

SEMINAR SERIES 2007

TUESDAY 26 JUNE

## PROFESSOR PATRICK MANNING

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### *"The Past in the Public Eye: Historical Writing and Human-Rights Debates."*

Debates over human rights play out, occasionally, through historical discourse. Whether the rights claimed or rejected address gender, race, nationality, or other categorizations, the opposing sides sometimes appeal to the past to make their case. Perhaps a prejudice is rendered more palatable if it can be shown to be of long standing. In France, for instance, debates over the history of slavery in the Atlantic and in Africa served to polarize political positions in 2005 and 2006.

This exploration of human-rights debates takes both case-study and global approaches. Focusing on recent cases in national electoral politics, it addresses cases including Australia, France, India, Bolivia, and the United States, to demonstrate the dynamics by which historical approaches to human rights are introduced into electoral politics. Then, turning to assembling the cases into a world-historical context, the presentation argues that such behavior goes beyond national idiosyncrasy to reflect a global dynamic of debate and negotiation in establishing principles of human rights.

#### Biographical information

Patrick Manning is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of World History at the University of Pittsburgh. He is also president of the World History Network, Inc., a nonprofit corporation fostering research in world history. A specialist in world history and African history, his current research addresses global historiography, early human history, migration in world history, the African diaspora, and the demography of African slavery.

In his 2007 project at the Humanities Research Centre, Manning will focus on identifying ways in which the histories of aboriginal and immigrant groups have been debated and distorted through national political discourse. He seeks to identify global patterns in the debates of such countries as France, Australia, Mexico, Sudan, Indonesia, and the United States.

He was educated at the California Institute of Technology (BS in Chemistry, 1963) and the University of Wisconsin - Madison (MS in History and Economics, PhD in History 1969). He was trained as a specialist in the economic history of Africa, and went on to explore demographic, social, and cultural patterns in Africa and the African diaspora. Manning taught at Northeastern University, 1984-2006, where he directed the World History Center and directed twelve PhD students in world history. He serves as Vice President of the Teaching Division of the American Historical Association, 2004-2006.

ALL WELCOME

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