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Diplomatic History Speaker Series
PENNY VON ESCHEN
"Rebooting the Cold War: Cultural Narratives of Triumphantism and Nostalgia"

Friday, February 06, 2015, 12:00PM - 1:30PM
Mershon Center for International Security Studies
1501 Neil Ave. Columbus, OH 43201
Register for this event here.

Penny Von Eschen is professor of history and american culture at the University of Michigan. She received her Ph.D. in history at Columbia University in 1994.Von Eschen's primary research interests include transnational cultural and political dynamics, race, gender, and empire, and the political culture of United States imperialism.


Abstract
The lecture will examine the stakes of U.S. policy makers and cultural producers’ national and global discourses about the Cold War. Von Eschen argues that a conservative narrative about the Cold War was consolidated in the 1999-2000 George W. Bush campaign, and that this account of the Cold War fundamentally shaped American responses to the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. This narrative enabled the simultaneous exponential extension and privatization of government security and surveillance under the fears of terrorism and of an extended siege by an enemy.

Triumphalist and nostalgic views of the Cold War were not simply top down inventions of politicians, academics, and pundits. To understand the development and deployment of Cold War stories, we must exit the realm of formal politics and ask how and why conservative stories about the Cold War gained traction within a broader public. The lecture investigates the stakes involved in Cold War memory and nostalgia through readings of multiple media representations of the past within intersecting sites of politics, journalism, and popular culture.