

Current Issues

in North American Studies and Cultural Studies

Lecture Series | Winter Term 2016-2017

NORTH
AMERICAN
STUDIES
PROGRAM

Prof. Stefani Engelstein, Ph.D.

Duke University

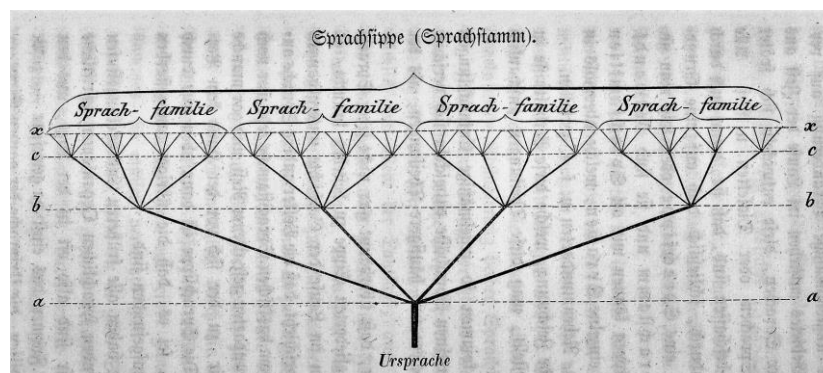
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Split Genealogies

The History of Philology between Natural Sciences
and Humanities

Tuesday, January 31, 2017 | 6:00–8:00 pm

Room A, IAAK, Regina-Pacis-Weg 5



In the eighteenth century, Europeans began to classify historical epistemological systems genealogically, turning contemporary terms in these systems into siblings of varying degrees. For instance, within a “language family,” a “sister language” is a boundary object whose differentiation enables, and yet simultaneously calls into question, the definition of any particular language. The sibling soon became the privileged figure for negotiating collective and individual identity in literature and philosophy (see Goethe’s *Iphigenie auf Tauris*), and Darwin turned naturalist epistemology on its head by endorsing this same contingency when he genealogized biological classification. To reinforce threatened boundaries, linguistics and evolutionary theory repudiated merger as “monstrous” and thus participated in an affective rhetoric also implicated in policing the genealogical boundaries between population groups.

Stefani Engelstein is an Associate Professor in Duke University’s Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures. Her research focuses on science and literature of the long nineteenth century in Germany and Great Britain. She is the author of *Anxious Anatomy* (2008) and *Sibling Action: The Genealogical Structure of Modernity* (forthcoming with Columbia UP). Currently, she is a visiting scholar at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin.