Globalization has been steadily increasing over the last few centuries but it has never been a singular, transnational process. It has always been fractured. Modern empires spanned the globe but segmentally, each with a distinct imperial sphere of interest partially separated from the others and often in conflict. The first half of the 20th century saw a notably fractured and violent phase of global expansion through two world wars and the Great Depression. The second half saw the decline of empires but as the nation-state became globalized, fracturing was now by (mostly peaceful) nation-states. This represents an enduring tension between political power relations which take inherently authoritative and territorially-confined forms versus economic (and to some extent ideological) power relations which are more diffuse, unbounded, and transnational. Anyone studying globalization must treat it as an expanding but fractured process.

Michael Mann is Distinguished Professor of Sociology, UCLA. He has honorary doctorates from McGill University and The University of the Aegean, and is an Honorary Professor at Cambridge University. Author of the four-volume The Sources of Social Power: Vol I: A History of Power from the Beginning to 1760; Vol II: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760 -1914; Vol III: Global Empires and Revolution, Globalizations, 195 -2012 (early 2013). He has also published Incoherent Empire; Fascists; The Dark Side of Democracy; and Power in the 21st Century: Conversations with John Hall. He is also the subject of John Hall & Ralph Schroeder (eds.), The Anatomy of Power: The Social Theory of Michael Mann.

21st is the lecture series of the Mellichamp Professors of Global Studies, with support of the Orfalea Center for Global and International Studies.