

For Instance . . . : Eighteenth-Century Exemplarity, Its Practice and Limits

The Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies at Indiana University is pleased to announce the Twelfth Bloomington Eighteenth-Century Workshop, to be held on May 8-10, 2013. The workshop is part of a series of annual interdisciplinary events that has been running since 2002, with 12-15 scholars presenting and discussing papers on a broad topic in a congenial setting.

Our topic for 2013 is “For Instance. . . : Eighteenth-Century Exemplarity, Its Practice and Limits.” In the seventeenth century, cultural authority could often be established through the skillful negotiation of examples past and present. Through this process, men and women could aspire to exemplary status, as the present instance in a long tradition of examples. One could “stand in” for others. This relationship of “standing-in-for,” or exemplarity, played a central role for institutions of learning, knowledge, and morals; for the political and religious order; and for individuals’ understanding of history and art. In this workshop, we want to explore what happens to these cultures of exemplarity, modeling, and emulation in the long eighteenth century

Exemplarity is not a simple relationship. For instance: on the one hand, in the case of absolutism, the king aimed to become an exemplary “one” who encompassed all others for whom he could, in turn, become an ideal model. On the other hand, exemplarity could also invoke a radical equality, that of the “sample,” where everyone can be an example for everyone else. In the light of such complexity, we ask what happens to the culture of the example in the eighteenth-century as new ways of understanding the correlation of “one case” and “all the others” gain prominence, as discourses of individuality, probability, experience, experiment, representation, radical democracy, and revolution hold sway. If the past stops serving as an example for the present, if the one no longer stands for all others, what alternative modes of thought serve? What happens when examples become unruly? Or should we think instead of transmutations and reinventions in some broader culture of exemplarity?

The focus of our Workshop will be an age when presumably exemplarity was under pressure and examples became unruly. We want to examine the practices and limits of exemplarity in different areas, such as politics, religion, fiction, and the so-called experimental sciences. Papers may explore (but are not limited to) the following questions:

- How does “standing in for something” shift in meaning throughout the eighteenth century?
- To what extent did eighteenth-century men and women think that the experiences of one person could apply to others? Does the language of experience change through the long eighteenth century? How does the discourse of probability inflect that of experience or example?
- To what extent do political actors stop modeling their acts on past examples? If they do, what replaces the rhetoric of exemplarity in political discourse?
- Can Christ and the saints still be “examples” in an era when exemplarity is only one of many modes of teaching?

- In the worlds of design and technology, how do constructed models or patterns – of buildings, terrain, or ships; fabric, furniture, or china – alter or expand the concept of the example?
- Amazons, Hottentots, wild children, mad women, sea monsters, and extraordinary beasts of all sorts: what can one make of these unruly examples?
- In what ways do eighteenth-century narratives –fiction or history – engage the work of exemplarity? To what extent can characters and storylines provide good or bad examples?
- How does the logic of exemplarity, rooted in tradition, relate to categories such as novelty, modernity, or innovation?

The workshop format will consist of focused discussion of four to six papers a day, amid socializing and refreshment. The workshop will draw both on the wide community of eighteenth-century scholars and on those working in this field at Indiana University-Bloomington. The workshop will cover most expenses of those scholars chosen to present their work: accommodations, travel (up to a certain limit), and most meals. We are asking for applications to be sent to us by Monday, January 7, 2013. The application consists of a two-page description of the proposed paper as well as a current brief CV (no longer than three pages). Please email or send your application to Dr. Barbara Truesdell, Weatherly Hall North, room 122, Bloomington, IN 47405, Telephone 812/855-2856. Papers will be selected by an interdisciplinary committee. All submissions will be acknowledged by e-mail within a fortnight: if you have not received an acknowledgment by Jan. 22, 2013, please contact Barbara Truesdell or Mary Favret.

Further information can be found on our website, <http://www.indiana.edu/~voltaire/> , or you can find us on Facebook. For additional details and queries please contact the director of the Center, Mary Favret, Dept. of English, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405, e-mail favretm@indiana.edu