Rudolf J. Siebert was born in Frankfurt a.M. Germany in October of 1927. He studied at the prestigious Lessing Gymnasium in Frankfurt until he was drafted into World War II, where he fought in the German Luftwaffe and Wehrmacht. He was later captured and brought to the United States as a prisoner of war. However, he was classified an anti-Nazi and sent back to help democratize his homeland. He later studied history, philosophy, sociology, psychology and theology at the University of Frankfurt a.M., the University of Mainz, the University of Münster, and the Catholic University of America in Washington D.C. In 1965, he took a position at Western Michigan University in the Department of Comparative Religion. He has lectured widely in the United States, Canada, as well as Western and Eastern Europe. He was the founder and director of the Center for Humanistic Future Studies at WMU, and the director of two international courses on the “Future of Religion” in Dubrovnik, Croatia, and “Religion and Civil Society” in Yalta, Crimea. He has written dozens of books, eleven since 2010, including his three volume Manifesto of the Critical Theory of Religion: The Wholly Other, Liberation, Happiness, and the Rescue of the Hopeless (Brill). Dr. Siebert has also written hundreds of articles and book chapters, covering the topics of Critical Theory, Liberation Theology, Hegel, aesthetics, Malcolm X, Psychoanalysis, political violence, fascism, and Christianity in critical dialogue with other religions. He is the founder and of the Critical Theory of Religion and Society, which continues to be developed to this day. He has eight children, fourteen grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.
Critical Theory and the Study of Religion
A Conference in Honor of Dr. Rudolf Siebert, Professor Emeritus, Department of Comparative Religion, Western Michigan University

November 16, 2019
Fetzer Center rm. 2016-2018

9:00 – 9:10 Welcome address: Dr. Jennifer Bott, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

9:05 - 9:15 Introduction Dr. Dustin Byrd, Associate Professor, Olivet College

9:20 - 9:40 Michael Ott
“Remembrance, Hope, and Revolutionary Action: Walter Benjamin’s Critical Theory of Religion and Society”

9:45 - 10:05 Dustin Byrd
“Ethno-Apotheosis contra Bilderverbot: The Frankfurt School’s Struggle Against the Idolatry of Racial Politics”

10:15 - 10:35 Nicholas Budimir
“Conspiracy Theories in Light of the Critical Theory of Religion”

10:40 - 11:00 Toby Johnson
“A Theoretical Journey: debates about Comparative Religion & a future for Sikh Studies”

11:05 - 11:25 Lee McCorkle
“The Great Experiment: Dialectical Fascism in the Era of Post-Factual American Discourse. In honour of Professor Rudolf J. Siebert, Emeritus”

11:30 - 12:00 Discussion

12:00 - 13:00 Lunch for presenters and invited guests