

## History, politics, and memory in the fictions of Juan Gabriel Vásquez

Ein Nachmittag für Doktorierende und Interessierte mit Juan Gabriel Vásquez

### Call for Participation

#### Friedrich Dürrenmatt Gastprofessur für Weltliteratur

Interdisziplinärer Workshop der Graduate School of the Humanities | GSH

**Leitung:** Juan Gabriel Vásquez, Schriftsteller Kolumbien / Friedrich Dürrenmatt Gastprofessor  
**Begleitung:** Dr. Stella Krepp, Universität Bern / Iberische und Lateinamerikanische Geschichte  
**Datum:** Dienstag, 16. Mai 2017, 14:15 bis ca. 18:00 Uhr  
**Raum:** t.b.a.  
**ECTS:** 1.5  
**Anmeldung:** Bis spätestens 28. April 2017 an: [toggweiler@wbkolleg.unibe.ch](mailto:toggweiler@wbkolleg.unibe.ch) sowie über KSL: <https://www.ksl.unibe.ch/> (Login mit UniBe-Account, Suche mit Titel)

#### Content

Since *The Informers*, published in Spanish in 2004, the novels of Juan Gabriel Vásquez have explored the hidden aspects of our relationship with the past. With different forms and methods, they have illuminated that crossroads where public events—history, politics, the social world—meet the private lives of individuals. Whether it is the lives of German immigrants in Colombia during World War II or the impact of the drug trade on the intimate realities of common men and women, Vásquez has always tried to go beyond prevalent versions of history to explore what goes on in the invisible areas of human experience. What is the nature of the always-tense relationship between historical fact and fictions about history? How do novels, that realm of ambiguity, respond to the demands pressed on us by the world of politics? What does literature reveal to us that we cannot know in any other way?

In this workshop, Vásquez will discuss these issues and their presence in his fiction. Students will read one of his five novels in the language of their choice, but the discussion will be held in English.

Course reading (one reading of your choice required):

*The Informers*, *The Secret History of Costaguana*, *The Sound of Things Falling*, *Reputations* and *La forma de las ruinas*.



**Juan Gabriel Vásquez** was born 1973 in Bogotá, Colombia and studied literature at the Sorbonne University in Paris. Before his breakthrough as a novelist, he gained acceptance both as the translator of Victor Hugo, John Dos Passos and E. M. Forster and as an essayist and columnist. His novels have been awarded many prizes and been published in sixteen different languages. Vásquez is regarded as one of the most important latin-american voices of his generation. In his novels Vásquez tells the story of Colombia as its has been marked by civil wars and drug wars. All his main characters are affected by this history of violence. In *The Informers* (2004) the reader learns about immigrants during the Nazi era, in *The Secret History of Costaguana* (2007) about Panama's secession. *The Reputation* (2013) is all about the power of a formidable cartoonist, *The Shape of Ruins* (2015) about political assassinations. In *The Sound of Things Falling* (2010) the protagonist's investigations into the death of a drug runner lead him to the Medellín cartel and legendary serial killer Pablo Escobar. Chosen from over 600 manuscript submissions, this novel has been awarded the Alfaguara Novel Prize, one of the most prestigious literary awards in Spanish language.