From the Brain to Human Culture: Intersections between the Humanities and Neuroscience

An interdisciplinary conference sponsored by the Comparative Humanities Program at Bucknell University to be held at

Bucknell University
April 20-21, 2007

Confirmed Plenary Speakers:

Prof. Andy Clark,
Dept. of Philosophy, University of Edinburgh

Prof. Michael Gazzaniga
Dept. of Psychology, University of California at Santa Barbara

Papers and/or panels are solicited for an interdisciplinary conference examining the intersections between recent work in the humanities and neurosciences. In the past decade, the various branches of neuroscience (as well as linguistics, sociobiology and other fields) have begun to take up the ethical, artistic and behavioral questions that were previously thought to be the province of scholars in the humanities and to challenge the centrality of learned human behavior in these and other areas. Scholars such as Simon Baron-Cohen, Marc Hauser, and Steven Pinker (among many others) have begun to provide scientific accounts of ethical phenomena and neuroscientific research has coined new subdisciplinary fields such as “neuroethics,” and “neuroaesthetics.” Scholars in the humanities, in their turn, have begun to produce critical-philosophical accounts of the claims of these scholars and new work on subjects such extended consciousness, artificial intelligence, robotics, and the effects of digital culture on human subjectivity and cultural production. The purpose of this conference will be to explore the status of this important debate at the present time.

We especially encourage papers that cross conventional disciplinary lines and/or that directly address the scholarly, institutional, and practical consequences of the ways in which the humanities and sciences are interacting at present. Papers from across the whole range of both the humanities (art, religion, literature, philosophy, film studies, history, languages, etc.) and neuroscience and its related fields (psychology, cognitive science, physiology, animal behavior, organismal and evolutionary biology, etc.) are welcome.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the panels and audience, we ask that potential presenters be aware that they will not just be addressing specialists in their field. Selected papers from the conference will be considered for publication in an edited book in the Aperçus: Histories Texts Cultures series from Bucknell University Press.

Among the possible themes for papers and panels are:

- can new disciplines like "neuroethics" work alongside traditional humanistic modes of enquiry or is conflict between the two inevitable?
- what have the humanities done to respond to these new developments in the sciences?

- what new configurations of the relationship between the sciences and the humanities could be made possible by this new work?

- how are questions of culture (human activity in the world) being related to the activities of the mind and brain in new and productive ways? And vice versa?

- how does neuroscientific study affect the way we understand the reception of books, films, and digital media?

- how are “rationality” and “emotion” seen as part of human decision making process by humanists and neuroscientists?

- how has recent research in evolutionary biology and psychology affected our perceptions of cultural productions?

Please send a 500-word abstract and CV as an email attachment to:

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Submissions via regular mail will be accepted if necessary. Comments and inquiries to the above address are welcome.