



Forum Neuzeit  
Sommersemester

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## Conspiratorial Thinking: Narratives in Modern History

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### Of Conspiracy Theories and Viruses: Misinformation, Disinformation and HIV/AIDS

In 1983, a particular conspiracy theory arose in the United States – namely, that the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) had been artificially constructed by the U.S. government as a biological weapon.

The presentation will trace the evolution and permutations of this particular conspiracy theory from its origins until today. The goals of the individuals and groups spreading it have varied widely, whether one speaks of certain gay-rights activists in the U.S., the East German Stasi and Soviet KGB, the Marxist-Leninist Party of Germany (MLPD), right-wing militias and anti-Semites, or former Libyan dictator Muammar Kadhafi. However, its effects have remained constant. It has proven to be a danger not only to democratic politics, but also to public health.

Dr. Douglas Selvage (Ph.D., Yale University, History, 1998) is a project director in the Education and Research Division of the Office of the Federal Commissioner for Stasi Records (BStU) in Berlin. He is currently directing two historical research projects, "The GDR, the Ministry for State Security, and the CSCE Process, 1973-1989," and "The Ministry for State Security and the MGB/KGB in the Soviet Bloc, 1950-1989." His most recent publication (with Christopher Nehring) in German was the study, *AIDS Conspiracy: The Ministry of State Security and the KGB's AIDS Disinformation Campaign*.