

**Nature, Nurture, Economy:  
The History of Sleep in Modern Times  
Conference Göttingen January 26-28,  
2012**

**Conference Venue:**

**SUB Göttingen, Historisches Gebäude, Papendiek 14,**

**37073 Göttingen**

The general statement that the need for sleep and the concrete process of sleeping can be seen as immutable, timeless anthropological constants seems at first glance to make any historical research about sleep pointless. However, there are many good reasons to choose sleep as a topic of historical research. The perception of sleeping, its status, its regime, and its practices are inextricably bound up with the structures of the society in which the sleeper lives.

Beginning in the eighteenth century, the conditions for sleeping fundamentally changed as a result of industrialization, altering the organization of labour and everyday life. This transformation of society brought with it essential changes in the perception and management of time, transforming the experience of day and night. Simultaneously, various experts began to scrutinize the phenomenon of sleep based on new methods and ideas and tried to incorporate the “secret” of sleeping into the “rationalized” world. From its inception, one of the main purposes of „sleep research“ has been to prepare the individual human being for the demands of the developing Industrial Society: Sleep disorders were a threat to happiness and healthiness, but also to the performance and productivity of individuals and society as a whole. Therefore, experts as well as the sleepers themselves have sought rules for “good”, “natural”, “necessary”, “efficient”, and “productive” sleep.

At the same time, sleep resisted any attempts to measure it, to control it, or even to understand it. On the contrary, sleep has always offered to the individual the possibility of disengaging from the surrounding society. Thus, the history of sleep not only helps us to analyze more precisely the processes of “economization” and “subjectivization” that characterize modern societies, it also reveals the recalcitrant and irrational moments within the history of Modernity, which is often still spun as a story of progress and successful rationalization. This interdisciplinary conference will address the methodological challenges of a “history of sleep” as well as discuss the cultural circumstances of sleep, the social and economic conditions that have shaped sleep and the individual sleeper in the context of the concrete historical situation.

## Program

### Thursday, January 26

18.00-20.00 h     **Evening Lecture** (ZHG 003, Platz der Göttinger Sieben 5, 37073 Göttingen)

Roger Ekirch:        Is Insomnia History? The Modernization of Sleep

20.00 h            **Welcome**

### Friday, January 27

9.30-9.45 h        Hannah Ahlheim:    Introduction—Nature, Nurture, Economy: The History of Sleep in Modern Times

#### **Panel I: On the Edge of a „Modernization of Sleep“?**

Moderator: Richard Hölzl

9.45-10.30 h      Ingo Uhlig:            What Can Sleep Do? Eighteenth-century Answers

10.30-11.15 h     Brigitte Steger:      „Early to bed, early to rise?“—Sleep Patterns in Pre-modern Japan

11.15-11.45 h     Coffee Break

11.45-12.30 h     Philipp Osten:        „In Sleep as in Death“: Folk Religion, Medicine, and Politics in a Case Study on Somnambulism in 1815

12.30-14.00 h     Lunch

#### **Panel II: Under Control—Out of Control? Governing Modern Sleep**

Moderator: Nina Fischer

14.00-14.45 h     Benjamin Reiss:      “Government in Every Thing”: Controlling Sleep on the American Slave Plantation

14.45-15.30 h     Sonja Kinzler:        Traditional Dietetics and Modern Research, Bourgeois Morals and the Industrializing Economy: Sleep as a Scientific and Social Issue in the Long Nineteenth Century

15.30-16.00 h     Coffee Break

16.00-16.45 h     Marie Guthmüller:    Spending and Economizing Life During Sleep and Wakefulness in the Works of Italo Svevo

17.45-18.30 h     Hans-Walter Schmidt-Hannisa:  
Aesthetical Pleasures of the Night. Ludwig Klages’  
Metaphysics of Sleep and Dream

**Conference Dinner**    19.00 h            Restaurant „Bullerjahn“ (Markt 9, 37073 Göttingen)

## **Saturday, January 28**

### ***Panel III: Night-time Sleep and the Economics of the Night***

Moderator: Maik Tändler

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| 9.30-10.15 h  | Philipp Simonnot: | Economics of the Night   |
| 10.15-11.00 h | Hannah Ahlheim:   | Rhythms of Work, Rhythms of Rest: Economizing Sleep in Germany (1930-1970) |
| 11.00-11.30 h | Coffee Break      |  |

### ***Panel IV: Concepts of Sleep: Modern Sleep Research and Sleep Medicine***

Moderator: Dirk Schumann

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| 11.30-12.15 h | Matthew Wolf-Meyer: | Wither Naps?, Or Nathaniel Kleitman, the Consolidation of Sleep, and the Historiography of Emergence |
| 12.15-13.00 h | Thomas Penzel:      | Motivation of Sleep Researchers and Sleep Physicians   |
| 13.00-14.30 h | Lunch               |  |

### ***Final Discussion***

Moderator: Roger Ekirch

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| 14.30-16.00 h | Nature, Nurture, Economy: The History of Sleep in Modern Times |  |
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*The Conference is generously sponsored by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation.*