



## Lecture Series “Signatures of World Society”

# Enforcing Abolition and the Emergence of Humanitarian Intervention in the 19th Century

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Tuesday,  
**29 April 2025**  
**6.15 p.m.**  
Room X-C3-107

The practice of humanitarian intervention – that is, of military intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign state to stop the mass atrocities and the violation of humanitarian norms – is commonly situated within the international politics of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Yet, recent scholarship has identified the roots of humanitarian intervention in the nineteenth century. In this context, the practice of enforcing the abolition of the slave trade was pivotal because it established the concept of humanitarian intervention as a recognized instrument in international politics. Closely intertwined with imperial and colonial projects, the enforcement of abolition also shaped more general legal debates of when and how “civilized” states should intervene in a humanitarian crisis. These debates went far beyond the sole issue of intervening militarily against the slave trade but significantly connected and shaped various fields of nineteenth-century humanitarianism.

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This lecture will also be transmitted via Zoom  
Meeting ID: 696 7099 4418 – Passcode: 609070