

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

**AMERICAN PORNOGRAPHIES:  
CONSUMERISM, SENSATIONALISM, AND VOYEURISM IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT**

**Annual MA-Level Graduate Student Conference at American Studies Leipzig  
Leipzig, 1-2 April 2011**

Although conventionally associated with sexuality alone, 'pornography' is most productively understood more broadly as the often sensationalist commodification of individual acts and features. In this sense, it can serve as a prism, a new focalization, when scrutinizing recent changes in consumerist dynamics. In the realm of actual pornography, increasingly popular 'porn 2.0' portals like *YouPorn* now allow formerly 'passive' consumers to become 'active' producers through user-generated content, exemplifying a more general shift towards content production in consumer culture. Defining pornography more broadly, networks like *Facebook* can be similarly understood as commodifying (or 'pornographing') personal relationships by recasting them in the logic of voyeurism and exhibitionism. These are only some of the developments relevant to the study of the multidirectional, heterogeneous, and transnational field of consumerism, which can be revisited and investigated most productively with an interest in different notions of 'pornography.'

The previously understudied and often silenced subject of pornography thus brings new impulses to the study of consumerism, particularly in light of the rising influence of globalization and the Internet. We therefore invite proposals that investigate the intricacies of pornography as well as those that frame 'pornography' in the broader context of consumerism and related notions like sensationalism, voyeurism, materialism, or exhibitionism. Accordingly, contributions could address questions such as: Which new challenges to the concept of pornography have arisen since feminism has complicated simplistic notions of pornography as always being oppressive? How has consumerism, in turn, reconfigured notions of gender, 'race,' and sexuality? How do shifting understandings of consumption create transnational and individual narratives or turn previously unidirectional phenomena like Americanization into reciprocal processes? In what ways is consumerism both vilified and cherished—in terms of individualism, modernization, social mobility, power dynamics, or materialist re-readings of the American Dream? In how far do terms like 'food porn,' 'torture porn,' and the 'pornography of violence' complicate understandings of 'consuming,' e.g., information, religion, and war through sensationalist depictions in the media and pop culture?

Calling for an interdisciplinary angle, we welcome contributions by MA-level students from literary and cultural studies, sociology, political science, history, minority studies, gender studies, media studies, and all other fields related to American studies. Proposals on pornography could focus, for instance, on political censorship of allegedly 'obscene' art, on how 'queer' pornographies differ in their depictions of gender or their projections of gazes, or on interracial constellations in pornography as a perpetuation of (stereotypical) cultural fantasies. We also encourage contributions that incorporate a broader understanding of 'pornography.' These papers could range, for example, from investigating the visual commodification of ideologies or bodies (e.g. in advertising) to discussing the 'pornographication' of the youth; from reading suburbia—both in fiction and as a social reality—as conformed, commodified living to looking at global affairs through the lens of 'political pornography.'

As a platform to discuss the complexities of 'pornography' and consumerism within the wide spectrum of academic contexts, our conference invites all interested MA-level students. Please note that there will be **no conference fee**. Also, to encourage nationwide and international participation in our conference, we will be able to award several **travel and accommodation grants** to students in Europe, ranging from about 100€ to 250€.

Please submit your proposal (max. 300 words) for a 20-minute presentation with your name, current level of graduate study, affiliated university, and email address to [asl-gradconference@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:asl-gradconference@uni-leipzig.de) by **January 6, 2011**. We will notify all authors by January 17, 2011. For further information, please refer to <http://americanstudies.uni-leipzig.de/asl-gradconference2011> or contact us via email.