



MEDIA ADVISORY

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Weiser Center Events to Focus on Historic Anniversaries of 2009

Conference and series dedicated to the many iconic “Nines” and the shifts inspired by events 20, 70, 90, and 220 years ago.

DATE: Ongoing events Sept-Dec; conference December 3-4, 2009.

In Fall 2009, the Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia, along with other partnering units at the University of Michigan, will present a series of programs focused on the iconic “nines” of the modern era. Few readers of the New York Times on February 7, 1989, may have paid much attention to the short article on page A-3 describing negotiations that had begun the day before in Warsaw between the communist government and the opposition. Events moved to the front pages by June, when those negotiations produced elections that swept the communists out of power in Poland. Within a few months the entire region would follow. The Hungarian parliament passed a massive democratic reform package in October, the Bulgarian leadership resigned in early November, and the Czechoslovak Party surrendered power after a peaceful “Velvet Revolution” later that month. On Christmas Day the dictator of Romania, Nicolae Ceaușescu, was arrested and executed in 1989’s only moment of violence. Already in August the border between Austria and Hungary had been opened, starting a crack in the so-called “iron curtain” that culminated with the opening of the Berlin Wall on November 9. The Soviet Union would exist for a few more years, but by the end of 1989 the Cold War was effectively over.

The 20th anniversary of 1989 and the collapse of communism that would shortly spread from Poland to China’s western borders inspire reflection on the great shift that occurred that year. But

the end of other decades—1979 in Iran and Afghanistan, the financial crisis in 1929, and in exemplary ways, 1789 in France—inspire similar commemorative reconsiderations. These and other “nines” include moments of transition and change, possibility, and crisis.

The Weiser Center’s signature fall series, “*The Nines: Brinks, Cusps, and Perceptions of Possibility—from 1789-2009*,” will kick off on September 17 with a talk on the European events of 1989 by Andrei S. Markovits, Arthur F. Thurnau Professor and Karl W. Deutsch Collegiate Professor of Comparative Politics and German Studies. Other noted speakers throughout the semester include former Polish president Aleksander Kwaśniewski, political scientist and historian William H. Sewell, Jr., anthropologist Katherine Verdery, journalist and politician Veton Surroi, writer Andrei Codrescu, and political scientist Grigore Pop-Eleches. In addition, several events including films, concerts, artistic demonstrations, and a photo exhibition of the Berlin Wall will take place. The series will culminate with a conference on December 3-4 that is co-sponsored by the Center for Chinese Studies. For more information including event times and locations, please visit www.ii.umich.edu/wcee.

SPONSORS: Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies, Center for Chinese Studies, Center for European Studies-European Union Center, Center for Russian and East European Studies

The Ronald and Eileen Weiser Center for Europe and Eurasia (WCEE) supports faculty and student research, teaching, collaboration, and public engagement in studying the institutions, cultures, and histories of these regions. WCEE is housed in the University of Michigan International Institute with the Center for European Studies-European Union Center (CES-EUC), the Center for Russian and East European Studies (CREES), and the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies (WCED). Named in honor of Ronald and Eileen Weiser and inspired by their time in Slovakia during Ambassador Weiser's service as U.S. ambassador from 2001-04, WCEE began operations in September 2008. For more information, visit <http://www.ii.umich.edu/wcee>.

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