

# The Centre for Comparative and Public Law Faculty of Law, The University of Hong Kong

*Presents a Seminar*

## **William Blackstone and His Impact on the Rise of Modern Constitutionalism**

by

**Horst Dippel**

*Professor, University of Kassel*

Professor Dippel is teaching British and American Studies at the University of Kassel, Germany. He has published widely in the field of the history of modern constitutionalism. Amongst his numerous books and essays are: *Germany and the American Revolution: A Sociohistorical Investigation in Late Eighteenth-Century Thinking*, transl. by Bernard A. Uhlendorf, with a Foreword by R. R. Palmer. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977), *The American Revolution, 1763-1787*, (Suhrkamp, 1985), *History of the USA*, (Beck, 1996), *Executive and Legislative Powers in the Constitutions of 1848-49*, (ed) (Duncker & Humblot, 1999). In 2002, he started to edit the constitutions of the world since 1776, which covers, so far, Europe and the Americas. His seven-volume edition of *U.S. Constitutional Documents, 1776-1860*, will be completed by the end of the year. Currently, he is working on a major study of American constitutionalism, including national and state constitutions, covering the period up to the Civil War.

In this lecture Professor Dippel will discuss the contribution William Blackstone made to the rise of modern constitutionalism. He will start from the assumption that, when Americans sat down in the late 18th century to write their constitutions, they rejected William Blackstone's constitutional ideas, only to take up afterwards his common law ideas for their newly formed societies. Instead, it will be shown that a number of Blackstonian ideas had become so familiar in America thanks to its ubiquitous author that they went into the American constitutional construction without ever quoting Blackstone directly in support of it. In contrast to the received wisdom, William Blackstone has to be assessed as a major contributor to core principles of modern constitutionalism.

**Tuesday, 9 September 2008**

**1:00 – 2:00 pm**

**Room 425, 4/F KK Leung Building**

**The University of Hong Kong**

**ALL ARE WELCOME!**