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Director's Speaker Series

Mary Sarotte

"China's Fear of Contagion: Tiananmen Square and the Power of the European Example"

Thursday, December 6, 2012

3 p.m.

Mershon Center for International Security Studies

1501 Neil Ave., Columbus, OH 43201

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Mary Sarotte

Professor of History and
International Relations
University of Southern
California

Mary Sarotte is Professor of History and International Relations at the University of Southern California.

Her most recent book, *1989*, appeared with Princeton University Press on the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. In addition to receiving the DAAD Prize for Distinguished Scholarship in German and European Studies, *1989* is also the first book to become the winner of both SHAFR's Ferrell Prize, awarded to the best book on U.S. foreign policy, and AAASS' Shulman Prize, awarded to the best book on Communist foreign policy (co-winner). *1989* was favorably reviewed in *The New York Times Book Review*, *The New York Review of Books*, and *Foreign Affairs*, which called *1989* a new "classic," as well as the *Financial Times*, which selected it as one of the "Books of the Year."

Sarotte received her AB from Harvard and her PhD in History from Yale. She has been a White House Fellow and a member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. Sarotte is also a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Abstract

The Tiananmen Square massacre of June 1989 remains a taboo topic in the People's Republic of China (PRC); the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) still detains participants and suppresses online, popular, and scholarly discussions of it. The twentieth anniversary of the end of

the transatlantic Cold War, however, saw the release of new sources from high-level contacts between the CCP and foreign leaders. These new sources, combined with older ones, show the extent to which Chinese political leaders were obsessed with the democratic changes in Eastern Europe and were willing to take violent action to prevent similar events on their territory. This obsession has received mention from a few scholars, but until now it has played too small a role in the current understanding of Tiananmen. New evidence documents that one of the main motivations for the CCP in deploying the army in June 1989—on the same day as semi-free elections in Poland—was its desire to combat possible contagion from the events in Europe. These sources also show that the CCP knew it had little to fear from reprisals by the United States, which it predicted would take "no real countermeasures."

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1501 Neil Ave.

Columbus, OH 43201

Phone: 614.292.1681

Fax: 614.292.2407

Email: mershoncenter@osu.edu

