

## **VID Colloquium**

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Vienna Institute of Demography  
Welthandelsplatz 2 / Level 2  
Nathan Keyfitz Library  
1020 Vienna

### **Roberta Maierhofer**

University of Graz

Wednesday, 10. May 2017  
2:00 - 3:00 pm

### **"Let's Talk about Age/ing! An Introduction to Anocriticism, and thus to Gender, Age, and Identity"**

Since the 1980s, scholars in the field of cultural gerontology have turned to cultural manifestations to investigate ideas about the meaning of identity within the life course. Cultural representations both reaffirm and subvert dichotomies of gender and age. Within the interplay between the fields of sciences and humanities, textual representations are also important sources that contribute towards understanding "identity in movement," the matrix of time and experience within the many contexts in which a person moves over the duration of a life. Examining reactions to personal crises and turning points as expressed in cultural representations provides researchers with unique insights into the way individuals construct their lives. Narratives play a central part in the construction of lives, as what is meaningful about ourselves is expressed through the telling of stories. Whereas on the public level these stories communicate the significance of particular lives and communities for society as a whole, on the individual level the telling of stories is a medium for the integration of lives, for explaining discontinuities as well as continuities. The fluidity of identity opens up possibilities to move beyond the defined position of self, and makes it not only possible but necessary to view family structure and relationships in new ways. In my presentation, I will suggest an anocritical approach in order to initiate an interdisciplinary discourse of the narratives and interpretation of lives. Growing old will then be seen in the larger context of fundamental human rights for both young and old, women and men..

### **About the presenter**

Roberta Maierhofer is Professor of (Inter)American Studies at the University of Graz, Austria, and Adjunct Professor at Binghamton University, New York. From 1999-2011, she served as Vice Rector for International Relations of the University of Graz. Since 2007, she has been directing the Center for Inter-American Studies of the University of Graz. Her research focuses on (Inter)American Literature and Cultural Studies, Feminist Literature and Research, Transatlantic Cooperation in Education, and Age/Aging Studies. In her publication *Salty Old Women: Gender, Age, and Identity in American Culture*, she developed a theoretical approach to gender and age/ing (anocriticism), and was thus in the early 1990s one of the first to define her work within the field of Cultural/ Narrative Gerontology.

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If you do not wish to receive invitations to our colloquia in the future, please send a short note to:

[vidnews@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:vidnews@oeaw.ac.at)