



University of  
Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>

IKMZ – Institute of Communication and Media Research

The IKMZ Speaker Series presents:  
**The Media, Baby Boomers, and the  
Advent of Aspirational Aging**

**Susan J. Douglas**  
**University of Michigan**

**Monday, Feb 26, 2017**

**16:15-17:15**

**AND 2.44**

Baby boomers in the United States—76 million strong—are now approaching retirement, and around the world, populations are aging. How are the media, notorious for their obsession with youth markets, confronting and representing this major demographic shift? This talk will explore the contradictory terrain of aging in American media, where negative stereotypes of older people are colliding with Aspirational Aging, a media-crafted zeitgeist whose central tenet is that aging is something we can and should “defy.” The defiance discourse is especially advanced by what I have labeled the Anti-Aging Industrial Complex. The talk will note the intersections between ageism and sexism, and emphasize how neoliberal discourses about personal responsibility frame and mark off good, successful aging from bad, failed aging.

Susan Douglas is the Catherine Neafie Kellogg Professor of Communication Studies at The University of Michigan and former Chair of the Department. She is author of *The Rise of Enlightened Sexism: How Pop Culture Took Us From Girl Power to Girls Gone Wild* (St. Martin's Griffin, 2010); *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How it Undermines Women* (with Meredith Michaels, The Free Press, 2004); *Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination* (Times Books, 1999), which won the Hacker Prize in 2000 for the best popular book about technology and culture, *Where The Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (Times Books, 1994) and *Inventing American Broadcasting, 1899-1922* (Johns Hopkins, 1987). She is the 2009 recipient of the Leonardo Da Vinci Prize, the highest honor given by the Society for the History of Technology to an individual who has greatly contributed to the history of technology through research, teaching, publications, and other activities.

