



Universität Hamburg
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FAKULTÄT
FÜR RECHTSWISSENSCHAFT



PUBLIC LECTURE

EUROPEAN COLONIAL LAW: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

20 OCTOBER, 2025, 18.15, ROOM ESA W 221
NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED

For a long time, colonial law was celebrated in Europe as a symbol of national achievement; an orderly system that justified overseas expansion while ignoring the voices and experiences of the colonized. Historians and jurists debated whether one empire was more “humane” than another, while the darker realities of dispossession, violence, racism, and enslavement remained largely invisible. Since the mid-twentieth century, however, scholarship has begun to challenge these Eurocentric and nationalist narratives. Today, historians ask fundamental questions such as: Was there ever truly a distinct “colonial law”? How did legal systems overlap across empires and continents? And how might acknowledging non-European legal traditions transform our understanding of the past? This public lecture invites us to explore these debates and to rethink European colonial law as a complex, contested field that continues to shape our world today.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:



Prof. Tamar Herzog

Monroe Gutman Professor of Latin American Affairs;
Department of History, Harvard University

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