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Boston College Law School

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## Leading Sociologist and Philosopher Habermas to Deliver Lecture May 8

2014 NEWS ARCHIVE

04/24/14



Newton, MA--Jürgen Habermas, a sociologist and philosopher closely identified with critical theory and pragmatism, will visit Boston College as part of the Distinguished Lectures in Jurisprudence series, a joint venture between the Clough Center for the Study of Constitutional Democracy and the Law School. Habermas's lecture is entitled "Transnationalizing Democracy: The Example of the European Union." The event will take place Thursday, May 8, at 5:00 p.m. in Higgins Hall, Room 300 on BC's Chestnut Hill campus.

One of the world's leading intellectuals, Habermas has received wide recognition both for his contributions to philosophy and for his commentaries on contemporary political issues.

Born in Düsseldorf, Germany, in 1929, Habermas was deeply affected by World War II and its aftermath. The revelation of the atrocities of the Third Reich through the Nuremberg Trials had a lasting impact on his political and philosophical views by provoking him to be skeptical of authority. After studying at the universities of Göttingen, Zürich, and Bonn, Habermas earned a doctorate in philosophy in 1954. Two years later, he began a habilitation under the critical theorists Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno at the University Frankfurt am Main Institute for Social Research. He later completed his habilitation under Wolfgang Abendroth at the University of Marburg before beginning his teaching career. From 1961 to 1994, Habermas held positions at several German universities; he served as "extraordinary professor" of philosophy at the University of Heidelberg, the chair of philosophy and sociology at the University of Frankfurt am Main, and the director of the Max Planck Institute in Starnberg.

Closely associated with the Frankfurt School of social theory, Habermas is perhaps best known for his scholarship on communicative rationality, the public sphere, linguistic intersubjectivity, and the philosophical discourse of modernity. He first gained extensive public attention in Germany for his first book, *Structural Transformation and the Public Sphere* (1962), which detailed the social history of the development of the bourgeois public sphere. He later explored political philosophy and critical-social analysis in *Toward a Rational Society* (1970) and *Theory and Practice* (1973). In his magnum opus, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), Habermas criticized the rise of the welfare state, corporate capitalism, and mass consumption as responsible for the rationalization of public life. This rationalization, he argued, resulted in the deterioration of boundaries between public and private life. Furthermore, through the replacement of participatory democracy with representative democracy, it led to the widespread disfranchisement of citizens.

By bridging continental and Anglo-American traditions of thought, Habermas has significantly influenced philosophy, legal thought, sociology, communication studies, argumentation theory, rhetoric, developmental psychology, and theology. Indeed, in 2007, *The Times Higher*

Education Guide listed him as one of the ten most-cited authors in the humanities.

For more information please email [clough.center@bc.edu](mailto:clough.center@bc.edu).

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