



# History by Generations

## Generational Dynamics in Modern History

University of Göttingen (Göttingen) & German Historical Institute  
(Washington)

Date: December 9-11, 2010.

Venue: German Historical Institute  
(Washington).

Deadline: February 26, 2010.

Proposals should include an abstract of the paper and a curriculum vitae in English. The proposals should be submitted via email (preferably in pdf format) to Ms. Baerbel Thomas (thomas@ghi-dc.org) and Sandra Kirchner (skirchn@gwdg.de).

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The concept of generations figures prominently in both popular culture and historical studies. New departures in politics, culture, and economics are often associated with a specific generational group. This applies to youthful (and male) activists who seem to share some extraordinary experience as well as similar political ideas, social habits and cultural practices and who manage to stand in for the cultural hegemony of their views. It also includes distinctions based on generational affiliations, which feature prominently in media, consumer culture, migration, and everyday-life. Much of post-war German history, e.g., has been explained by the succession of the 45ers, the 68ers, and the 89ers. The concept of generations is similarly prominent in American public discourse, as evidenced by the prevalence of catchphrases like the “greatest generation”, “the baby boomer generation”, and “generation X”. As an analytical category, the concept of generations has played an important part in immigration studies; the distinction between first- and later generation immigrants is central to the field. Now that the importance of the categories gender, race, and ethnicity has been clearly established in the social sciences and humanities, it is worth asking how far the concept of generations cuts across those categories.

The graduate program on Generations in Modern History at the University of Göttingen has begun a critical investigation of the assumptions that lie behind the concept of generations and the definition of generational dynamics. It is giving particular attention to “generation building” and the mobilization of “generational meaning”, be it in political conflicts and “culture wars” or at critical historical junctures. To explore the issues raised by the concept of generations in transatlantic perspective, the Generations in Modern History program and the German Historical Institute are jointly organizing the conference *History by Generations: Generational Dynamics in Modern History*.

The organizers welcome proposals on topics such as:

- The role of generational assumptions in the making of cultural identity, the distribution of economic resources, the orchestration of political conflicts, and the making of historical tradition.
- The formation of generations and the development of generational conflicts within social groups, with particular attention to migration and family socialization.
- The changing culture of subjectivity and community in educational patterns and social habitat and their influence on the emergence of a “generational sense” of experience and self in modern times.
- The succession of generational styles in different spheres of activity, such as, for example, popular culture, consumerism, business management, and product development.

The conference will specifically test the applicability of the concept of generations in the comparative study of national cultures over time. Proposals (two pages maximum) are welcome from both young and established scholars from different countries and disciplines such as history, business and economic history, sociology, cultural studies, literature and anthropology. Topics may range over a variety of fields, like memory and experience, war and migration, management and corporate governance, youth and counterculture, families and intellectuals, education and consumption.