2 April 2020

2 PHD POSITIONS IN SNSF PROJECT
THE BEACH IN THE LONG TWENTIETH CENTURY

Starting 1 August 2020, for four years

Professor Virginia Richter (Principal Investigator) and Dr Ursula Kluwick (Senior Researcher) are looking to select two doctoral students (with an MA or equivalent degree) interested in pursuing their PhD in Modern English Literature within the framework of the Swiss National Science Foundation research project The Beach in the Long Twentieth Century at the University of Bern, Switzerland.

The project
The beach is an important space in Western literature. Ever since the rise in popularity of the seaside holiday, the beach has been depicted as a site of leisure, sensuous enjoyment and play, clearly distinguished from and often in a dialectical relationship with industrialised and metropolitan spaces of work. However, the prevalent conception of the beach as a liberating, and even paradisiacal, space mainly connoting leisure overlooks the continuous presence of violence and death, specifically the fact that beaches were theatres of war in both the First and the Second World War. If beach holidays from the 1950s onwards indicated post-war prosperity – but also, in the naming of the bikini after a site of nuclear testing, pre-war anxiety – in the last decades of the twentieth century and even more so since the millennium the paradisiacal connotations of the beach have begun to disintegrate. Natural and human-caused disasters such as tsunamis, oil spills, nuclear tests and rising sea levels as harbingers of climate change signal the fragility of littoral space. The arrival of large numbers of refugees on the European coasts of the Mediterranean has transformed the beach into a contested legal and political zone.
Despite its significance as a spatial frame in fiction, travel writing and memoirs, however, the beach has played a relatively minor role in scholarship until fairly recently. This project seeks to redress this neglect, focussing on a period in which the beach has undergone dramatic changes, both in everyday culture and in literary and artistic representations: the ‘long twentieth century,’ dating roughly from 1890 to the present. The project aims at making a significant contribution to Littoral Studies, an emerging sub-field of the Blue Humanities.

The position
We offer two fully funded PhD positions according to the salary range of the SNSF (http://www.snf.ch/en/researchinFocus/newsroom/Pages/news-180305-conditions-for-employees-funded-under-snsf-grants.aspx) for the duration of the project, 1 August 2020-31 July 2024. Applicants are expected to pursue their PhD under the direction of the PI and/or the SR, and to take residence in Bern. They are expected to dedicate their time to their own doctoral dissertations, and to the joint research of the project team. To be eligible, you must meet the University of Bern’s admission criteria for doctoral study: www.zib.unibe.ch/content/internationals/bewerbung/doktorat/index_eng.html. Non-Swiss candidates will be responsible for applying for relevant work permits/visas.

Applications are particularly welcome in, but not restricted to, the following areas of Littoral Studies:
- The Postcolonial Beach
- The Beach and War
- The Beach as an Ecological Space

To apply, please submit by 12 May 2020 the following documents as a single PDF:
- a cover letter, outlining your motivation to apply
- a full Curriculum Vitae/Résumé
- the names and email addresses of two academic referees (no letters needed at this point)
- a research proposal (a minimum of five pages) with bibliography
- a representative sample of your academic writing in English (e.g. your MA thesis or a substantial stand-alone paper/essay).

Please submit your applications electronically, in a single PDF document, to virginia.richter@ens.unib.ch and ursula.kluwick@ens.unibe.ch.