**Call for Papers**

**The Ouroboros Effect**

The department of Comparative Literature at UC Berkeley invites submissions to our conference, entitled the “Ouroboros Effect,” to be held on **April 22nd-23rd, 2016**.  We are honored to welcome Professor Stathis Gourgouris of Columbia University as our keynote lecturer.

In the *Timaeus*, Plato describes the universe as ouroboros: a serpent fixed in a cyclical and unchanging path as it consumes its own tail. Although our species’s head was crafted in imitation of this perfect circular shape, our limbs and front/backward orientation distance us from the beauty of ouroboros.  Socrates stresses that our imperfections allow us access to “every sort of motion,” and—especially—the will to plow on forward.

These two forms of movement (the circular and linear) may be symbolic of intellectual and socio-political phenomena applicable to Plato’s era and beyond, into the contemporary age. On the one hand, the circular movement of the ouroboros could represent reason’s radi(c)al self-questioning, pre- and post-enlightenment. Yet the ouroboros has its monstrous side: although independent and self-sustaining, it is likewise auto-cannibalistic, simultaneously consuming and nourishing itself. The linear movement of the human body, on the other hand, evokes various literal and figurative forms of exile and border-crossing which characterize our species’s progress. Fleeing from the past and/or inebriated by rectilinear progress, the membered creature imagines a way out of the circle.  And yet, we too find ourselves trapped in cycles: exiles and returns, downfalls and comebacks; we are a species obsessed with renewal and rebirth.

We invite papers and presentations on any and all of the following topics, broadly conceived. Both academic studies and creative\* interpretations of all things serpentine and cyclical (et cetera) will be quite welcome:

- Exile, departures and returns, pilgrimage

- Serpents, monstrosity, (auto-)cannibalism

- Regeneration, rebirth, reproduction

- Ecocriticism, environmental renewal and destruction

- Cycles, reinterpretation

- Ritual, repetition

- Self-sacrifice

- Labyrinths

- Solipsism

- Hermeneutic circles

- Russian dolls / Chinese boxes

- Reason vs. skepticism, doubt, self-questioning

- Mirrors, reflections

Please send an abstract of 300 words or less, with a CV and short bio, to ucbouroboros@gmail.com, by **January 29thth, 2016**.

\* Guidelines for creative work: in lieu of an abstract, please send a sample of up to 2 pages, or a brief (up to 5 minute) audio or video file.  Prose, poetry, creative nonfiction, music, video and graphic art are all welcome.  We expect to close our academic panels with a reading (and/or gallery show) of creative submissions.