

FRI | 16 OCTOBER 2020

6 THE LIMITS OF CRINGE

09:00 Compassionate Cringe Humour  
James Walters (Birmingham)

Cringe and Sympathy:  
The Comedy of Mental Illness in *Flowers*  
(2016-2018)

Linda Heß (Augsburg)

*After Life*

Cringe Between Resistance  
and Resilience Discourse

11:00 Cornelia Wächter (Bochum)

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee Break

7 NAUGHTY CRINGE!

11:30 »A Futile and Stupid Gesture«  
The American Comedy of (Bad) Manners  
Thomas Morsch (Berlin)

Rubbing It the Right Way:  
Cringe and Sex Positivity in Julia Davis  
and Vicki Pepperdine's  
*Dear Joan and Jericha* (2019-)

13:00 Philip Jacobi (Passau)

13:00 Concluding Discussion

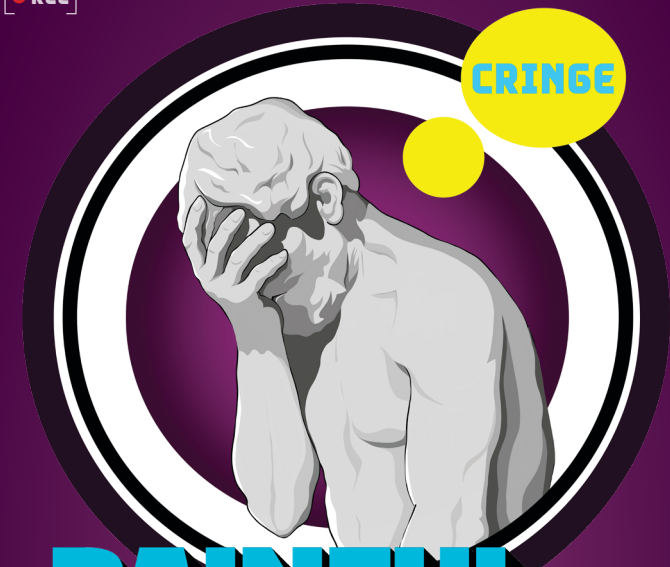
13:30 End of Symposium

PAINFUL LAUGHTER

Media and Politics in the Age of Cringe

This conference brings together scholars from a variety of disciplines (including sociology, neuroscience, film and media studies) to investigate the phenomenon of *cringe* as a key symptom of the contemporary cultural landscape. Cringe experiences across the media articulate a deeply-felt discomfort, and they are linked to the inability to successfully adopt political correctness, and to changing attitudes in the cultural mainstream. Cringing involves the inability to extricate yourself (or to look away) from unpleasant situations, resulting in feelings of vicarious shame (*Fremdscham*), for example when watching diplomatic blunders committed by prominent statesmen or uncomfortable 'dare you' challenges on social media platforms. In the field of comedy, cringe humour produces the kind of 'unstable jokes' to be found in transgressive comedy formats that involve protected groups like ethnic minorities and disabled people, but the targets of the jokes are not always clear.

The conference will be rounded off by a Skype Q&A with director Robert Weide (*Curb Your Enthusiasm*). He specialises in cringe humour and has directed several documentaries on groundbreaking American comedians.



PAINFUL LAUGHTER

MEDIA AND POLITICS IN THE AGE OF CRINGE

14-16  
OCTOBER 2020

Schloss Herrenhausen  
Alte Herrenhäuser Str. 3  
30419 Hannover

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📅 <https://tu-dresden.de/slk/cringe>

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Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik  
Professur für Englische Literaturwissenschaft

## WED | 14 OCTOBER 2020

15:00 **Introduction to the Symposium**  
Wieland Schwanebeck (Dresden)

### 1 THE NATURE OF CRINGE

15:30 Vicarious Embarrassment:  
A Psychological Perspective  
Sören Krach (Lübeck)

17:00 Embarrassment, Humiliation, and Cringe:  
Problems in Attributing >Painful Laughter<  
Patrick Wöhrle (Dresden)

17:00 – 17:30 Coffee Break

17:30 **Introducing Robert Weide // Screening**

18:30 **Dinner**

20:00 **Q&A with Robert Weide**  
(director, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*)  
via Skype

## THUR | 15 OCTOBER 2020

continued

### 2 THE CRINGE CYCLE ON BRITISH TELEVISION

09:00 Cringe Histories:  
Harold Pinter and the Steptoes  
Jonathan Bignell (Reading)

Alan Partridge:  
Aha for the Middle Classes and the Media  
Anette Pankratz (Bochum)

David Brent's Eternal Failures in  
the *Office* Universe  
Eckhard Pabst (Kiel)

11:00 – 11:30 Coffee Break

### 3 THE CRINGE CYCLE ON AMERICAN TELEVISION

11:30 The Cringe and the Sneer: Structures of  
Feeling in Contemporary TV Culture  
Katja Kanzler (Leipzig)

Horsing Around:  
#MeToo and the Comedy of Discomfort  
of *BoJack Horseman*  
Nele Sawallisch (Eichstätt)

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch Break



### 4 CRINGE AGENDAS

14:00 Comedy's Ideological Kerfuffles:  
From #MeToo to Black Lives Matter  
Beck Krefting (Skidmore)

Painful Ambivalences:  
Political Humour in Right-Wing Subcultures  
Stefan Wellgraf (Hamburg)

»KILL THE PUPPIES!«  
Disability Humor and the Invective Mode  
in Comedy Live Performances  
Gesine Wegner (Leipzig)

16:00 – 16:30 Coffee Break

### 5 CRINGING ON THE STAND-UP STAGE

16:30 Cringe-Watching:  
Stand-up Comedy as a Serialized  
Misadventure  
Willem Strank (Kiel)

Killjoy Comedy?  
Feminism, Affect, Cringe  
Stefanie Schäfer (Vienna)

18:00 **Dinner**