

## **Embattled Heavens: The Militarization of Space in Science, Fiction, and Politics**

*– Call for Papers –*

Berlin, 10–12 April 2014

Deadline for proposals: 1 December 2013

For much of the twentieth century, outer space has been envisioned as not only a site of heavenly utopias, but also the ultimate battlefield. Science fact and science fiction celebrated visions of progress and renewal. Astrofuturists imagined a future in which the wonders of space exploration would unite humankind and eliminate violent conflict worldwide. Nonetheless, many of the projects and preoccupations central to Western space thought, such as the efforts to establish a military base on the moon, are testaments to the darker and more violent side of astroculture. Defense interests have historically been driving factors in the development of space technologies. Military and civilian aspects have, however, often been dealt with separately in debates about humanity's widely anticipated future in the stars.

Concentrating on weapons, warfare, and violence, this conference examines the military dimensions of astroculture in the period between 1942 and 1990. While space history tends to distinguish between military and civilian aspects, this conference examines the ways in which both have been linked in the legitimization and popularization of spaceflight. By highlighting the militarization of extraterrestrial frontiers and conquest in politics and popular culture alike, 'Embattled Heavens' addresses the complex processes that oscillate between peaceful and aggressive characteristics of human endeavors in outer space. It aims to decentralize a historiography that often focuses on the two space superpowers, the US and the USSR. While the Space Age is usually associated with the Cold War, this conference complicates established narratives by integrating Western European and global perspectives. Examining astropolitics, technoscientific practices, and science fiction, our goal is to reconceptualize the history of outer space with a view toward its military dimensions.

The conference will be structured around the following five core themes: (1) **ROCKETS AND DOMINATION** looks at military spaceflight and its political applications from the V-2 rocket to satellite surveillance, problematizing the 'dual use' character of space technology. (2) **HUMAN SPACEFLIGHT AND HEROIC UTOPIAS** explores the interplay of romantic images and technoscientific narratives in legitimizing the development and use of space technology. (3) **SPACE MACHINES** emphasizes the collaborative role of both technology and human actors in developing ever-new capabilities of space assets and envisioning the possibilities for space-based wars. (4) **BODIES IN SPACE** focuses on agency and experience in relation to aspects of physical power and violent practices and the constant preoccupation with the possibilities of extraterrestrial life. (5) **ENVISIONING SITES OF WAR** examines the importance of visions articulated in science fiction and their influence on international politics, from Wernher von Braun's space station scheme to Ronald Reagan's Star Wars program, stressing the tensions between depictions of the heavens as a utopian site eliminating all future wars, and as a battlefield of cosmic dimensions.

Our approach is transdisciplinary, and we welcome proposals for twenty-minute presentations from scholars of all fields, including history, political science, science and technology studies, and cultural studies. Confirmed speakers include Bernd Greiner (Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung), Michael J. Neufeld (Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum) and Michael Sheehan (Swansea University). Please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words together with a short CV (up to two pages) before 1 December 2013 to Daniel Brandau and Tilmann Siebeneichner at [astrofuturismus@fu-berlin.de](mailto:astrofuturismus@fu-berlin.de). All lodging and meals during the conference will be covered. A limited number of grants will be given to contributors to cover their travel expenses.

### **Address**

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### **Conference Venue**

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