



Dear Colleague:

As an initiative group for the 2011 seminar, ***Character Assassination: the Art of Defamation throughout the Ages***, we would like to invite you to participate in this interdisciplinary event. It will take place at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, July 21-23, 2011. We aim to cover both travel expenses and accommodations.

We believe this will be the first event of this kind. A small group of participants will discuss personal attacks — a well-known and widely practiced yet not well-researched phenomenon in social life and politics — from antiquity to the present. Opponents commonly attempt to portray their adversaries as weak, untrustworthy, or otherwise falling short of political, professional, or moral standards. Slander, mockery and insinuation have been used to achieve political and personal goals. How does character assassination work? When and why do character ‘assassins’ decide to deploy their fatal weapons of facts and fiction? Why do people fall so easily when they are under character attack? We will discuss these and other questions in an attempt to understand the anatomy of character assassination. The participants will try to combine the historic facts with an analysis of new cases, their origins, and consequences.

We anticipate each participant to present a paper (30-40 minutes) followed by a discussion. Papers are accepted in English, German or French. Several brief summative round tables are also planned. A website dedicated to the seminar will be launched in the fall. We also plan to publish the materials of this seminar-colloquium. We will be happy to provide more details.

Please let us know if you would be interested in participating.

Sincerely,

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