Power Hierarchies

Prager Vorträge / Prague Lectures

Summer semester 2026

Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau
Niemiecki Instytut Historyczny w Warszawie
Außenstelle Prag

COLLEGIUM CAROLINUM
Außenstelle Prag

Leibniz-Institut für Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Europa

PRAGUE FLÚ
Joint Czech-German Platform

Organizers

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Partner institutions

Max Weber Stiftung
Deutsche Geisteswissenschaftliche Institute im Ausland

SACHSEN
Diese Maßnahme wird mitfinanziert durch Steuermittel auf der Grundlage des vom Sächsischen Landtag beschlossenen Haushaltes.

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Cover image: The Palach and Zajíc memorial in Prague, Václavské náměstí, 2010.
Author: High Contrast, CC BY 3.0 DE,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jan_Palach_and_Jan_Zajic_RIP.JPG.

24 March 2026, 5:00 p.m.
Venue: Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Národní 3, Praha 1, room 206

Ute Frevert (Berlin, Bonn)

The Politics of Humiliation: Shame and Shaming in Modern History

Humiliation is a hot topic. Many people claim to feel humiliated, either by other individuals or by larger social and political structures that allegedly deny them respect and recognition. Experts in international relations even speak of a humiliation syndrome, while sociologists find that public resentment is rooted in feelings of humiliation. The talk investigates if and why people's sensitivity to humiliating practices has increased over the last two or three centuries. However, it also examines the social function of humiliation and public shaming, in both social life and international affairs.

Registration for online participation:
https://tinyurl.com/PV20260324

Prof. Ute Frevert is a historian of modern Europe. She held professorships at three German universities (Berlin, Konstanz, Bielefeld) and at Yale (USA). In 2008, she joined the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin and set up a research center on the History of Emotions. Since 2023, she has served as President of the Max Weber Foundation. She is a member of various national academies and has been awarded prestigious prizes and honors. Her publications include: *Men of Honour* (1995), *A Nation in Barracks* (2004); *Emotions in History – Lost and Found* (2011); *The Politics of Humiliation* (2020); *The Power of Emotions* (2023); *Writing the History of Emotions* (2024).

20 April 2026, 4:00 p.m.
Venue: CESES, Voršilská 144/1

Sabine Stach (Leipzig)

Tracing Communism in Prague's Urban Landscape. An On-site Reflection on Tourist Offers

In addition to the medieval and early modern periods, more recent history has long been marketed as a tourist attraction in historical city centers in Eastern and Central Europe. Apart from World War II, the legacy of communism can be used as a unique selling point to distinguish Eastern European cities from their Western European counterparts. But how exactly is the recent history presented to an international audience with little prior knowledge? What role does urban space itself play in this presentation, and what significance do the national specifics of history and memory culture have? How can the difficult aspects of communist rule be integrated into a leisure offering that promises entertainment and fun?

Starting in the seminar room and then moving to the streets of Prague, Sabine Stach shares insights from her 2025 study on "communism tours." She discusses city tours as performative offerings that transform specific places into tourist attractions and produce historical spaces. As we search for traces ourselves, we see that interpreting state socialism in Prague's historic, tourist-filled center unfolds differently than, for example, in Warsaw or Bratislava. The city tour will be accompanied and commented upon by anthropologist Barbora Spalová.

The lecture will include a walk in the city centre of Prague and online participation is not possible.

Dr. Sabine Stach, PD, is a researcher at the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) in Leipzig. After receiving her Ph.D. in Cultural Studies in 2015, she joined the research group "Functionality of History in Late Modernity" at the German Historical Institute in Warsaw. She focuses on Czech and Polish cultural history, (post)socialist memory regimes, the practice of history in popular culture, the history of tourism, and tourism history. For her habilitation in 2025, she analyzed how the period of communism is portrayed in guided tours. Sabine Stach is also the initiator of the Citizen Science project "Schreib Dich durch die Neunziger!" ("Write your way through the nineties!"), which invited members of different generations in eastern Germany to document their memories of the transition period using creative writing methods.

28 April 2026, 5:00 p.m.
Venue: Valentinská 1, 3rd floor

Christiane Brenner (Munich)

Sexarbeit im Arbeiterstaat: Sozialistische Ordnung, Geschlechterverhältnisse und ‚Prostitution' in der Tschechoslowakei (1948-1989)

Als sich die Kommunistische Partei der Tschechoslowakei (KSČ) im Februar 1948 die Alleinherrschaft in der Tschechoslowakei sicherte, kündigte sie an, Prostitution überflüssig zu machen. In ihrem Buch „Sexarbeit und Sozialismus", das 2026 bei De Gruyter/Brill erscheint, zeigt Christiane Brenner, wie der tschechoslowakische Staat zwischen 1948 und 1989 mit kommerziellem Sex umging. Es war kein Geheimnis, dass Prostitution auch in sozialistischen Zeiten existierte, obgleich sie für die Öffentlichkeit wenig sichtbar war. Propaganda und Praxis gegenüber dem ‚unsozialistischen' Phänomen Prostitution bieten instruktive Einblicke in Herrschaft und Alltag im sozialistischen Staat. Brenner rekonstruiert die disziplinierenden Effekte der staatlichen und gesellschaftlichen Beobachtung, Verfolgung und Bestrafung von Menschen, die sexueller Arbeit nachgingen. Diese schieden die Bevölkerung in eine ‚ordentliche' Mehrheit und einen ‚asozialen' Rand. Prostitutionspolitik war aber auch Genderpolitik, sie stabilisierte die Hierarchie zwischen den Geschlechtern. Das drängt die Frage auf, was an dieser Politik eigentlich sozialistisch war. Welche Wirkung hatte der ‚Kampf' der KSČ gegen Prostitution auf die Stabilität und die Glaubwürdigkeit der sozialistischen Ordnung?

Registration for online participation:
https://tinyurl.com/PV20260428

Dr. Christiane Brenner ist wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin des Collegium Carolinum (München) und Redakteurin der Zeitschrift Bohemia. In ihren Forschungen widmet sie sich der Zeitgeschichte der Tschechoslowakei. Von 2019 bis 2023 war sie Mitarbeiterin im Sonderforschungsbereich 1369 „Vigilanzkulturen" an der LMU München mit einem Projekt über Prostitution in der sozialistischen Tschechoslowakei. Aus diesem Projekt ist sowohl der gemeinsam mit Martin Schulze Wessel herausgegebene Sammelband: *The Watchful Society. Gender, Sexuality, and the Body in Eastern European Socialism* (Göttingen 2026) hervorgegangen als auch das Buch „*Sexarbeit im Sozialismus: Sozialistische Ordnung, Geschlechterverhältnisse und ‚Prostitution' in der Tschechoslowakei*" (Berlin 2026), die erste umfassende Untersuchung zu diesem Thema überhaupt.

11. May 2026, 5:30 p.m.
Venue: Faculty of Arts, Charles University,
nám. Jana Palacha 1/2, lecture hall P300

Frank Bösch (Potsdam)

Dealing with Dictators: Germany's Relations to Worldwide Autocracies since 1950

Guest of Honor and Greetings: H. E. Dr. Peter Reuss, German Ambassador to the Czech Republic

Germany's cooperation with dictatorships has been widely criticized over the past decade. Close ties to non-democratic states such as Russia, China, and Qatar have led to calls for tougher sanctions. However, the export-oriented Federal Republic of Germany is dependent on many autocracies, which makes it difficult to advocate for human rights and sanctions. Based on extensive archival research, historian Frank Bösch shows how these close relationships with dictatorships around the world have developed since 1950. His lecture illustrates how an economy-oriented pragmatism created various long-term connections: in the Middle East, Latin America, and even socialist Eastern Europe. After National Socialism, anti-communist dictatorships often became partners, ranging from South Korea and Iran to Libya and Chile. Bösch also shows how, since the late 1960s, advocacy for human rights has successfully put pressure on individual dictatorships. Cooperation between the government and NGOs such as Amnesty International led to the release of political prisoners. Targeted sanctions could indeed lead to improvements in human rights. The lecture thus offers a new perspective on the history of German democracy: it supplements the history of Westward integration and Ostpolitik with a look at relations with global dictatorships.

Registration for online participation:
https://tinyurl.com/PV20260511

Frank Bösch, born 1969 in Lübeck, is Professor of 20th-Century European History at the University of Potsdam and Director of the Leibniz Centre for Contemporary History Potsdam (ZZF), a leading research institute in Germany. He is author of many influential books, including several bestsellers. His most recent book analyzes Germany's relations to autocracies ("*Deals with Dictatorships. A Different History of the Federal Republic*"). Previous publications covered topics such as the history of the Christian Democratic party ("*The Adenauer CDU*", 2001), the changing influence of media ("*Media History: From Asian Printing to the Computer*", 2019), and German history from a global perspective ("*Turning Point 1979: When the World of Today Began*", 2019).

21. May 2026, 5:00 p.m.
Venue: Academic Conference Centre (AKC),
Husova 4a, Prague 1

Jannis Panagiotidis (Vienna)
Hans-Christian Petersen (Oldenburg)

Racism against East Europeans in Germany. History and Present

Racism against East Europeans constitutes a major gap in racism research and anti-racism debates. Yet there is a long tradition of treating the region and its inhabitants as inferior, with devastating consequences throughout history. We present the first comprehensive study of racism in the entangled histories of Germany and Eastern Europe — a racism that is not based on skin colour and affects people despite their mostly phenotypical whiteness. Embedded in colonial imaginations of Eastern Europe, anti-East European racism took its most radical and brutal shape during Nazism. But racist knowledge persisted across the rupture of 1945 and the Cold War and took on new shapes after the fall of communism in 1989, when East-West migration once again became an important feature of European and German reality. We make the case for the long overdue eastward expansion of the contemporary racism debate.

Registration for online participation:
https://tinyurl.com/PV20260521

Jannis Panagiotidis is scientific director of the Research Center for the History of Transformations (RECET) at the University of Vienna. His publications include his monographs *The Unchosen Ones: Diaspora, Nation, and Migration in Israel and Germany* (Indiana UP 2019), and *Postsowjetische Migration in Deutschland: eine Einführung* (Beltz Juventa 2021).

Hans-Christian Petersen is a research associate at the Federal Institute for Culture and History of Eastern Europe (BKGE) in Oldenburg, Germany. His publications include his monographs *Bevölkerungsökonomie – Ostforschung – Politik. Eine biographische Studie zu Peter-Heinz Seraphim (1902-1979) and An den Rändern der Stadt? Soziale Räume der Armen in St. Petersburg (1850-1914)* (Böhlau, 2019).

Together, they have published the monograph *Antiosteuropäischer Rassismus in Deutschland: Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Beltz Juventa, 2024).

The "Prague Lectures" provide an opportunity for Czech and German scholars to meet and discuss topics related to history and the humanities. These events provide information on ongoing research projects and recent publications, encourage theoretical and methodological reflections, and promote transnational collaboration. The lectures and walks are open to students and the public.

Die „Prager Vorträge" bieten einen Begegnungs- und Kommunikationsort für tschechische und deutsche Wissenschaftler*innen an, mit dem Schwerpunkt auf Geschichte und Geisteswissenschaften. Die Veranstaltungen dienen dem Austausch über laufende Forschungsprojekte und aktuelle Publikationen, regen zu theoretischen und methodologischen Reflexionen an und fördern die transnationale Zusammenarbeit. Die Vorträge und Rundgänge sind auch für Studierende und die Öffentlichkeit zugänglich.

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