overlapping and clashing social practices and cultural images, it is no wonder that agile markets sell a multitude of mass-consumption products.

Against this background, our international, comparative and multi-disciplinary conference interrogates central issues, such as: Who defines health and to what ends? Is health across the individual life course merely an ideal, maybe a hoax, or a possibility based on responsible and conscious conduct as well as appropriate genes and bank account? What roles do politics, media, society and individual play in shaping health matters, play in either perpetuating or deconstructing health beliefs? Are these health beliefs still tied to national self-imaginings (e.g. – 'Canada, the healthy northern nation'), and how do such projections correspond to reality? How efficient are discourses on food and fitness in light of increasing obesity, lack of physical agility among our youth, and growing social demands for always flexible workers? If we are what – and how – we eat, what do our past and present forms of food and cooking, the patterns of taking in and digesting the many types of nourishment we (believe we) need, reveal about us culturally? What do literature and the arts reflect and represent? What is the relationship between consuming and generating fitness? Finally, what does it take for a nation to become truly healthier and fitter beyond the mere images, the costs and projections? The symposium will bring together internationally distinguished scholars from the social sciences, ethnology, economics, environmental studies, physical education, philosophy, political science, security studies, Canadian and German literatures, linguistics and film studies. The Conference at the University of Trier (Germany) will be held in partnership with the Universities of Manitoba (Canada) as well as Greifswald and Marburg (both Germany).

Paper proposals should be sent to Dr. Markus M. Müller ([markus.m.mueller@uni-trier.de](mailto:markus.m.mueller@uni-trier.de)) or Dr. Lutz Schowalter ([schowalter@uni-trier.de](mailto:schowalter@uni-trier.de)) no later than February 29, 2012. It is expected that some funding will be available to offset travel and accommodation costs.