



## The Department of International Relations

invites you to a department seminar by

**Thomas Peak**

on

### **WESTPHALIA FROM BELOW: HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION, R2P, AND THE MYTH OF 1648**

**| 19 FEBRUARY 2020 | 3:30 – 5:00 P.M. |**

**NADOR 9 BUILDING, FACULTY TOWER | ROOM 609**



The ‘Myth of Westphalia’ is a grounding assumption of international relations as an academic discipline and as a set of practices. The persistence of this myth, and the pronounced misinterpretation of the Treaties of Osnabrück and Münster, have impoverished visions of international human protection — none more so than in the case of Responsibility to Protect. Employing human dignity as an ordering concept, and approaching the seventeenth-century lifeworld from the ground up, this talk exposes the untenability of the ‘Westphalia thesis’ — the absolute right of non-intervention enjoyed by sovereign states — as a normative precept. With the mythical view put to rest, what actually happened in Westphalia is far more interesting. The negotiators and the treaties in fact established an order grounded in human dignity in which sovereignty and intervention are not opposed — an order that has important and valuable continuities with more recent issues in international politics, particularly the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention.

**Thomas Peak** is a postdoctoral Research Associate and Acting Chief Administrator at the Centre on Geopolitics, University of Cambridge. His forthcoming book, *Westphalia from below: Humanitarian Intervention and the Myth of 1648*, is in press with Hurst & Co. and Oxford University Press.