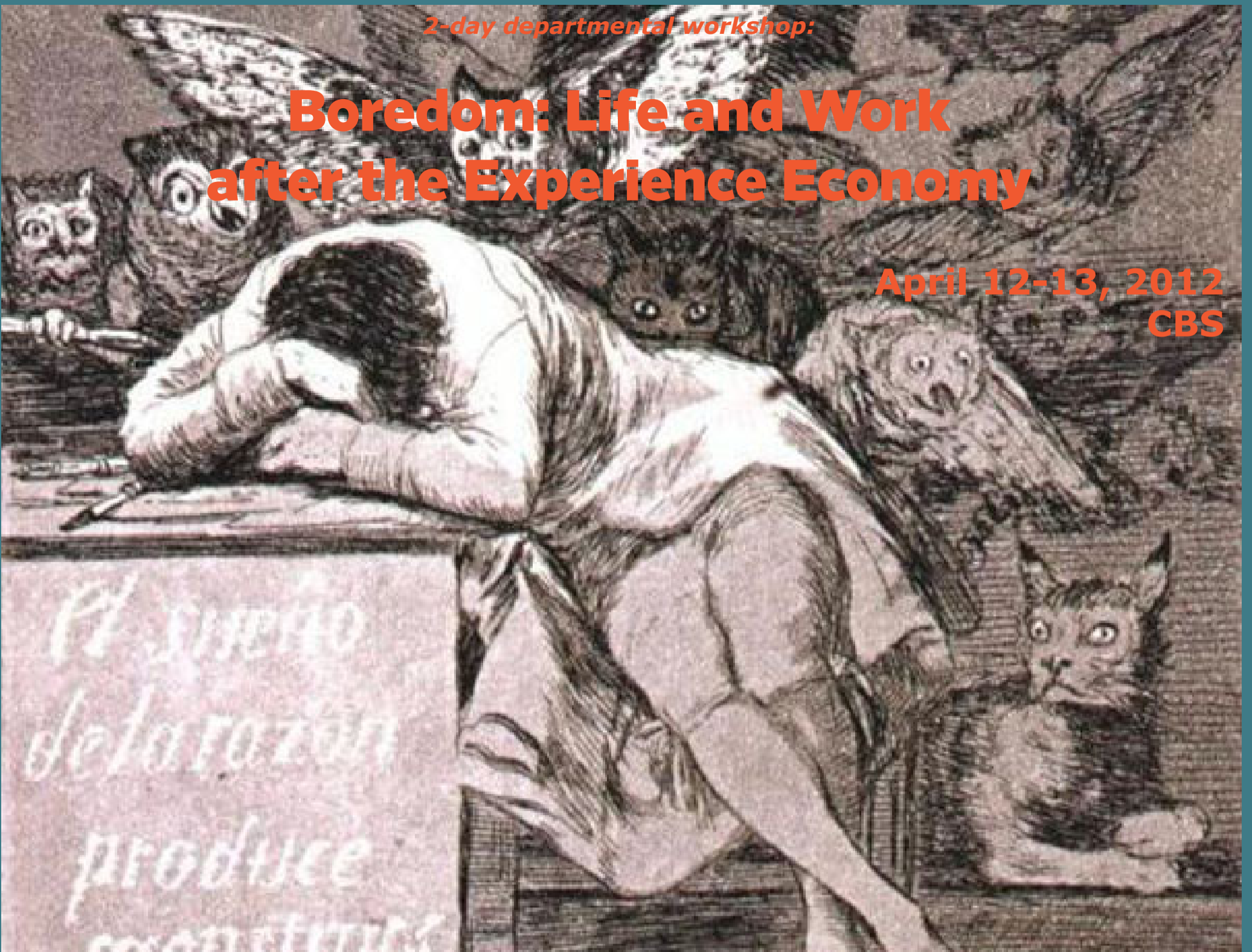


2-day departmental workshop:

Boredom: Life and Work after the Experience Economy

April 12-13, 2012
CBS



Research on work and organizations over the last decades has ever more often associated human attributes like 'innovation', 'creativity', 'choice' and 'playfulness' with positive organizational outcomes. In general, the ability of the working subject to perform as a 'self' has been viewed as an important resource and an asset to value creation.

In this light, it is surprising that boredom, which Søren Kierkegaard considered a despairing refusal to be oneself and called 'the root of all evil', has not received more attention from business and organization scholars. The studies that do exist, mostly within the fields of sociology and psychology, rarely touch upon the experience itself. Yet the experience of boredom as a cognitive stalemate appears as both cause and effect of individual and organizational failure. In boredom, identity becomes a problem and the wishes and the goals of the self are fundamentally put into question. In the words of Elizabeth Goodstein, one of our keynote speakers, boredom equals "an experience without qualities with the deficits of the self masquerading as the poverty of the world". The bored individual wishes (s)he had something to do, but does not know what; and in the failure of this ability to make demands comes to expect the miraculous arrival of an object that would again revive her/his activities.

On a socio-historical level, boredom is closely associated with the coming into being of consumer society. As part of a cultural vocabulary that provided a language for lived human discontent in a world without God, boredom arose in the 18th century and spread during the period of the industrial revolution. Today, as many of the traditional forms of subjective malaise are being subsumed under clinical diagnoses like stress, depression and anxiety, being bored has become a taboo like never before. In a culture that valorizes personal initiative, resolution and productivity, boredom turns both time and the question of what to do with it into a burden of guilt. Rendering idle time into a commodity, in turn, has paved the way for new and growing markets. Over the last decades, social networks like Twitter and Facebook have come to provide workplaces within workplaces. Through these 'new workplaces', employees invest their time at work when they do not know what else to do – or when they know exactly what they ought to do but cannot seem to get around to do it. Yet, at the same time, therapeutic practices that develop the individual capacity to wait and to focus, like yoga, meditation, mind-fullness and coaching have become integral parts of our everyday life.

This workshop will bring together scholars from various backgrounds to discuss a wide range of disciplinary perspectives on boredom, not only as an affect and individual state of mind, but as a culturally created, socially/collectively performed, historically changing, and philosophically reflected phenomenon. Because of the unique place occupied by this concept in the history of Western ideas and in contemporary consumer society, the workshop aims at highlighting the contribution of humanistic studies to management scholarship and the social sciences in general. The first day of the workshop will be dedicated to *theoria* – the contemplation of the concept. After a contextualizing keynote address, representatives of the sections of the Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy will respond to and challenge the theme from their specific perspectives, i.e. management and innovation studies; politics and public policy; business and economic history; and philosophy. These responses will be accompanied by discussion sessions. The second day will be dedicated to *praxis*, and is organized around a second keynote address, a practitioner perspective and contributions from organization theory.

For additional information about the workshop see the MPP webpage:

cbs.dk/mpp

or contact the organizers:

Associate Professor Stefan Schwarzkopf
ssc.lpf@cbs.dk

Assistant Professor Rasmus Johnsen
rj.lpf@cbs.dk

Please register to:
mpp-relations@cbs.dk

Hosted by:



Copenhagen Business School
HANDELSSHØJSKOLEN | KØBENHAVN



department of management
politics and philosophy

Center for Business History