

Mershon Memo

An e-newsletter of the Mershon Center for International Security Studies

October 13, 2008

In this issue

1. Coming up at the Mershon Center
2. Other events
3. Faculty publications
4. Featured Mershon research project

Having trouble reading this newsletter? You can [read it online](#).

Coming up at the Mershon Center

Friday-Saturday, October 17-18, 2008

China Plural: Local Identities, Contesting Visions, and Constructing Nations

Organized by Kwang-Kyoon Yeo, Visiting Scholar, Institute for Chinese Studies

180 Hagerty Hall, 1775 College Road



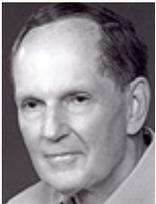
Since the 1990s, China has been one of the most speculated, researched, and analyzed topics in academia, mass media, and policy debates in the United States. However, most of the analysis has been framed by the idea that China has a homogenous history, people, and culture. This monolithic image has shaped not only the study of China, but dominated the policy debates and public imagination of China in the United States. **China Plural: Local Identity, Contesting Visions, and Constructing Nations** will communicate, elaborate, and expand an interdisciplinary discourse on a multifaceted view on China. By convening scholars working on local, linguistic, and cultural diversity of China, the conference will highlight the heterogeneous and dynamic inner workings of China, and examine the representation, construction, and reproduction of a homogeneous China both inside and outside its national boundary. [Read more](#)

Wednesday, October 22, 2008

Dick Combs

"Inside the Soviet Alternate Universe"

Noon, Mershon Center for International Security Studies, 1501 Neil Ave.



Dick Combs was one of a core group of U.S. foreign service officers who specialized in Soviet and Eastern European affairs during the last three decades of the Cold War. He is author of [Inside the Soviet Alternate Universe: The Cold War's End and the Soviet Union's Fall Reappraised](#) (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008). His foreign service assignments included two years at the U.S. Legation in Sofia, Bulgaria, and a total of eight years at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, Russia. In addition, he spent an academic year at the U.S. Army's Institute for Advanced Russian Studies and served two tours on the Soviet Desk in the State Department. [Read more and RSVP](#)

Rescheduled

Friday, October 24, 2008

Robert Rakove

"Getting the Worst of Both Worlds': John F. Kennedy and Decolonization"

Noon, Mershon Center for International Security Studies, 1501 Neil Ave.



Robert Rakove has a M.A. in European History from Stanford University and will receive his Ph. D. in U.S. History from the University of Virginia in December 2008. His project, "Befriending the Nonaligned: Kennedy, Johnson, and the Neutralist Powers," examines the efforts of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations to create lasting, constructive relations with leading states of the non-aligned world. Rakove will explore how U.S. policies of interaction with non-aligned powers helped define relations between the United States and its allies, many of whom had tense relations with the new post-colonial states in Africa and Asia. [Read more and RSVP](#)

Wednesday, October 29, 2008

Jeff McMahan

"Killing Civilians in War"

Noon, Mershon Center for International Security Studies, 1501 Neil Ave.



Jeff McMahan is professor of philosophy at Rutgers University. His research is known for its combination of philosophical rigor and simultaneous accessibility to the non-specialist audience. He is author of [The Ethics of Killing: Problems at the Margins of Life](#) (Oxford University Press, 2002), described as "the first comprehensive study of the ethics of killing, where the moral status of the individual killed is uncertain." McMahan's most recent work focuses on the ethics of killing in war, as self-defense, and as a mode of

punishment. A significant strand of this current work is dedicated to the re-examination of traditional just war theory. McMahan seeks to pry apart the perceived assumptions grounding this theory's arguments, using the tools of metaphysics and ethical theory. [Read more and RSVP](#)

Other events

Monday, October 13, 2008

Clyde Wilcox

"Closing the God Gap? Religion and Voting in 2008"

4:30 p.m., 090 Science and Engineering Library, 175 W 18th Ave.

Sponsored by the [Center for the Study of Religion](#)

Clyde Wilcox is Professor of Government at Georgetown University. He publishes on public opinion and electoral behavior; religion and politics; gender politics; the politics of social issues such as abortion, gay rights, and gun control; interest group politics; campaign finance; and science fiction and politics. He has authored, coauthored, edited, or co-edited more than 20 books. His most recent include *The Politics of Gay Rights*, *Prayers in the Precincts: The Christian Right in the 1998 Elections*, *The Clinton Scandal and the Future of American Government*, *Political Science Fiction*, and *Women in Elected Office, Past, Present, and Future*. For more information, contact Sandra van Kley at van-kley.2@osu.edu.

Tuesday, October 14, 2008

Dawood Azami

"Drug Money: Opium, Crime, and Insurgency in Afghanistan"

4 p.m., Mershon Center for International Security Studies, 1501 Neil Ave.

Sponsored by the [Middle East Studies Center](#)



Dawood Azami is a writer and broadcast journalist. He has been working with the BBC World Service for nearly 10 years. As a senior producer, he supervises and produces news and current affairs transmissions in Pashto and Persian languages. He has also worked in the BBC's English Network, BBC World Television, and BBC News Online covering international



news and current affairs. Dawood specializes in politics, security and culture in Central and South Asia and the Middle East (especially Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan including the Tribal Areas). He has produced several special radio documentaries for the BBC World Service on politics, religion and human rights. [Read more](#)

Thursday, October 16, 2008

Jennifer Heath

"The Veil: Visible and Invisible Spaces"

4 p.m., Mershon Center for International Security Studies, 1501 Neil Ave.

Sponsored by the [Women's Place](#), [Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures](#), and [Middle East Studies Center](#)

Jennifer Heath is the editor of [The Veil: Women Writers on Its History, Lore, and Politics](#) (University of California Press, 2008). She is an independent scholar, curator and writer, the author of nine works of fiction and non-fiction, including *The Scimitar* and *The Veil: Extraordinary Women of Islam* and *A House White With Sorrow: A Ballad for Afghanistan*. Heath discusses the veiling of women, men, and sacred places and objects, which has existed in countless cultures and religions throughout history. Her multimedia presentation will explore and examine the history and politics of veiling around the world. [Read more](#)

Friday, October 17, 2008

Bernd Fischer and May Mergenthaler

"Enlightenment, Culture, and the Public Sphere"

3:30 p.m., 488 Hagerty Hall, 1775 College Ave.

Sponsored by the Department of [Germanic Languages and Literatures](#)

In this seminar, we will discuss two short seminal texts: "Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" by Immanuel Kant, and "On the Question: What Does It Mean to Enlighten?" by Moses Mendelssohn. This event is part of a larger project on **The Public Sphere and Modern Social Imaginaries**, which includes a reading group, lectures and seminars, and a conference in 2010-11. The goal is to investigate how cultural and artistic expressions arising from and contributing to modern social imaginaries work within and against the classical Habermasian notion of the political public sphere of German speaking and European societies, in a historical (1750-today) and global context. Our guiding question is whether the creation of a political public sphere is and has indeed been necessary for establishing and maintaining social freedom and justice. Please indicate your interest by replying to mergenthaler.4@osu.edu.

Faculty publications



Congratulations to **Andy Keeler**, associate professor at the John Glenn School of Public Affairs, and **Alex Thompson**, assistant professor in the Department of Political Science. They published ["Industrialized-Country Mitigation Policy and Resource Transfers to Developing Countries: Improving and Expanding Greenhouse Gas Offsets"](#) with the

The Harvard Project on International Climate Agreements at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Their paper offers a proposal for partially resolving the impasse between industrialized nations and developing countries on efforts to control greenhouse gas emissions. It will be part of an upcoming volume to be published by Cambridge University Press.

Featured Mershon research project

Political Asylum Policy and International Security

Principal Investigators: [Amy Shuman](#), Departments of English, Women's Studies, and Anthropology



In 2005, President Bush signed the Read ID Act, requiring applicants for asylum to provide documentation of their identity and allowing judges to deny asylum to anyone whose family may be connected with a terrorist group. The act is one example of how political asylum policy is intertwined with international security issues.

In this project, Amy Shuman and co-author Carol Bohmer of Dartmouth College examine how humanitarian concerns for refugees come into conflict with security concerns in the United States and Britain. While the goal of political asylum is to provide refuge for the applicant, the process must also protect the state. This contradiction is at the root of current problems in the system.

This project builds on previous Mershon-supported research by Shuman and Bohmer that resulted in [Rejecting Refugees: Political Asylum in the 21st Century](#) (Routledge, 2008). Using in-depth accounts by asylum applicants and interviews with lawyers and others involved, this book shows what it is like to apply for asylum in the United States and Great Britain, and explores the central obstacles facing asylum applicants.

Now Shuman and Bohmer are examining how the identity of asylum seekers is represented in the media and public policy, including both asylum policy and security policy. Their data will include ethnographic observation of hearings, interviews with asylum applicants and lawyers, review of policies, and review of a wide variety of media from newspaper accounts to online postings by international aid agencies.

Shuman and Bohmer hope to answer two questions. First, why are asylum applicants under such suspicion? Their previous research found that although the system is vulnerable to abuse, terrorists prefer to stay under the radar and are not applying for asylum. Second, what is the relationship between asylum policy and foreign policy?

The researchers also hope to learn what types of documents are available to various populations in different countries. For example, education records; birth, marriage, and death certificates; medical records; and identity documents such as passports are not always available in each country.

For more information, please see the [project web page](#).

About Mershon Memo

Mershon Memo is a weekly e-mail newsletter distributed by the Mershon Center for International Security Studies. You have received this newsletter because you have been identified as a party to whom these mailings may be of interest. If you would like to unsubscribe, please e-mail becker.271@osu.edu.

