

Co-Conveners: Duke University and UNC-Chapel Hill, Departments of History, and Center for Slavic, Eurasian, and East European Studies

## Friday, 4 December 2020

4:00–5:30 pm | Online

### THOMAS PRENDERGAST

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Department of History



## The Sociology of Empire: German and Habsburg Theories of Multinational Statehood, 1848-1914

Over the past twenty years, historians have dramatically reevaluated the Habsburg Monarchy. Once characterized as a “prison of nations,” scholars now emphasize the effectiveness of its institutions and its subjects’ loyalty to the dynasty and indifference to nationalist propaganda. And yet, despite its stability and “modernity,” Habsburg Austria came to be categorized in the decades before 1914 as an “empire,” an archaic polity fundamentally different from Western European “nation-states.” This lecture will examine how and why Central European jurists attempted to define the Habsburg Monarchy as an “empire” and the Habsburg effort to undermine this definition through a new and globally influential sociological critique of the state. Prendergast will show that German nationalist legal scholars used “empire” to distinguish the Monarchy from other similarly composite European states and that Austrian sociologists recognized the analytical inadequacy of this category more than a century before the “imperial turn.”

**THOMAS PRENDERGAST** is a PhD Candidate in History at Duke University. His research explores the intellectual history of modern East Central Europe from a global and Jewish perspective, specifically the formative role this region played in shaping concepts of imperialism, federalism, internationalism, and decolonization.

**Moderator: CHAD BRYANT | UNC-Chapel Hill, Department of History**

For more information on the NCGS program and the Zoom access go to the NCGS website: <https://ncgsws.web.unc.edu/>

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