

# *Invectivity & Democracy*

A Powerful Tool to Destroy, Reform and  
Revitalize Political Order and Democracy?



**June 20 and 21, 2019**

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315 Bloor Street West, Toronto

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***“Invectivity & Democracy”***

*A Powerful Tool to Destroy, Reform and Revitalize Political Order/Democracy*

**June 20–21, 2019**

Transit House, Munk School, 315 Bloor Street West, Toronto

**Session I: Populist Style – from Imperial Germany to US-American Culture**

**Chair: Dagmar Ellerbrock**

Thursday, June 20

10:45–12:45

**Katja Kanzler**

‘Trumpism’: Mediated Populism and Reality TV Scripts of Anger

**Abstract**

My paper approaches the contemporary, US-American brand of populism that is commonly called 'Trumpism' from a literary and cultural studies perspective. Its point of departure is Benjamin Moffitt's conception of populism as a “political style” – as a “thin-centered ideology” (Mudde) that thrives on an open-ended set of performative scripts, moods, 'flavors.' Not least because populist leaders stage themselves as opposed to the political establishment, populism as such a style is not confined to a narrowly conceived political sphere. Populist leaders, one might say, are not made on the political stage – they are made on other stages, and I suggest that commercial popular culture is a chief one among them. In my paper, I want to theorize the style of Trumpism as an invective mode that has deep roots in US-American popular culture. This invective mode, I will suggest, derives much of its discursive potency from a dialectic of fluidity and solidity: from, on the one hand, a flexibility and penchant for busting conventions that allows populists to stage themselves as 'raw,' authentic, unmediated; and on the other, from a simultaneous tendency to coagulate into set of performative conventions that afford recognizability and popular circulation. One of the performative conventions into which the invective mode coagulated in recent years are those of reality TV. I want to ask where and how reality TV might have served as a catalyst for the rise of Trumpism – as a forum where the style of Trump's populism has been articulated, rehearsed, and proliferated.

**Curriculum Vitae**

Katja Kanzler is Professor of American Literature at Leipzig University. Her research focuses on the forms and cultural valences of narrativity and textuality

across different text-types, media, and historical contexts, with a particular focus on popular culture and its negotiations of social difference. Among other things, she has published on multicultural discourse in the *Star Trek* franchise, on the politics of meta-narrativity in 20th- and 21st-century courtroom dramas, and on representations of feminine labor in antebellum literature and 'para-literature.' One of her current projects is dedicated to the role, forms, and functions of invectivity in popular culture.

### **Meghan Sutherland**

Comments: Invektivität and the Spectacle

### **Curriculum Vitae**

Meghan Sutherland's is Associate Professor of Cinema & Visual Studies at the University of Toronto and a founding co-editor of the online journal World Picture <<http://www.worldpicturejournal.com>>. She is also the author of *The Flip Wilson Show* (Wayne State University Press, 2008) and a range of essays on the intersections between media, politics, aesthetics and philosophy. She is currently completing a book manuscript called *Variety: The Extra Aesthetic & the Constitution of Modern Media* (Duke University Press, forthcoming), which argues that the concept of variety and the institution of popular entertainment that crystallized around it in the 19th century have played a defining role in the material constitution of modern liberal democracy, effectively forming and reforming both the theory of representation at its core and the biopolitical imagination that animates it still today.

### **Jennifer Jenkins**

Invektivität and German Foreign Policy Before 1914

### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on invectivity--aggression and bellicosity--in the history of German foreign policy before the First World War. The "sabre rattling" of Kaiser Wilhelm II is a well-established trope, so much so that the traditional understanding of German foreign policy in the age of *Weltpolitik* positions it as the dominant factor. The Kaiser's aggression—his bellicose speech, famous volatility, threats, taunts and general paranoia—rattled his advisers, Europe's political leaders, its crowned heads and the German public. Much of the historical writing on German foreign policy before 1914 is powered by the Kaiser's invective energy. His aggression, and the decisions that flowed from it, is often seen as the primary driver of events. However, while he did have the final say in matters of war and peace—by virtue of being the Kaiser--was his voice

also the only one in the room? What are the consequences of such a one-sided view of German foreign policy before 1914? How does the overwhelming historiographical focus on the Kaiser's invectivity erase an awareness of the other voices in policy-making, particularly those that saw Germany as a global actor in ways that differed from that of the ruler? Germany was a complicated global actor in the age of *Weltpolitik*. Does our attraction to the invectivity of the Kaiser mask a more complicated understanding of policy-making before 1914?

### **Curriculum Vitae**

Jennifer L. Jenkins is Associate Professor of German and European history at the University of Toronto, where she held a Canada Research Chair in Modern German History from 2004 to 2014. She is the author of *Provincial Modernity: Local Culture and Liberal Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Hamburg* (Cornell University Press, 2003) and the co-editor, with Geoff Eley and Tracie Matysik, of *German Modernities from Wilhelm to Weimar: The Contest of Futures* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016). She is finishing *Germany's Great Game: The Reich and Iran in the Age of Empire* on German diplomacy in the Middle East before 1914. Future projects include "Germany's Orient, 1905-1979" and "Tehran 1943: Iran, Europe and the Second World War." She had held fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Harvard University, and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. She has been an Associate at the Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin (2017-2018) and a Senior Associate Member of St. Antony's College, Oxford University (2013-2014).

### **Session II: Invective Legal Challenges**

**Chair: Jennifer Jenkins**

Thursday, June 20

1:30–3:00

#### **Luis van Isschot**

Human Rights Counterpoint: Transnational Anti-Imperialism and the Bertrand Russell Tribunal on Latin America

#### **Abstract**

This paper explores the radical roots of human rights in Latin America. The Bertrand Russell Tribunal on Latin America, also known as Russell II, held over three sessions between 1973 and 1976, was an extension of global outrage against the United States war in Vietnam, against the backdrop of the Cold War. Russell II struck a chord amongst Latin Americans seeking to link human rights and national liberation. What began as a response to a rightist military

crackdown underway in Brazil since 1964, expanded to a wider condemnation of authoritarianism and US imperialism following the 1973 coup d'état in Chile. Hundreds of delegates from more than a dozen Latin American countries participated in the sessions. At the conclusion of Russell II, organizers established a permanent platform for the convening of "Peoples Tribunals" to expose state terror, and support the cause of national liberation. On July 4, 1976 in the city of Algiers, dozens of radical intellectuals, social movement activists, and revolutionaries from around the world gathered to draft and sign the International Declaration of the Rights of Peoples. The organizers of the Algiers conference would go on to stage dozens of Peoples Tribunals to denounce political violence and economic exploitation.

### **Curriculum Vitae**

Luis van Isschot is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Toronto. He is the author of "The Social Origins of Human Rights: Protesting Political Violence in Colombia's Oil Capital, 1919-2010", published in 2015 by the University of Wisconsin Press, as well as several articles and chapters on the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, peacebuilding, paramilitarism, and oral history. His book is being published this year in Spanish translation by the Editorial Universidad del Rosario in Colombia.

### **Sabine Müller-Mall**

Invectivity and the Right to Freedom of Art: Democratic Challenges

### **Abstract**

My paper reflects on the relationship of invectivity and the right to freedom of art in the context of democratic challenges. – The connection of art and invectivity might cause serious challenges to the right to freedom of art at various levels. And, since the rights to expression are fundamental to any democratic constitution, this connection also challenges democracy on a general level. As soon as invectivity is involved, a work of art not only risks to interfere with the rights of others in a typical manner. It also risks to narrow down the corridor of freedom a constitution provides for artistic expression overall because it usually forces the law to redefine limitations of the right to freedom of art with regard to the very ways of artistic means and not just regarding a certain content. My paper examines such invective challenges to the right to freedom of art along two examples.

### **Curriculum Vitae**

Sabine Müller-Mall is Professor of Legal and Constitutional Theory at the Department of Political Science of the Technical University Dresden. She has also worked as a Postdoc at the Collaborative Research Centre 626: Aesthetic Experience and the Dissolution of Artistic Limits/Free University and at Humboldt University/Berlin. Her main research interests include legal and constitutional theory, theory of judgement, law and aesthetics, the concept of normativity.

### **Session III: Imperial Cultures of Invectivity**

**Chair: Andres Kasekamp**

Thursday, June 20

3:30 – 5:00

#### **Nisrine Rahal**

The Kindergarten and the Emotive Discourse of the Revolutionary 1840s

#### **Abstract**

During the revolutionary 1840s a new emotive language emerged to mobilize social reform and protest. The movement for children's education through kindergartens provides us with a window to examine this language. Founded in June 1840 by Friedrich Fröbel, the kindergarten was imagined as a literal garden that would provide the space for a renewed humanity. A dissenting Christianity that saw God within nature filled the rhetoric of education and childhood. Education, kindergarten activists believed, would follow natural laws. There would be no force, but free play. Childhood was reimagined within a new ideal of humanity. The early ages of childhood were vital in the development of a healthy humanity that embraced individualism as well as responsibility of community. Included within this was freedom, happiness, and love all for the sake of creating a strengthened nation. It is within these concepts of childhood and education that a binary formed between a hopeful future with democracy and rights and a degenerative past controlled by old traditional religious and state authorities.

Invective language has a lot to tell us about shaming and insulting processes that are central to political crises and questions of social reform. My

presentation focuses on an examination of terms not usually associated with invectivity. Words like freedom and love are vital in the emotive discourses among kindergarten activists. Love in particular is utilized as a transformative mobilizing concept that sought to spread ideas of emancipation and social reform. Love and freedom fueled notions of education for kindergarten activists. My presentation therefore brings to attention the ways love and freedom were used to shame the past and old traditional elites particularly in the movement for education.

My presentation focuses primarily on the religious-national language used by kindergarten activists in newspapers and pamphlets. The two movements for the kindergarten and Christian dissent (the two dissenting groups included: The Lichtenfreunde and the Deutschkatholiken) overlapped. While they had their own goals and origins, the two utilized a similar rhetoric of nature, freedom, and dissenting Christianity. Friedrich Fröbel himself provided lectures to members of the Lichtenfreunde during the 1840s. Johannes Ronge, the charismatic leader of the Deutschkatholiken openly supported the kindergarten movement and saw the kindergarten as an effective institution in the development of a free society. Ludwig Storch, a Gotha based writer and member of the Deutschkatholiken, sought to open a kindergarten in the town of Nordhausen in Thüringia. His open support for democracy as well as his membership in a dissenting congregation led to the banning of not only his kindergarten, but all kindergartens in Prussia in August 1851. The dual connection to both dissent and radical politics made the kindergarten a suspect institution tied to revolutionary disorder. To state authorities, the kindergarten was a “nursery of destruction” that led children to socialism and atheism.

### **Curriculum Vitae**

I'm a doctoral candidate in the Department of History in the collaborative program with the Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto. My dissertation focuses on the German Kindergarten movement during the 19th century as a window to examine histories of revolution, liberalism, social reform, and education. I previously held a doctoral fellowship from the Leibniz Institute for European History in Mainz from June 2017 to February 2018. From September 2015 to September 2016 I held a Leo Baeck doctoral fellowship. I have also received research support from the scholarship program of the Research Library for the History of Education (BBF) at the German Institute for International Educational Research (DIPF), the Stipendienprogramm der Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, and the Central European History Society.

### **James Retallack**

## Abusive Relationship? Socialists and Their Enemies in Imperial Germany

### **Abstract**

German Social Democracy seemed to embody modernity's least attractive features: it was seen by its enemies as subversive, violent, revolutionary, irreligious, immoral, and un-German, and it was the object of invective hurled at it by fearful, anxious German burghers. Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Law (1878-90) was, however, only one of a number of moral crusades directed at "enemies of the Reich": other targets of discrimination and abuse included Jews, Catholics, Poles, left liberals, and women. These remarks reflect on the connections between the emotional, intellectual, and political dimension of campaigns to provide security to the young German nation.

### **Curriculum Vitae**

James Retallack received his Oxford DPhil. in 1983 and has been teaching German and European History at the University of Toronto since 1987. He has authored or edited seventeen book-length works, including monographs, teaching texts, conference volumes, special issues of journals, and a digital history anthology of documents and images in German history. His most recent book was *Red Saxony: Election Battles and the Spectre of Democracy in Germany* (Oxford, 2017). He is currently writing a new biography of the German Social Democratic leader August Bebel, supported by Guggenheim and Killam fellowships and an SSHRC Insight Grant.

### **Session IV: Invectivity Mobilization in Current Populist Movements**

#### **Chair: Sabine Müller-Mall**

Friday, June 21

9:30–11:00

#### **Daniel Silver**

The Populist Style in the City: the Case of Ford Nation

### **Abstract**

Populism is often viewed as a national-level phenomenon that pits a declining periphery against a cosmopolitan, economically successful metropolis. Rob Ford's 2010 campaign and mayoralty in Toronto reveals the potential for the emergence of populist politics within the metropolis. To comprehend his appeal, principally within the city's ethnically diverse postwar peripheral, I examine populism as a discursive repertoire, highlighting the forms of speech and self-



presentation that populist leaders draw upon. Applying this general notion of the populist style to the case of Ford, I describe how Ford's charged language constructed electorally salient protagonists and antagonists. In turn, I examine how his emergence was enabled by institutional, economic, and demographic change. Finally, I explain Ford's appeal to a diverse electorate in terms of the sincerity and coherence of his performance as the collective representation of suburban grievance. I conclude by arguing that populist style may emerge in metropolitan settings with strong, spatially manifest internal social, economic, and cultural divisions.

### **Curriculum Vitae**

Daniel Silver is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Toronto. His research areas are social theory, cities, culture, and cultural policy. He is co-editor of *The Politics of Urban Cultural Policy* and author of *Scenescapes: how qualities of place shape social life*. Professor Silver was the recipient of the 2013 Theory Prize, the 2017 Distinguished Scholarly Publication Award in the Sociology of Consumers and Consumption, and received an honorable mention for the 2015 Junior Theorist Award, all from the American Sociological Association. He co-edits *Theory*, the Newsletter of the International Sociological Association Research Committee on Sociological Theory. His current research examines the role of arts and culture in city politics, economics, and residential patterns; the enduring political orders of cities; the use of diagrams and figures in social theory; the potential of evolutionary theory to inform urban studies; Georg Simmel; American pragmatism; and international variations in how sociological theory is taught. Silver is also a core participant in The Scenes Project and the Urban Genome Project, details about which may be found [here](#) and [here](#). Additionally, he was editor and co-author of reports on the cultural sectors in Toronto and Chicago: *Redefining Public Art in Toronto*; *From the Ground Up: Growing Toronto's Creative Sector*; and *Chicago: Music City*.

### **Andres Kasekamp**

*Invectivity as a Means of Political Mobilization: The Case of the Estonian Populist Radical Right*

### **Curriculum Vitae**

Andres Kasekamp is Elmar Tampõld Chair of Estonian Studies and Professor of History at the University of Toronto since 2017. Previously, he was Professor of Baltic Politics at the University of Tartu and Director of the Estonian Foreign Policy Institute. He holds a PhD in history from the School of Slavonic and East European Studies at the University of London. His research interests include

populist radical right parties, memory politics, European foreign and security policy, and cooperation and conflict in the Baltic Sea region. His books include *The Radical Right in Interwar Estonia* (Palgrave 2000) and *A History of the Baltic States* (Palgrave 2018, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), with the latter being translated into nine languages. He has also served as the editor of the *Journal of Baltic Studies* and is currently the President of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies.

## **Session V: From hate speech to violence? – Invective Media Displays**

**Chair: Katja Kanzler**

Friday, June 21

11:15-1:45

### **Dagmar Ellerbrock**

Between Courtroom and Newsroom: Invective Staging in the Democratic Decline of the Weimar Republic

#### **Abstract**

The political life of the first German democracy - the Weimar Republic - was very much dominated by insulting rhetoric. Following the German surrender after the First World War, the young Weimar democracy started its political life with shameful founding myths, denouncing democrats as killers of German monarchy and enemies of the German Imperial military (“stab in the back myth” & “November criminals”). Humiliating speech became even more widespread at the end of the 1020s/early 1930s. The paper analyzes the distractive logic of political insults, by following the strong momentum it gains by oscillating between newsrooms and courtrooms. It raises the question what nexus exists between hate speech and violence, and asks if invectivity always means a threat to democracy. It ends with general assumptions on the role of invectivity in democratic societies.

#### **Curriculum Vitae**

2018/19 Hannah Arendt Visiting Professor at the Munk School of Global Affairs, Center for European and Russian and Eurasian Studies.

Professor at Technische Universität Dresden, Chair for Modern History; associated researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin; founding committee of the Cooperate Research Center “Invektivität” (SFB 1285, TU Dresden)

2012-2014 Research Professor (Minerva Research Group): “Emotions, Violence & Peace” at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development in Berlin. In 2011, she obtained her habilitation at the University of Bielefeld. From 1999 until 2009 she was Assistant Professor at the University of Bielefeld. She holds a PhD from the University of Bielefeld and an MA from the University of Freiburg. Her major works include: „Healing Democracy“ - Demokratie als Heilmittel. Gesundheit, Krankheit und Politik in der amerikanischen Besatzungszone 1945-1949, Bonn 2004; Vom „ächten deutschen Waffenrecht“. Waffenpraktiken zwischen Volkswaffen und der Freiheit des Gewehrbesitzes, Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, (in print) 2019; Deutsche Schießwut. Zur Transformation der deutschen Waffenkultur im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, forthcoming 2020; Ellerbrock, Dagmar/ Koch, Lars/ Müller-Mall, Sabine/ Münkler, Marina/ Scharloth, Joachim/ Schrage, Dominik/ Schwerhoff, Gerd: Invektivität - Perspektiven eines neuen Forschungsprogramms in den Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften, In: Kulturwissenschaftliche Zeitschrift 2017, Band 2, Heft 1, S. 2-24; Gun-violence and control in Germany 1880-1911. Scandalizing Gun Violence and Changing Perceptions as Preconditions for Firearm Control, in: Wilhelm Heitmeyer, Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, et al. (Hg), The Control of Violence in Modern Society: Multidisciplinary Perspectives, From School Shootings to Ethnic Violence, Berlin 2010, S. 185-212; Gun-rights as privileges of free men – Chronology of a powerful political myth of the 19th and 20th century Germany, in: Kathleen Starck/Birgit Sauer (Ed.), Political Masculinities, Newcastle 2014, 67 – 79; Ellerbrock, D., "Waffenkultur in Deutschland", Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte 35-37, (2014), 1-8; <http://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/190121/waffen-und-ruestung>; Ellerbrock, D. und Kesper-Biermann Eds., Between Passion and Senses? Perspectives on Emotions and Law, (InterDisciplines: Special Issue 2/2015), <http://www.inter-disciplines.org/index.php/indi/article/view/146>.

### **Sadiya Ansari**

Islamophobia in Quebec: Hate Speech, Violence and How it Relates to the Rest of Canada

### **Abstract**

In January 2017, a 27-year old man walked into a Quebec City mosque and opened fire, killing six men. A Laval student who lived near the mosque, shooter

Alexandre Bissonnette was later described by peers as having recently gone through a transformation, from a harmless campus conservative to a far-right troll who espoused anti-immigrant and anti-feminist views. While the nature of the 2017 shooting was shocking, many in the Muslim community said they were experiencing sustained, escalating hateful rhetoric targeting them. Anti-immigrant views in Quebec have focused on one group in particular: Muslims. The majority of Muslims living in the province are newcomers and nearly half of them have arrived since 2001. Their arrival has prompted new anxieties about protecting Quebecois culture — a minority group in Canada, but a majority group in Quebec. And while there are particular ways this manifests that are unique to Quebec — the endless attempts to legislate what Muslim women wear, and the popularity of *radio poubelles*, or “trash radio” where right-wing shock jocks routinely slur Islam and Muslims — the same sentiments can be found across Canada. This talk will trace back the history of this type of invective speech in Quebec, and how it relates to themes seen in speech across Canada.

### **Curriculum Vitae**

Sadiya Ansari is a Toronto-based journalist particularly interested in race and immigration. Her work — including essays, features, Q&As and books reviews — has appeared in the Guardian, Chatelaine, Toronto Star, Maclean’s, VICE, HuffPost Canada, Globe and Mail, Reader’s Digest and more. Most recently, she was the managing editor of features at Global News. Prior to that, Sadiya was a staff editor at Chatelaine. She has previously reported news and original investigations for the Toronto Star, produced TV for CBC News, and edited opinion for HuffPost Canada. She holds a Masters of Public Administration from Queen’s University and a Masters of Journalism from the University of British Columbia.

### **Vasuki Shanmuganathan**

Cancel Culture, Race, and Gendered Reckonings in Digital Activism

### **Abstract**

BBQ Becky, Pool Patrol Paula, Cornerstore Caroline, and Permit Patty are only a few of the nefarious female figures that have been popularized in recent years through Twitter and other forms of social media. The common thread tying these figures together is a) their performance of gendered whiteness through attempts to call the police on Black people in public, b) the public involvement in creating their alliterative and villainous names, and c) the resulting ‘dragging’ through social media with the subsequent loss of moral, financial, and digital support. This paper explores the effects and proliferation of such figures in digital activism

and how cancel culture functions as a site of racialized and gendered "community" reckonings for Black and other marginalized people, which are otherwise not accessible through the state nor possible in public spaces.

### **Curriculum Vitae**

Dr. Vasuki Shanmuganathan is an interdisciplinary scholar whose research examines how colonialism, health, gender and sexuality shape narratives of race. Her past work explored the shift from aesthetic towards biopolitical readings of colonial subjects in Europe and South Asia whereas her present scholarship expands on this study paying closer attention to views on aging in the colonial context. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Centre for Aging Research and Education at York University as well as lead investigator of the SHADES study funded by Women's College Hospital.

### **Session VI: Summarizing Comments and Final Discussion**

Comments by Doris Bergen and Meghan Sutherland

Friday, June 21

2:15-3:30

### **Doris Bergen**

#### **Curriculum Vitae**

Doris Bergen is the Chancellor Rose and Ray Wolfe Professor of Holocaust Studies in the Department of History and Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto. She is the author of *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (3rd edition 2016), *Twisted Cross: The German Christian Movement in the Third Reich* (1996), and the editor of *Alltag im Holocaust: Jüdisches Leben im Grossdeutschen Reich* (with Anna Hajkova and Andrea Löw, 2013), *Lessons and Legacies: From Generation to Generation* (2008), and *The Sword of the Lord: Military Chaplains from the First to the Twenty-First Centuries* (2003). Bergen is a member of the Academic Committee of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.