

Co-Conveners: Duke University, Department of History; UNC-Chapel Hill, Department of History; UNC Center for European Studies

### Friday, 22 October 2021

2:00 – 4:00 pm | Zoom Seminar

## HEDWIG RICHTER

Professor of Modern and Contemporary History  
University of the Bundeswehr, Munich, Dept. of History



Book Discussion

## *Democracy – A German Affair?* *Rethinking the German Past*

Can and should the history of democracy in Germany be written as a success story? With her newest book, *Demokratie: Eine deutsche Affäre*, Hedwig Richter has generated fierce debate by claiming that democracy has a longer history in Germany than the older, male-dominated scholarship has claimed with its contested notion of a German *Sonderweg* (special path) that deviated from the West. Written for a broader audience, the book provides a provocative new interpretation of democracy in German history and the role of the people by defending gradual reform from above, integrating gender and the body, and calling for a transnational approach. Critics contend that Richter makes Imperial Germany appear improbably democratic and the Third Reich less totalitarian. The aim of this book discussion is to explore the limits and possibilities of a more balanced interpretation of the long 19th century for the scholarly and public rethinking of modern German history.

**HEDWIG RICHTER** is Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at the University of the Bundeswehr in Munich. Her wide-ranging research interests include the history of democracy and dictatorship, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany, and gender in history. Her most recent publications include: *Demokratie. Eine deutsche Affäre* (2020); *Moderne Wahlen: Eine Geschichte der Demokratie in Preußen und den USA im 19. Jahrhundert* (2017); and *Frauenwahlrecht: Die Demokratisierung der Demokratie in Deutschland und Europa* (ed. with Kerstin Wolff, 2017).

**Moderator:** KAREN HAGEMANN | James G. Kenan Distinguished Professor of History, UNC Chapel Hill, Dept. of History

**Comments:** OLIVER F.R. HAARDT, Junior Research Fellow, University of Cambridge, Magdalene College

SYLVIA SCHRAUT, Professor Emerita of Modern History, University of the Bundeswehr, Munich, Dept. of History

More information on the NCGS website: <https://ncgsws.web.unc.edu/>

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**CONVENERS:** Duke University: Dept. of German Studies | Dept. of History | The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: Carolina Seminars | Carolina Center for Jewish Studies | Dept. of Germanic and Slavic Languages & Literatures | Dept. of History