



Star historian and Balkan expert Maria Todorova delivers this year's IWM Lectures in Human Sciences

The IWM is honored to welcome Maria Todorova as the speaker of this year's IWM Lectures in Human Sciences, held in cooperation with the University of Vienna. Todorova is professor emerita at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and is widely regarded as one of the most distinguished experts in the field of Southeastern European history and Balkan studies. Her seminal 1997 book *Imagining the Balkans* has become a staple of university curricula worldwide.

No, it is not a mistake. The titles of this year's IWM Lectures in Human Sciences allude to *Mission Impossible*, the Tom Cruise film series. While it is impossible to perform his physical stunts, the tricky mountainous terrain of the Balkans and their trickier history offer enough vertigo. Still, there is nothing comparable to looking down from a mountain peak in the Balkans. But Gadamer is there, with his defense of humanities, with his thoughts on tradition, prejudice, experience, dialogue, negotiation, reciprocity, situatedness, and the fusion of horizons. In three consecutive lectures, taking place on **16, 23, and 25 October**, Maria Todorova will attempt to take stock of her own shifting horizons as she has both experienced and contemplated the Balkans over the course of her life.

The first lecture – **Tracing the Balkans or Mission Possible: Fallout** – tracks the beginnings and fading of the Balkans, and the fallout from this by trying to address some of the omissions and insights coming with the span of several decades, particularly the pertinence of the category of race. IWM Rector [Misha Glenny](#) will moderate the evening.

The second lecture – **Measuring the Balkans or Mission Possible: Dead Reckoning** – seeks to describe the different approaches or measurements that aim to reach this moving object or shifting unit, from specialization to the institutionalization of the discipline as well as the dominant trends that move it. The evening will be moderated by [Philipp Ther](#), professor of Central European History at the University of Vienna.

The third lecture – **Framing Balkan Biographies or Mission Possible: Rogue Nation** – shifts the perspective drastically to focus on individuals, with the intention to let them speak and enter in a “true conversation, a conversation in which we seek to find ‘our’ language—to grasp what we have in common” (Gadamer), by presenting brief biographies of several relatively unknown individuals from different social backgrounds. IWM Permanent Fellow [Ivan Vejvoda](#) will moderate the third evening.

[Maria Todorova](#) is a Bulgarian historian specializing in the Balkans. She publishes extensively on Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Communism. *Imagining the Balkans* (1997) is her most influential book. Todorova is Edward William & Jane Marr Gutsell Endowed Professor Emerita at the

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Currently, she is Guest of the Institute at the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM Vienna).

About the IWM Lectures in Human Sciences: The IWM launched this series of public lectures in 2000 on the occasion of the 100th birthday of Hans Georg Gadamer, a supporter of the Institute since its inception. Previous speakers include distinguished scholars such as Paul Ricoeur, Zygmunt Bauman, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Eva Illouz, and Seyla Benhabib. Selected lectures have been published in English (Harvard University Press, Cambridge), German (Passagen Verlag, Wien; Suhrkamp Verlag, Berlin), and Polish (Kurhaus Publishers, Warsaw).

Save the date:

The Balkans: Mission Possible

IWM Lectures in Human Sciences with Maria Todorova

Part I. Tracing the Balkans or Mission Possible: Fallout

Wednesday, 16 October 2024, 18:00 CEST

Aula am Campus, Hof 1.11 (University of Vienna), Spitalgasse 2, 1090 Vienna

More information can be found [here](#) (registration required)

Part II. Measuring the Balkans or Mission Possible: Dead Reckoning

Wednesday, 23 October 2024, 18:00 CEST

Aula am Campus, Hof 1.11 (University of Vienna), Spitalgasse 2, 1090 Vienna

More information can be found [here](#) (registration required)

Part III. Framing Balkan Biographies or Mission Possible: Rogue Nation

Friday, 25 October 2024, 18:00 CEST

Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen (IWM Vienna), Spittelauer Lände 3, 1090 Vienna

More information can be found [here](#) (registration required)

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