

Fellows



Thomas R. Prendergast
Fulbright/IFK_Junior Fellow

Duration of fellowship
01. October 2017 bis 30. June 2018

Thomas R. Prendergast

PROJECT TITLE

In Defense of Empire: Austrian Sociology and the European Nation-State, 1870–1914

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

While often discussed in terms of the rise of the nation-state, the late 19th century was also the era of the *critique* of the nation-state. Prendergast's research explores one of the earliest sites of this critique: the Habsburg monarchy. It was here that legal scholars and political theorists, many of them Jewish, first began to question the supposed abnormality of empires, adopting a sociological approach to the study of states that promised to scientifically legitimize multiethnic political entities. Situating these actors in four contexts – the emergence of nation-based claims to sovereignty, the institutionalization of the social sciences, the nationalization of identity in the Dual Monarchy, and the Jewish response to this process of nationalization – this project revises our understanding of the viability of Europe's landed empires and provides insight into the lasting influence of imperial thinking in the 20th century, both in East Central Europe and beyond.

CV

Thomas R. Prendergast is a Ph.D. candidate in History and Nathan J. Perilman Fellow in Judaic Studies at Duke University. He holds an M.A. in History from Duke University and a B.A. in History and Comparative Literature from the University of Chicago. His dissertation reconstructs the scientific languages through which intellectuals from the geographic and social margins of the Habsburg monarchy challenged prevailing notions of political modernization around the turn of the 20th century. His work has appeared in the journal *Religions* as part of its ongoing special series "Empire, Socialism, and Jews: Writing the Monarchy Back into Austrian History." In addition, he has presented his research at conferences in the United States and Europe, including the Southern Conference in Slavic Studies, American Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies Conference, Triangle Intellectual History Seminar, and a 2015 IFK-sponsored workshop.

Publications

„The Social Democrats of Scholarship: Austrian Imperial Peripheries and the Making of a Progressive Science of Nationality, 1885–1903“, in: *Religions* 6, no. 4 (December 2015), p. 1232–1248.