

International Conference: Biographically Grounded Literature  
in Late Hellenistic and Early Imperial Times

Bern, 24. – 26. Juni 2024

## Kasper Bro Larsen

**Title:** Jesus the Debutant: First Public Appearances in Ancient Biographies and Mark's Gospel.

**Abstract:** In the ancient Mediterranean world, first public appearances were agonistic display windows for up-coming young men. The *bioi/vitae* took advantage of the ancient fascination with spectacular debuts and turned it into a literary topos (the *parodos*). This presentation investigates this largely overlooked topos, arguing that Mark's Gospel contains both a Jesuanic debut summary (1:14–15) and a debut scene (1:21–28). Both scenes employ motifs from the conventional debut topos in markedly Markan ways (debut timing, patronage, famous first words, characteristic deed, etc.). Jesus's debut in Mark, moreover, contains militaristic power language comparable to the debut of Moses in Exodus and the foreign generals in, for example, Cornelius Nepos. In Mark, as in Plutarch and Suetonius, the main character's debut serves a programmatic function in the literary work as a whole.