

Friday, 22 September 2023

2:00 – 4:00 pm **Zoom Seminar**

Konrad H. Jarausch Essay Prize Winner for Advanced Graduate Students 2022:

YANARA SCHMACKS

Graduate Student, The Graduate Center,
City University of New York, Department of History



“We always also did this for our children”: Motherhood in the GDR between Socialism and Opposition

The presentation explores how GDR women dealt with motherhood and thereby, in conversation with and sometimes opposition to the state, renegotiated socialist modernity. East German women writers drew up alternative socialist versions of maternity, framing the mother-child relationship as a platonic partnership between mother and child and, in contrast to their Western counterparts, deemphasizing the bodily elements of motherhood. These positions toward motherhood and children were often politically in line with culturally hegemonic ideas about the socialist family that were promoted by the state. Yet, in the 1980s, motivated by intense maternal concern for their children in the face of growing Cold War tensions and environmental destruction, GDR women’s activists tried to actively intervene at the state level to improve the future of their children, thereby becoming involved in oppositional activities and ultimately contributing to bringing about the *Wende*.

YANARA SCHMACKS is a graduate student of Modern European History at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York, and currently a Doctoral Fellow at the Leibniz-Institute for European History in Mainz. She is working on a dissertation titled “Reproductive Nation: German Motherhood, Erotics, and Ecology between East and West,” exploring how the maternal served as a space for the renegotiation of both the German past as well as the East-West divide and reunification. Her research was published in *Central European History* and in *Psychoanalysis and History*.

Moderation: **KAREN HAGEMANN** | James G. Kenan Distinguished Professor of History, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Department of History

Laudation: **THOMAS PEGELOW KAPLAN** | Louis P. Singer Endowed Chair in Jewish History, University of Colorado Boulder, Department of History

Comment: **JAMES CHAPPEL** | Gilhuly Family Associate Professor of History, Duke University, Department of History

DONNA HARSCH | Professor of History, Carnegie Mellon University, Department of History

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CONTACT: Karen Hagemann | UNC Chapel Hill, Dept. of History, email: hagemann@unc.edu

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 | Center for European Studies | Dept. of Germanic and Slavic Languages & Literatures | Dept. of History