The Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (IERES) is pleased to invite you to:

The International Tracing Service: What’s in a Name?
Part of IERES’ Visiting Scholar Roundtable Series

with

Jennifer L. Rodgers
Visiting Scholar, IERES

In June of 2007, the CBS news program 60 Minutes broadcast “Hitler’s Secret Archive” about the International Tracing Service, a humanitarian agency in Bad Arolsen, Germany. It detailed the longtime struggle to reopen the archive, the world’s largest central repository of biographical information on victims of the Holocaust, to the general public. The report, referring to the agency as “Hitler’s Secret Archive,” is indicative of the myths and sensationalism that have surrounded the tracing service since the 1940s. In fact, the organization, also called “the archive of horrors” and the “shop window of democracy” has a much more lurid and compelling history than granted it by media coverage. Epistemic anxieties born during the post-World War II era effectively recoded the original humanitarian mandate of the agency. Control over the archive had immense symbolic and practical significance for the international community: it promoted and legitimized various political and cultural agendas. Negotiations about the future of the ITS thus not only reflected larger geopolitical considerations, but directly impacted the Cold War, transatlantic relations, European integration and the politics of Holocaust memory.

Jennifer Rodgers is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Pennsylvania. Her dissertation, tentatively titled “From the ‘Archive of Horrors’ to the ‘Shop Window of Democracy’: The International Tracing Service and the Transnational Politics of the Past,” explores the transnational instrumentalization of the world’s largest archive of Holocaust victim information. She is currently a Visiting Scholar at IERES, a Sarah P. Mitchell fellow at the University of Pennsylvania, and a doctoral fellow at the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC.

Thursday, May 5, 2011
5:00-6:30 p.m.
Voesar Conference Room
1957 E Street, NW, Suite 412
Please RSVP with your name and affiliation to ieresgwu@gwu.edu.

This event is on the record.