

“Politics of Denial: Germany’s International Responsibility and the Silencing of Mass Atrocities”



**3:30 pm, Wednesday, Sept. 4
Brown & Gold Room,
Bernhard Center, WMU**

**Bernhard Stahl
Professor of International Politics
University of Passau (Germany)**

The past years have been marked by a high number of conflicts with mass atrocities and humanitarian emergencies. The civil wars in Yemen and South Sudan or the fate of the Rohingya in Myanmar provide only a few examples. Most of these situations are in dire need of responsible external support for humanitarian relief or conflict solution. Yet, in the political discourses of many countries, they hardly emerge as relevant issues, if at all. This stands in stark contrast, not only to the common promise of the UN charter, but also to value-laden aims of national foreign policies. Using Germany as a case study, this talk examines the thesis that mass atrocity situations are silenced in globally influential countries, which thus fail to assume their responsibilities. By applying discourse-analysis to statements of the chancellor, foreign ministers and parliamentary faction leaders, it is argued that Germany, in fact, silences mass atrocity situations. Three silencing mechanisms - non-mentioning, trivialization and framing - are identified, allowing us to draw important implications regarding future theoretical and explanatory analysis.

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