Leo Tolstoy on Humane War

Date: 05 November 2021 (Friday)
Time: 10:00 (HKT)
Venue: Online (This talk will be held via Zoom.)

Speaker:
Samuel Moyn, Yale University

Abstract
In the era of what Americans call “forever war,” Leo Tolstoy’s lifelong suspicion of making war humane deserves a second look. This lecture reconstructs his views in his fiction and non-fiction and investigates its relevance to contemporary and future forms of war. Today the laws of war call for restraint, requiring protection of captured or wounded soldiers, as well as civilians in harm’s way. Yet Tolstoy, witness to the first international treaty on the subject, was already skeptical that the values of humanity allowed for war, and placed in the mouth of one of his most memorable characters in War and Peace a profound critique of trying to make war humane - one Tolstoy revised the rest of his life. Is it applicable today?

Short Biography
Samuel Moyn is Henry R. Luce Professor of Jurisprudence at Yale Law School and a Professor of History at Yale University. He has written several books in his fields of European intellectual history and human rights history, including The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History (2010), and edited or coedited a number of others. His most recent books are Christian Human Rights (2015), based on Mellon Distinguished Lectures at the University of Pennsylvania in fall 2014, and Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World (2018). His newest book is Humane: How the United States Abandoned Peace and Reinvented War (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2021). Over the years he has written in venues such as Boston Review, the Chronicle of Higher Education, Dissent, The Nation, The New Republic, the New York Times, and the Wall Street Journal.

Registration is required. Please email: jooglee@cityu.edu.hk