



Call For Papers

41st Annual International Jean Gebser Society Conference

Rice University

October 13-15, 2011

Instrumental Communication as Cultural Expression

As the amount of “communication” explodes, we are forced to ask what communication means in contemporary culture. In order to examine this phenomenon we must consider how communication in all forms has changed. From this contemplation the question arises: How has the atomization of contemporary culture changed what we understand as communication?

Instrumental communication has efficient and deficient manifestations, the latter alters modern codal-signalic communication, the efficient transfer of unambiguous code for the transference of information, into signs and symbols marshaled solely for effect. Not only are the messages rendered "dead" or uninterpretable, but so are the targets of our messages. They are objectified and acted upon. Today's public "compliance gaining" messages have affected our semantic environment profoundly.

In many arenas, communication seems to have become an end in itself. For example, the political process has become the campaign process. Deliberation has become stump speech. The 24-hour news cycle has created the need for “news” to fill the 24 hours, especially “breaking” news. Debate seems to be increasingly self-referential. Debates are rarely “resolved.” This is the case for political debates, cultural debates,

academic debates, and intercollegiate debates. Meta-debate dominates. Rather than make the difficult choices, we opt for the debate about the debate. Who will win a given election is more about the contest than the outcome. Ideological debates are not about achieving an outcome but rather about the hypertrophic individualism of continuing the debate. Additional examples are easily found in the technological realm, finance, fashion, and many other areas.

Research Presentation

As a more focused conference, scholars will have an opportunity to describe their research in greater detail than the typical conference setting. Each presentation will last approximately 25 minutes with a 10-minute question and answer session. The research discussions are conducted with an air of scholarship and collegiality.

The Society invites submissions that address the conference theme, though we welcome papers unrelated to the theme that demonstrate a clear relevance to the works of Jean Gebser. Because the conference is multidisciplinary, submissions are not limited to papers only. Poetry, films, paintings, and performances that explain, extend, or demonstrate a Gebserian theme are welcome.

For a more complete reference of the work of Jean Gebser, please visit gebser.org. If you have a question about how your research might fit into the conference theme or Gebser's approach, please contact David Worth at dworth@rice.edu.

Submissions

Scholars are invited to submit abstracts of roughly 500 words or completed paper for consideration for presentation by July 15, 2011.

Electronic submissions are preferred and may be sent to dworth@rice.edu

Otherwise, please send submissions to:

Dr. David Worth
MS 36
Rice University
6100 Main St.
Houston, TX 77005
USA

Conference Information



The 2011 conference will be held at Rice University, located in the heart of Houston, TX. With approximately 3000 undergraduates and 2300 graduate students, the university is known for its friendly atmosphere, world-class scholars, and unique student body. The university is minutes from downtown Houston by train or car, across the street from the Texas Medical Center (one of the largest medical complexes in the world), a block from Houston's world-class Museum District, and an hour from the Texas Gulf Coast.

More information about lodging and transportation will be forthcoming.