



Mid-America Humanities Conference

Downward Spirals?

Thinking about “Crisis” across the Disciplines

A forum for interdisciplinary student research

Saturday, April 3, 2010
University of Kansas

While the experience of uncertainty is common in the modern world, the first decade of the twenty-first century has witnessed events that have contributed to a growing sense of crisis: 9/11 and the ensuing “global war on terror”; the Indian Ocean tsunami, Hurricane Katrina and the ongoing phenomenon of climate change; and, most recently the collapse of global economic markets. In this context it is useful to critically reflect on the social, political, and cultural implications of “crisis” and “catastrophe.”

We invite proposals from undergraduate and graduate students engaged in humanistic inquiry in humanities, social sciences, and arts fields for papers addressing the theme or problem of crisis in historical and/or contemporary contexts. Relevant questions for consideration include, but are not limited to:

- What are the contextual factors that determine whether an event is interpreted as a “crisis” or as “normal”?
- In particular crises, what is the relationship between danger and opportunity?
- In what ways do new cultural forms and media emerge as responses to crises and catastrophes?
- What is the relationship between crisis and transformation more generally?
- How do trends in human migration and the proliferation of media bring about crises of identity?
- What kinds of shifts in gender, race, class or other identities accompany large and small-scale crises?

Interested students are invited to submit 250-word abstracts by Friday, November 15, 2009 to Christopher Forth (cforth@ku.edu) and Marike Janzen (mjanzen@ku.edu).