

AICED-20

THE 20th ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST LITERATURE AND CULTURAL STUDIES SECTION

CALL FOR PAPERS

The English Department of the University of Bucharest invites proposals for the Literature and Cultural Studies section of its 20th Annual International Conference:

Truth(s) and Alternative Facts

Dates: 7–9 June, 2018

Venue: The Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures,
Str. Pitar Mos 7–13, Bucharest, Romania

Confirmed keynote speakers:

Prof. Mircea Dumitru (University of Bucharest)

Prof. Michael Hattaway (New York University, London)

Prof. Mihaela Irimia (University of Bucharest)

Prof. Domnica Rădulescu (Washington and Lee University, Lexington)

In the mid-twentieth century Erich Auerbach saw his *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* published, a book he had been working on for years and to which he could give appropriate time and energy only in exile in Istanbul, having fled Germany under Nazi threat. It is intriguing and relevant now to think of this intellectual and, more widely, human odyssey in terms of truth(s) and lie(s). Here was an author dedicated to the lifelong study of reality and its representation accused of telling lies and ousted from a university chair for such ominous behaviour. More exciting still to think that Auerbach completed his cornerstone work in the absence of his working library, amazingly quoting from memory chunks of Western canonical works in the original! Everything had been stored in his erudite mind.

Mind indeed is the basic concept when it comes to truth and facts, and, of course, to truths and alternative facts. (And the connection between *mind* and lying is recalled in the transparent etymology of such Romance verbs as It. *mentire*, Sp. *mentir*, Port. *mentir*, Fr. *mentir*, and Ro. *a minți*.) It is what specialists in philosophy, religion, and art operate with as a rule. Engaged in identifying (the) truth under linguistic, cultural, or societal vestments, in search of *nuda veritas*, they carry on a tradition originating in Aristotle and his aesthetic theory, yet traceable further back to the Pre-Socratics, whose enquiry into truth and truth-related matters remains fundamental and foundationalist.

Lies propagate, circulate in human communities and may eventually become established by general agreement as truths. Once a lie is told, it needs more lies to make it acceptable and the snowball effect it can undergo may lead to *common wisdom* dislocating *epistemic* premises. Theories have been erected along the centuries to consolidate and stabilize these and similar issues, among which: *substantive theories* (e.g. *correspondence*, *coherence*, *consensus*, *constructivist*, and *pragmatic*) and *minimalist or deflationary* (e.g. *performative*, *redundancy*, *pluralist*).

We invite papers focusing on, yet not limited to, the following:

- truth in relation to reality
- truth and the self (as individual or collective identity)
- truth-telling as a compelling religious commandment, ethical constraint, political responsibility
- Relative truth and liberal democratic practice
- Truth versus opinion, absolute certainty versus sufficient assurance (cf. John Stuart Mill)
- lies and lying as scapegoat strategy
- lying in the face of the “naked truth”
- forms and samples of truth’s historical embeddedness (from *aletheia* to “by troth” commitment, to *verum ipsum factum*, to simulacra etc.)
- faith-based vs. empirically based truth
- lying as sin, failure or punishment
- truth and half-truths
- faithfulness, fidelity, veracity as virtues or constraints
- truth and “regimes of truth” and epistemic shifts (cf. Foucault)
- the theatricality of truth procession/precession (cf. Baudrillard)
- essentialist vs. man-made truth(s)
- the “dust in their eyes” manoeuvre and political success
- post-Enlightenment consequences (from the moral law and the cold stars in the sky to corner-bending conclusions regarding human communities)
- the high tech “democratization” of truth(s) and lie(s)
- the epistemic way-out (truth in terms of knowledge, belief, conviction, acceptance, perspective etc.)
- *trompe l’oeil* effects
- white lies
- lies meant to protect, spare and shield
- the explanation of reality by myths and legends
- strategies of mendacity and alternative truths practiced in authoritarian politics
- truth and lies as weapons or irresponsibility in journalism
- lies as investigative steps to uncovering the truth (police work, literature, etc.)
- truth and fidelity in adaptation
- historical fiction and the question of truth
- continuity and/or discontinuity in the sequence of modern truths propounded in the neo-classical, romantic, realist, modernist, postmodernist paradigms.
- truth in religions

Conference presentations should be in English, and will be allocated 20 minutes each, plus 10 minutes for discussion. Prospective participants are invited to submit abstracts of up to 200 words. Proposals should be in .doc or .docx format, and should also include name and institutional affiliation, a short bio (no more than 100 words), and e-mail address. Proposals for panel discussions (to be organized by the participant) will also be considered.

We look forward in particular to hosting a panel organized by the Romanian Studies Association of America, applying a Romanian Studies perspective to aspects of the conference theme.

A selection of papers from the conference will be published in *University of Bucharest Review* (ISSN 2069–8658; listed on Scopus, EBSCO (Literary Reference Centre Plus), CEEOL, and Ulrichsweb; CNCS category B). See the guidelines for contributors at <http://ubr.rev.unibuc.ro>.

Deadline for proposals: **25 March 2018**

Please send proposals (and enquiries) to conf.eng.litcult@lils.unibuc.ro

The conference fee of **50 euro** (or **200 lei** if paid in Romanian currency) is payable in cash on registration, and covers lunches and refreshments during the conference, but not evening meals.

For further details and updates, see:

http://www.unibuc.ro/depts/limbi/literatura_engleza/conferinte.php .

(Enquiries regarding the Linguistics section of the conference, which will be running at the same time, should be sent to aiced20th@gmail.com.)

We look forward to welcoming you in Bucharest,

The Organizing Committee:

Dr Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru

Dr Alina Bottez

Dr James Brown

Antonia Gîrmacea

Dr Eliana Ionoaia

Dr Dragoş Manea

Prof. Mădălina Nicolaescu

Dr Anamaria Schwab

Dr Ioana Zirra

Advisory Board:

Dr Nazmi Ağıl (Koç University, Istanbul)

Prof. Bart Eeckhout (University of Antwerp)

Prof. José Manuel Estévez-Saá

(University of A Coruña)

Dr Felicity Hand

(Autonomous University of Barcelona)

Prof. Michael Hattaway (New York University, London)

Prof. Carl Lavery (University of Glasgow)

Prof. Thomas Leitch (University of Delaware)

Dr Chris Louttit (Radboud University, Nijmegen)

Prof. Domnica Rădulescu

(Washington and Lee University, Lexington)

Prof. Kerstin Shands (Södertörn University)

Prof. Nicolas Tredell (University of Sussex)