

Fellows



William Rasch
IFK_Senior Fellow

Duration of fellowship
01. March 2007 bis 30. June 2007

William Rasch

PROJECT TITLE

The form of the political

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project investigates the relationship of violence to the political. Starting with the presupposition that violence in human society is "natural" and not just a product of history or (faulty) institutions, William Rasch examines three crucial periods of modern European history from the 2nd half of the 17th century to the present. By looking at 17th-century natural law theorists (e.g. Hobbes, Pufendorf, and Thomasius), the German reactions to the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars (from Kant to Clausewitz and Kleist), and 20th-century critics of the ideologies of global governance, Rasch wants to understand (logically more than anthropologically) the claim that the search for perpetual peace is the fuel that drives the engines of perpetual war. Of particular interest is the attempt to limit political violence to the state (Weber's famous claim about the monopoly of legitimate violence) and the consequences when sub- and extra-state violence claims political status (partisan warfare, for instance, or "terrorism"). Rasch finds that even in the age of weapons of mass destruction (wherever they may be found), "antiquated" thinkers like Hobbes, Weber, and Schmitt are far more useful in understanding our current political predicament than neo-Kantians like Habermas.

CV

Professor and Chair of the Department of Germanic Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington

Publications

U. a.: Niklas Luhmann's *Modernity: The Paradoxes of Differentiation*, Stanford 2000. He is the editor of a collection of Luhmann's essays in English entitled: *Theories of Distinction: Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity*, Stanford, 2002; *Sovereignty and Its Discontents: On the Primacy of Conflict and the Structure of the Political*, London, 2004 (available in German as: *Konflikt als Beruf: Die Grenzen des Politischen*, Berlin, 2005; he edited a special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 104.2, Spring, 2005 entitled: *World Orders: Confronting Carl Schmitt's The Nomos of the Earth*. Most recently he co-edited (with Wilfried Wilms) a collection of essays on depictions in literature and film of strategic bombing during World War II called "Bombs Away: Representing the Air War over Europe and Japan" as volume 60 of the *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik*.