Romanian Studies & Hungarian Studies
Junior Scholar Conference
March 22-23, 2019

This year’s keynote address, “Fascist Reburials and ‘Regenerative’ Cleansing: Iron Guard’s Festival of the Dead in Romania (1940),” will be presented by Dr. Constantin Iordachi, Professor of History at the Central European University, Budapest, editor of the journal East-Central Europe (Leiden: Brill), and President of the International Association for Comparative Fascist Studies (www.comfas.org). His latest publications include: Liberalism, Constitutional Nationalism and Minorities: The Making of Romanian citizenship, c. 1750-1918 (Leiden: Brill, 2019); and A fasiszta Vasgárda Romániában, 1927–1941. Karizma, politika, erőszak (Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2018). English ed: Martyrdom to Purification: The Fascist Faith of the Legion ‘Archangel Michael’ in Romania, 1927-1941 (London: Routledge, forthcoming 2019).

An extensive academic literature has documented the fascists’ fixation—indeed a morbid obsession—with the dead and funeral ceremonies, leading certain scholars to speak of fascist necrophilia. The Romanian Iron Guard provides a most striking example of the centrality of the cult of the dead for the fascist ideology and ritual practice. After its advent to power in September 1940, the Iron Guard placed pompous and carefully-staged (re)burial ceremonies at the very center of its political style in order to bestow legitimacy and sacrality to the would-be fascist elites and the resurrected nation. Iron Guard used dead bodies to forge its body-politics. Its 130-day rule was a morbid fascist festival of the dead, marked by an extraordinary frenzy of exhumations and reburials. The presentation argues that funeral ceremonies served as rites of passage marking not only the deceased’s’ transition from ‘this world’ to the ‘other world,’ but also the political transition to the fascist totalitarian state. They provided the ideological and ritual basis of the new regime, by articulating discourses of divine election, victimhood and martyrdom but also criminal revenge that was to lead to ‘national salvation.’

March 22  1:15 PM - 4 PM
March 23  10:35 AM - 6 PM, keynote address 4:15 PM
Georgian Room, Indiana Memorial Union

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