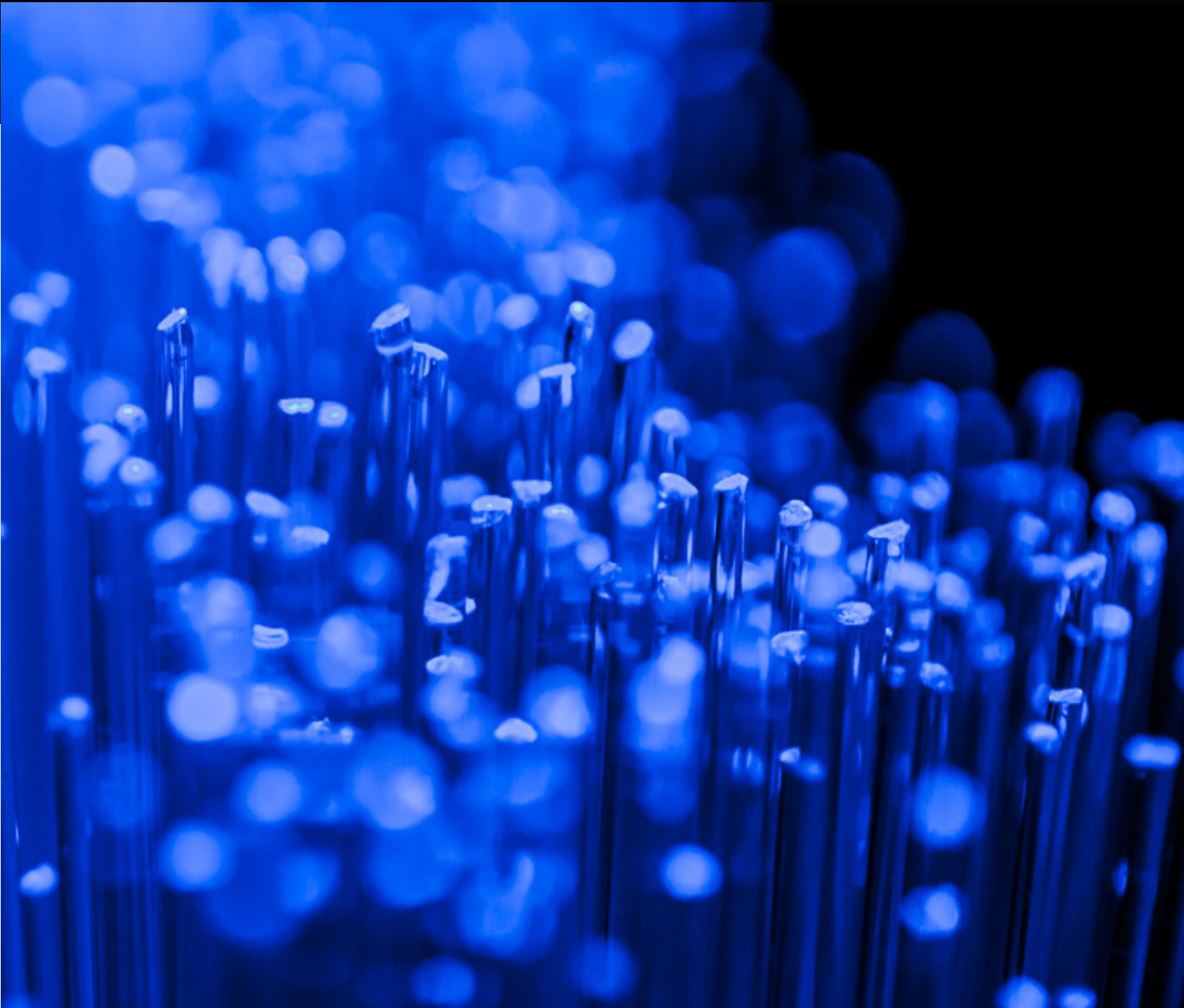


Archive of the Social Science Seminar



2020-2021 | Science and the State

Cover photograph: Ben Felten Photography
Credit: Munirah Bishop

Archive of the Social Science Seminar

2020-2021

Founded in 1973, the School of Social Science is the most recent and smallest of the four Schools of the Institute for Advanced Study. It takes as its mission the analysis of contemporary societies and social change. It is devoted to a pluralistic and critical approach to social research, from a multidisciplinary and international perspective. Each year, the School invites approximately twenty-five scholars who conduct research with various perspectives, methods and topics, providing a space for intellectual debate and mutual enrichment. Scholars are drawn from a wide range of disciplines, notably political science, economics, law, sociology, anthropology, history, philosophy, and literature. To facilitate intellectual engagement among the visiting scholars, the School defines a theme for each year.

Besides the informal conversations that take place all year long, the scientific activity of the School is mostly centered on two moments. The weekly Social Science Seminar offers the opportunity to all members to present their work, whether it is related to the theme or not. The Theme Seminar meets on a bimonthly basis and is mostly based on discussion of the literature and works relevant to the theme. In 2020-2021, the theme was “Science and the State.” The program was led by Alondra Nelson, Harold F. Linder Professor, and Visiting Professor Charis Thompson, Professor of Sociology at the London School of Economics, in collaboration with Didier Fassin, James D. Wolfensohn Professor in the School, and Visiting Professor David Owen, Professor of Social and Political Philosophy at the University of Southampton in Term 1.

**School of Social Science
2020-2021**

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Alondra Nelson, Harold F. Linder Professor

Visiting Professors

David Owen – *Term 1*
Charis Thompson

Professors Emeriti

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Arnaud Orain - *Joint Member w/SHS*
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Christo Sims
Robyn C. Spencer
Fabien Truong
Sonja van Wichelen
Sarah E. Vaughn
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Anne-Claire Defossez

Donald W. Light - *Term 1*
Luis Mireles-Flores - *Term 2*
Oscar Sosa López

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I

Social Science Seminar

THE SCIENTIST-IN-CHIEF
EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY AND TECHNOCRATIC CHARISMA IN THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

Alondra Nelson

September 21, 2020

JUSTIFICATION AND VINDICATION IN ETHICS AND POLITICS
FROM MORAL NORMS TO ETHICAL CULTURE

David Owen

We standardly picture our accountability as agents in terms of our accountability to others, a form of accountability that is exhibited in a game of justification and excuses and finds expression in an ideal of the moral agent with clean hands who has discharged their debts. However, alongside this form of ethical accountability, we can identify a second stance towards ourselves as agents, one that is focused on whether an action or course of conduct is vindicated by what it turns out we have done, the outcome which the exercise of our agency has brought about. This form of accountability to oneself finds expression in the ideal of the ethical agent who can affirm their actions (and, in widest scope, life), that is, who has no reason, all things considered, to regret that they have exercised their agency as they have.

Any coherent ethical outlook will involve both justificatory and vindicatory stances to one's agency, but how each is fleshed out and how their relationship is articulated within that outlook can vary widely. In this paper, I use Nietzsche's distinction between 'noble ethics' and 'slave morality' to illustrate one way that this may play out in ethics and Machiavelli's distinction between Christian humanist and civic republican political outlooks to illustrate one way that it may play out on politics. The central claim that these examples serve is that the claim that moral and political philosophy cannot sensibly (or, stronger, coherently) limit their focus to the question of what are justified moral or political norms but rather need to turn to the analysis and evaluation of ethical cultures. A secondary claim is that the two most obvious strategies for relating justificatory and vindicatory stances, namely, structuring one through the lens of the other, each also generate non-trivial problems.

September 28, 2020

**HOW SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE AND IGNORANCE BUILD NON-ISSUES
THE NON-EMERGENCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH ISSUES**

Emmanuel Henry

Whereas studies on the construction of public problems analyze mostly the processes of publicization, my own research focuses on the mechanisms which, on the contrary, contribute to making mobilization harder, or to limiting the possibilities of public debate on certain issues. Among these processes, my work highlights the contribution of science, expertise, and science-based policy instruments to the construction of public problems.

Recent trends of research in science and technology studies have shown the importance of studying ignorance to better understand the manufacturing of knowledge and non-knowledge and the balances of power that affect this process with specific attention to the role of industry. Following on from this research, I try to get rid of the ignorance/knowledge boundary to analyze the kind of knowledge produced in order to regulate health issues. My aim is to understand how the structuration of knowledge, ignorance, and undone science solidifies the definition of an issue and makes it difficult to challenge. Seen from this perspective, occupational and environmental health are very good examples of problems that are constructed in such a way as to keep them low profile and make the policies that are supposed to address them ineffective.

Two empirical examples are used to carry out this demonstration. The first is an analysis of how a European group of experts deals with industrial data to produce occupational exposure limits used in regulations that manage workers' exposure to chemicals. The second is based on attempts in epidemiology to use population attributable fractions to measure the proportion or number of occupational or environmental cancers. With materials collected using the methods of qualitative sociology (ethnographic observations, interviews, and literature reviews), their analysis shows how the production of a very specific kind of knowledge at the boundary of science and policy can reduce the scope of issues to the point of turning these situations into non-problems that legitimize public inaction.

October 5, 2020

**CYRUS EATON AND THE BATTLE OVER
PUGWASH INTERNATIONALISM, 1957-1962**

Waqar H. Zaidi

Cyrus Eaton's financial sponsorship of the celebrated early Pugwash Scientists' Conferences is still commemorated today in the organization's official histories and in histories of arms control, anti-bomb movements, and scientific internationalism. His other internationalist activity, including his non-scientists Pugwash conferences, is missing from these histories, and from our historical understanding of 1950s internationalism more generally. This paper frames Eaton's involvement with the Pugwash scientists as part of a wider internationalist project, and by doing so argues that the Pugwash scientists' organization was formed through clashing internationalist impulses: that of the scientists and that of Eaton. Once Eaton was pushed out of the developing scientists' organization, his involvement was downplayed, and the origins of Pugwash were rewritten to suit the developing needs and interests of the organization's scientific leadership.

Scientific conferences have long been recognized as sites for the performance and construction of internationalism. This paper emphasizes the importance also of understanding the conference as a visionary or imaginative construct. Visions, stories, and histories of scientific conferences have also, the paper argues, played an important constitutive role in twentieth century scientific internationalism, and helped modulate or connect relationships between scientists' internationalism and those of other internationalists. This paper makes these points by exploring the tussle to define what the Pugwash Scientists Conferences stood for during the organization's early years, and how it came to mould the early histories of the conference.

October 12, 2020

INTIMATE INSCRIPTIONS

RACE, SEX, LABOR AND THE PERSISTENCE OF THE FEUDAL

Anne Norton

In this talk I examine the persistence of feudalism, or what Michael Hanchard has termed “feudality.” There are three dimensions of this regime that escape the governance of democratic, republican and democratic socialist regimes: arbitrary authority, hierarchy, and power in the blood. The last turns on claims of an embodied entitlement.

Feudalism persists in law. Critical elements of feudal order survived in the UK: conspicuously in monarchy, aristocracy, titles, and the House of Lords. The survivals are less apparent - but profound in former colonies. Karen Orren’s *Belated Feudalism* read the inscription of the feudal law of master and servant in American labor law. I carry it further in several senses.

Orren thinks this ends with the regulatory state. I do not. I argue that feudalism spread with British common law throughout the British empire. It was part of a common process of the destruction of the commons and the establishment of a regime of private property *globally*. That process was the Enclosures, the long process of destruction of the commons. Enclosure was annihilating not only common lands and practices, but the very concept of commons. This was accomplished by violence. Enclosure imposed a regime of private property and created a mobile body of workers from the displaced and dispossessed.

Imperial expansion in general and settler colonialism in particular saw the process of Enclosure enacted on a global field where it was echoed and amplified. The strategies of the Enclosures were the engine of settler colonialism. Dispossessed commoners of the metropole become available for the project of colonization as unfree labor.

Details of the persistence and transformation of the feudal in capitalist settler colonies point to the imbrication of race and capital. Judah Benjamin, for example, who served as US Senator and as Secretary of War and Secretary of State for the Confederacy was a slaveholder who sold his slaves to invest in the Illinois Central Railroad as a founding partner. When the Confederacy was defeated, he fled to London, where he became a successful barrister and wrote *Treatise on the Law of Sale of Personal Property*, “Benjamin on Sales” the principal textbook on property law in the US, Britain, and throughout the Commonwealth. Benjamin’s understanding of common law of property in the British Empire enabled him both to negotiate the transmutations of capital from persons to shares, and to author a magisterial account of the law of property.

The imbrication of race and capital is also revealed in embodied entitlement. Power in the blood, in the body, did not pass away, it just changed its form. The title to rank and command no longer “I am your lord” but “I am white” “I am a man.” Race in the United States testifies to both embodied privilege and the governing power of economic inequality. Consider Eric Garner who died as a policeman held him in a chokehold, suspected of selling cigarettes illegally, close kin indeed to the peasant killed for poaching the lord’s game. One could say Garner’s death was an exaction of capitalism, not white supremacy, but it is impossible in America, in the Commonwealth, to tell them apart. The persistence of feudalism is written into our laws, into the sequestration of the economic realm from the political, into our understanding of the bodies we inhabit.

We have not defeated feudalism. It is not merely that we have failed to achieve socialism, communism, or anarchism. We have not yet achieved the promise of the liberal revolutions. The simple democratic demand of the English Revolutionaries still echoes “the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he.”

The survival of feudal forms over this very long *durée* proves the adaptive power of structures of oppression and exploitation is great. There is no predestined progress, no certainty of historical redemption. There is only struggle. What then is to be done? There is hope in Black Lives Matter, in Standing Rock and the Antipodean efforts at the recovery of an indigenous commons. How can we emancipate our thinking on property and the bodies we inhabit? I will close by putting before you two paintings that show ways in which we of the settler colonies might come to think differently. The first is a ledger painting by a Lakota artist, Donald Montileaux, used on the cover of Rob Nichols’s *Theft Is Property!* The second is a recent painting by Australian artist Katherine Hattam, shown in the exhibit “The Landscape of Language.”

October 19, 2020

HIGH RISES
WHEN "SOCIAL INTEGRATION" MAKES "VIOLENT DIVISIONS"

Fabien Truong

This lecture presents the overview of a book project that seeks to understand the making of ordinary resistances/social solidarities through long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Grigny, one of the poorest towns in the outskirts of Paris. By mapping the striking accumulation of hardship and demonization endured by its residents, it aims to show how individuals develop hidden solidarities, acts of resistance, and coping routines. The making of these resistances/solidarities boils down to the question of what it means to “cope” and “get by” at an individual level, and what it renders possible at a community level. But as strategies of reaction and circumvention, they also sustain the structural violence to which they respond, generating new patterns of domination and oppression. This is a paradox of consequences: ordinary resistances/social solidarities provide a means to hold on, but also prevent change. They do not only respond to the violence of the social world, but ultimately nurture it. It leads to analyzing how marginalized people can be overpowered by an internal rationale of group fragmentation while experiencing common difficulties within an intricate network of social ties. In other words, it questions how “social integration” may produce “violent divisions.”

At a time when France has supposedly fallen prey to an age of “cultural insecurity,” such an interrogation replaces the narrative of identity politics with an empirical exploration of the classical “poverty of condition”/“poverty of position” tension. Showing the scope of violence linked to the poverty of position - i.e. all those vertical forms of oppression that find their way within horizontal categories, seems particularly relevant when the strongest forms of violence are often the most contained. To do so, the footprint of residential (im)mobility on social bonds and politicization must be particularly stressed.

This presentation will focus on general sociological framing and highlight the book’s progression, rather than presenting the detailed life histories and ethnographic data on which it relies. It is a first attempt to discuss its general architecture and to disentangle the use of categories such as “violence,” “resistance” and “solidarity” – an effort I intend to pursue during my stay at the IAS.

October 26, 2020

"MODERN LIFE BEGINS WITH SLAVERY"
TONI MORRISON AND THE IMAGINATION OF FREEDOM

Lawrie Balfour

This paper begins from Toni Morrison's observation that "modern life begins with slavery" to ask what it would mean to rethink the concept of freedom in the shadow of Atlantic slavery and colonial dispossession. Where canonical approaches to freedom in modern political thought typically evade or minimize the force of Morrison's observation, her own work as a novelist and social and literary critic provides a rich resource for thinking it through. In this paper, I focus on one novel, *A Mercy* (2008). Set in late-seventeenth-century North America, *A Mercy* reimagines the landscapes and the people who lived before race and slavery were conjoined in law. By situating her story at this historical moment, Morrison speaks against the color-blind mythologies of her own time and discloses the ways that the ideas of freedom associated with North American settlement were racialized.

Although the story is not straightforwardly told, Morrison's plot takes inspiration from Bacon's Rebellion (1676); her characters embody many of the forms of bondage that defined life in the early centuries of the modern age. To understand the political implications of the novel, I first explore what Morrison elsewhere calls "critical geography": her reconstruction of the routes by which Africans and Europeans made their way to North America, how they laid new maps over those already drawn by Indigenous peoples, and how they conceived their own prospects in this strange land. Second, I approach *A Mercy* as a meditation on modern subjectivity, asking how the characters' varied racial backgrounds and degrees of subjection lay bare the contingencies and the difficult work involved in constituting oneself in a world shaped by slavery and dispossession.

Finally, I suggest, to say that "modern life begins with slavery" is to articulate the ways in which we remain captured by that centuries-long process of marrying human aspirations to racialized forms of human bondage and theft. This is not the same as declaring that "the past simply is our present." Nor does it curtail the imagination of alternatives. Instead, Morrison invites readers into participation in the imaginative act of reinhabiting forgotten figures of modern life and registering the manifold ways that ghosts of slavery reappear with each remaking of the world. The freedom of the moderns, in Morrison's view, is only thinkable when we ask, again and again: what resources do we have for conceiving forms of freedom that are not predicated on the enslavement of another?

November 2, 2020

MASTER PEACE
VIOLENCE, EXPERTISE AND SUBJECT FORMATION IN LEBANON

Nikolas Kosmatopolous

Master Peace presents an ethnography of peace and crisis expertise that bridges the nascent anthropology of morality with critical research in materiality. The aim is to enhance our understanding of the role that experts play in governing political violence today. The book argues that the contemporary politics of peace features masters and disciples entangled in global hierarchies of power and is premised on the control of moral ends and technical means. Techno-Moralities form powerful twin forces that frame debates, design interventions, and largely define “the violence problem”, to paraphrase Du Bois. Their influence is particularly strong when debates, interventions and definitions are promoted as responses to the problem.

The book explores the articulations of the “violence problem” and relevant solutions in post-war Lebanon, a prime location for the theme under study. In the thirty years that followed the end of the civil war in 1989 the small country has witnessed diverse investments in the politics of post-violence and peacemaking. This politics was often marked by merged schemes of techno-morality. This symbiosis came in diverse formats. Conflict resolution specialists re-educated refugee camps and rural villages, while crisis experts monitored recalcitrant groups, such as the notorious political-military actor *Hizbullah*. These seemingly distinct moral missions often transmogrify into specialized technical processes.

While philosophical inquiries on the morality of war have often taken into account the materiality of violence, the connection is rarely made in relation to the politics of peace. I wish to show how contemporary peace expertise encapsulates a politics of techno-moral power revolving around the formation of post-violence subjects. I suggest the term “master peace” to highlight the significant influence that moral and technical hierarchies bear upon the contemporary politics of peace. *Master Peace* seeks to designate the power that these forces exercise upon debates, actions, and solutions duly put in place in order to address violence today.

The limits of war, as Clausewitz, Schmitt, and Foucault taught us, are set by the power of politics; they are not objective nor given. This book promotes a similar argument about the limits of peace. What we commonly understand under the violence problem and, by default, the possible solutions to it, are significantly subject to definitions and actions put forward by hegemonic forces that govern the global politics of peace today.

This project offers a critical exploration of these forces.

November 9, 2020

A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MACROECONOMIC INDICATORS

INCREASINGLY DISCREET CONFLICTS AROUND THE MEASUREMENT OF INFLATION

Florence Jany-Catrice

The evolution of the consumer price index (CPI) is closely scrutinised by households and monitored by central banks since they adopted monetarist policies. The price index constitutes also an 'expression of value.' Is the purchasing power of an individual wage or of that of a particular category of worker increasing or not? Is the currency appreciating or declining in value? Are transfer incomes going to rise or fall? Is the economy, as measured by the rise in normal GDP deflated by the price index, growing? The disputes – tempestuous or more muted - around the measurement of macroeconomic data are closely intertwined with theoretical disputes. Throughout history, they have given rise to debates within the restrained world of statisticians. From time to time, simmering controversies erupt, underlining the sensitive nature of this political economy topic.

The stance adopted here is to objectify some of the controversies, and more generally the conventions on which measurement of the price index is based. It requires us to take seriously questions concerning the scope of the index and its weightings as well as how to deal with changes in the basket of products, including the introduction of new products, the substitution of products, and the estimation of quality effects. In restoring some of the keys to understanding what measurement of the evolution of prices encompasses, the idea is to encourage an interpretation in which it is shown that macroeconomic statistics – contrary to the process of naturalisation to which they are subjected – are the result of an intense process of social construction, itself embedded in a web of relations between the different protagonists of the measure (statistical administration, public authorities, unions, public opinion etc.).

We highlight the risks that arise when the question is completely naturalised and depoliticised: after all, when we seek to determine whether the productive system serves the interests of the men and women who have contributed to it by improving the quality of their lives, it is a societal question that is being addressed. The consumer price index is one of the measures that is used to answer this question.

The many controversies that have punctuated the evolution of this compound measure are questions of political economy. Centering the discussion on the case of France, we show that they reflect changes on a number of different levels: in contemporary economic history resulting from the Europeanisation of economic affairs, in the particular socio-political relationship that governments maintain with macroeconomic indicators such as growth, productivity, and inflation, and in the system of ideas that has seen advances in microeconomic theories of consumer behaviour and their utilitarian frameworks.

November 16, 2020

WORKERS, THE FASCIST ALLURE, AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE LEFT

David Ost

In recent years many blue-collar workers formerly affiliated with the political left have been turning towards the right. I explain this from a “supply-side” perspective, attributing the turn to an apparently, but not really, “new” kind of right on offer, and to transformations within the left.

Most observers call this new right “populist,” but that misses its similarities with the fascist tradition, whose key innovation was not violent repression but the break from both conservative elitism and pro-capitalism, and an embrace of the “dominant-essence” masses (those possessing the ascriptive features of a given country’s dominating identity) previously wooed only by the left. Fascism, like today’s “populism,” is the left-wing of the radical right: offering community and solidarity under authoritarian leadership to a cross-class community that excludes many citizens yet rewards even non-elites of the dominant identity.

Although the left always proclaimed internationalism, it originally gained workers’ loyalty by representing the class demands of dominant-essence workers. After World War II, however, it lost influence over the dominant-essence working class for three reasons: its success enabled workers’ children to become and identify with the middle class, it responded affirmatively to the anti-colonial and anti-racist movements whose stunning growth the “anti-fascist” war victory made possible, and it began representing minorities and the new professional middle class. When economic crises starting in the 1970s hurt dominant-essence workers, the left had moved, or was seen as having moved, to representing others instead, opening up workers of the dominant identity to appeals of fascism’s right-wing populism. Specific developments from Hungary, Poland, and Trumpism show hints of the return, under new conditions and in different guises, of the repression and authoritarianism of classic fascism.

My use of the controversial “fascism” is defended elsewhere in the project by a reexamination of classic fascism. Robert Paxton described fascism as “the major political innovation of the twentieth century” precisely because it made a right-wing appeal to “masses” who had previously been appealed to only by the left, a development largely replicated today. The project aims to explain the stunning recent successes of radical right and racist politics. It builds on the author’s previous work on the rise of the illiberal right in postcommunist eastern Europe, based on an understanding of politics as the “organization of anger.” In the end, both fascism and contemporary right-wing populism are conceptualized as different examples of what I call “REN PILL” politics: right-wing exclusionary nationalism populist illiberalism.

November 23, 2020

KNOWLEDGE, BEHAVIOR, AND POLICY

QUESTIONING THE EPISTEMIC PRESUPPOSITIONS OF BEHAVIORAL PUBLIC POLICYMAKING

Magdalena Malecka

The behavioral sciences have become increasingly important for addressing societal challenges. The behavioral sciences are drawn on in policy fields such as public health, employment, and consumer protection, as well as in policies which tackle poverty or climate change. Thus far more than a hundred policy units which rely on insights from behavioral research have been created across the globe. Behavioral public policymaking is aligned with the so-called evidence-based approach to policymaking. They both rest on an idea that designing policy solutions on the basis of the best available scientific evidence limits the influence of ideologies on policymaking and allows one to find efficient and effective policy interventions.

The behavioral approach has already been extensively discussed and criticized from diverse perspectives. Moral and political philosophers discuss whether behavioral policy is a form of manipulation of citizens or whether it infringes on their autonomy. Political theorists debate whether behavioral policy is yet another manifestation of the neoliberalization of the state. Public health scholars emphasize that in the area of health, behavioral public policy ignores decades of socio-economic research on health behavior. In addition, behavioral policy has been criticized for promoting a colonial modernity discourse and material relations of power when introduced in the Global South. Philosophers of science analyze the epistemological and methodological conditions under which one is allowed to predict the behavioral impact of policies.

In particular, I am deeply dissatisfied with this analysis from philosophers of science, as they take at face value and do not question the technocratic and instrumental framing of behavioral policy. Neither do they scrutinize the kind of knowledge which is provided by the behavioral sciences entering policy setting. Therefore, I point out that the analysis of what is actually known on the basis of behavioral research has been lacking in recent debates on behavioral policy. I argue that so far in the existing discussions it has not been noticed that there is a gap between the way in which behavioral science is represented in the practices and discourses of policymaking and the knowledge that it actually provides. In order to expose this gap, I bring insights from the philosophy of science (in particular, from feminist philosophers of science) and from the history of behavioral science (in particular, the history of the US behavioral research during the Cold War).

I point out that the discourse of behavioral policy, but also the debates surrounding it—including critical voices—presumes a set of claims about the behavioral sciences. There seems to be a shared understanding of what the behavioral sciences offer us knowledge of. It is widely believed that behavioral research reveals the irrationality of human behavior, that it offers ‘descriptive’ and ‘realistic’ views on decision-making, that it uncovers behavioral tendencies and biases which are systematic and robust, and that it identifies cognitive causes of behavioral changes. I challenge this set of widely shared beliefs. After questioning the epistemic presumptions underlying the behavioral approach to policy, I reflect on what my argument means for the existing debate on behavioral policy. I believe, and hope, that once we have a proper understanding of what we can and cannot know on the basis of behavioral science, then new critical perspectives on the role of behavioral science in policy will open up. I end my talk by speculating about such perspectives.

November 30, 2020

MEKONSIPPI
THE POLITICS AND POETICS OF BLACK ANTI-VIETNAM WAR ACTIVISM

Robyn C. Spencer

In post WWII America, African Americans articulated a vision of global justice that brought them in alliance with self-proclaimed revolutionaries all around the world. In the process they engaged with domestic and international issues, travelled around the world, launched newspapers and created dozens of organizations. Protesting against the American war in Vietnam was one way that they engaged with this larger world of activism.

A movement against the American war in Vietnam flowered amongst African Americans at the grassroots led by activists who theorized and organized against the war in Vietnam in conjunction with—but largely independent of—major civil rights groups and the white peace movement. These activists joined their anti-war activism with a critique of US imperialism, urban poverty, housing shortages, unequal education, and police brutality. Their stories do not follow the typical chronology of anti-war activism which is centered on military turning points, presidential politics and nationwide mobilizations. Instead, these activists were politicized on the issue of Vietnam by the Bandung Conference, the Cuban Revolution, and African decolonization. While some movement leaders were veterans of the movement for civil rights in the south, others were Black nationalists, socialists and communists rooted in places like San Francisco, Detroit, and New York. Leading figures in this movement ranged from degreed intellectuals like economist Robert Span Browne, folk pundits who wrote for the Nation of Islam’s “Muhammad Speaks,” Black feminists who helped found the National Black Anti-war Anti-Draft Union (NBAWADU), and blues musicians who sang anti-war anthems. Activists expressed their sentiments through academic analysis of history and current affairs, grassroots political organizing, folk wisdom, humor, visual and expressive culture, and in a variety of local and international contexts. They faced a backlash that ranged from instances of police harassment on the local level to the organized efforts of HUAC, COINTELPRO, and the CIA. These activists have been largely invisible. Their stories suggest new ways of looking at Black protest.

Black anti-war activism challenges the periodization, geography and very definition of what scholars have traditionally conceived of as anti-war activism. Black anti-war activism was, by definition, multi-issue and centered on challenging interlocking and reinforcing systems of oppression. Black anti-war activists’ ability to work with feminist, Black Power, and New Left organizations demonstrates that boundaries between the social movements of the 1960s were more permeable than scholars have imagined. Movement leaders linked anti-war sentiment with anti-imperialism and anti-racism, and even anti-capitalism. Despite the constraints of the Cold War, these left leaning black activists skillfully negotiated their way around the barriers presented by domestic anti-communism and the political wrangling and disagreements in the communist world. Their influence, especially within the military, had an impact on government policy. The legacy of their activism is directly relevant to contemporary analyses of the ongoing anti-Asian violence that gained visibility during the 2020-2021 pandemic.

December 7, 2020

COMPUTATION, EVOLUTION, CONSTRUCTION

THREE TOOLS FOR RE-IMAGINING THE SOCIAL

Jacob Foster

IAS Director Robbert Dijkgraaf recently remarked that 21st century scientists are shifting “from studying what is to what could be.” Social scientists should do the same. Humanity faces transformational challenges, from inequality and racial injustice to climate catastrophe and the rise of AI. We cannot address these challenges only by studying what is. We need rigorous tools for imagining what could be. In this talk, I describe three tools—computation, evolution, and construction—that help us re-imagine the social.

Re-imagining the social through *computation* implies a particular style. Following the computational neuroscientist David Marr, we can explain a social phenomenon (as computational process) on three levels: computational theory, representation/algorithm, and hardware implementation. I offer two examples here. I first consider Kleinberg’s striking analysis of the Milgram small world experiment as a form of distributed search. I then argue that the Bourdieusian field of scientists competing to accumulate capital can be mapped onto a computational architecture called a classifier system. In both examples, computation illuminates the social production of collective capacity, whether in search or in learning. Computation also provides a powerful way to analyze the possible. As the science of what a system can do under constraints, the study of computation is more capacious than the narrow imagination of economics.

Re-imagining the social through *evolution* begins by abandoning old ideas about what evolution is. It is not deterministic development. It is probabilistic inference, a special kind of computation implemented by any population with variation, inheritance, and differential survival. I provide an extended example focused on cultural change. I define culture as any shared regularity in the organization of experience or the generation of action acquired through social life. Using a near-complete population of metal bands from 1968-2000, I show that new Bayesian methods for modeling birth-death processes can be used to adjudicate between several evolutionary mechanisms of cultural change. There is no evidence for mass extinction or exogenous forcing by economic factors. The birth and death of bands instead appears to be driven by competition for limited cultural carrying capacity, which is relaxed by a series of key innovations in which the creation of new sub-genres expands carrying capacity. This framework is broadly applicable, with exciting applications to the dynamics of firms or states. Evolution helps us think about change and (radical) novelty; it also highlights the role of collective creativity in forging paths from what is to what could be.

Re-imagining the social through *construction* means embracing both faces of adaptation. Adaptation leads to a greater fit between a system and its world. This fit can increase through learning, but it can also increase through action that changes the environment—through construction. Construction can make the environment more legible. It can change others’ behavior to benefit the constructor, with mechanism design being a special case. It can facilitate learning, by shielding the constructor to allow experimentation. But it can also substitute for learning. Construction can ensure that privileged individuals need not learn some aspects of the environment. Powerful actors, like corporations or states, may prefer to reconstruct their world rather than learn about it. Construction bridges the two previous themes. Uniting the social production of collective capacity with novelty, it can create—or foreclose—opportunity.

These conceptual tools are the fruits of disciplinary trespassing. But they resonate with the way social scientists have long thought, theorized, and imagined the social. They embrace emergence, collective capacity, and radical novelty. They cherish the possibility of agency and help us understand the weight of the structures we have made. And they will equip us for pressing challenges like the rise of AI. Social scientists understand that current arrangements too often sacrifice the human capacity for radical novelty on the altar of collective production—in service of a narrow set of interests. With the tools developed here, we can return to the earliest point of social science: To understand the world in order to change it.

December 14, 2020

WE ARE BECOME LIFE

FROM EXISTENTIAL THREAT TO SELECTING SOCIETY

Charis Thompson

In this talk, I draw on empirical, methodological, and theoretical aspects of my research in progress, *Science and the State in an Age of Existential Threat and Selecting Society*, to draw out a mandate for science policy today. Nuclear weapons are the *locus classicus* for societal recognition of the profound ethical implications of science and technology, iconically expressed in J. Robert Oppenheimer's (IAS Director, 1947-1966) quoting of the Bhagavad Gita, "I am become death, the destroyer of worlds." Increasingly, the most heavily invested-in sciences and technologies co-emerge with pressing social and planetary challenges. I identify two poles in contemporary US science ethics, 'existential' and 'selecting.' These words are actors' categories, drawn from the worlds of AI and genome editing respectively. These two poles not only pick out distinct scientific and technological fields that are primarily military or primarily biomedical; they also come with different political valences, differential access to federal appropriations, and different ontologies of the enemy and/or of the Other. They also both tend to produce agnotology about the ways in which the other pole is active in the field in question.

I analyze the key differences between existential and selecting scientific and technological ethics, including noting their distinct geopolitical imaginaries and their profound dependence on public-private partnerships of different kinds. I show that the two poles cannot simply be reduced to deontological (\neq existential) versus consequentialist (\neq selecting) concerns, and that they do not line up neatly with Republican versus Democrat, although their differences are frequently leveraged to fuel political polarization. I also look at the US definition of genocide, a kind of asymptote where selecting and existential concerns coincide.

I compare and contrast two signature existential technologies, nuclear weapons and lethal autonomous weapons, with each other and against three more or less selecting areas of science and technology - climate change, Covid-19, and genome editing. For each of these domains, I draw on current policy quotes and my interview data to illustrate the characteristics of dominant US framings of each field. For existential technologies, the threat of wiping out life is the dominant moral horizon. For selecting technologies, the risk of their being deployed to the advantage of some and disadvantage of others is recognized. I find, however, that each one of these scientific and technological fields spans both existential and selecting logics. Where one pole is underemphasized, there are always groups attempting to draw attention to those concerns, despite the agnotology and despite the ways in which such advocates risk being penalized as outside the body politic. I argue that recognizing the links between existential and selecting logics is vital to science policy, making cross-sector resources and mobilization possible and providing the means for translation across partisan divides.

January 25, 2021

INDICATIONS OF DEMOCRACY
EVALUATION EXPERTISE AND THE POLITICS OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN MEXICO

Diana Graizbord

Following the historic 2000 election which ended the 7-decades-long rule of the Institutionalized Revolutionary Party, the Mexican legislature passed a raft of laws and administrative reforms aimed at encouraging transparency and accountability and purging the state of the corruption and opacity that characterized the outgoing regime. At the center of these reforms were the evidence-based policy making techniques of monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Reformers at the time promised that M&E would help advance a series of democratizing goals and help bring about a more democratic political order. In other words, they expressed a *technodemocratic* imaginary, or a collectively held and performed vision of a desirable democratic future that hinged on the political power ascribed to expert techniques associated with policy evaluation.

Despite the powerful technodemocratic political imaginary in which M&E is enmeshed, the degree to which the link between monitoring and evaluation and democracy promotion and consolidation is enacted in contemporary Mexico is a practical accomplishment rooted in the day to day work of policy experts. This talk examines the division of labor and relationships between civil servants (or *técnicos*) within the state and external, university-based evaluation consultants that structure the production of policy evaluation knowledge. As I will show, civil servants, university professors, and their students work through the tensions and contradictions of technodemocracy in practice as they coordinate and cultivate evaluation expertise across academic and bureaucratic domains. Enacting and upholding the democratic promises ascribed to policy evaluation turns on pitting technical knowledge against the *civic* role and responsibility of experts and casting evaluation as a public, civic good, and ethical obligation that somehow transcends both the technical and political logics in which M&E is embedded.

February 1, 2021

ENLIGHTENMENT AGAINST POLITICAL ECONOMY

Arnaud Orain

Economics is a science in crisis. This is not only the case because it failed and still fails to forecast and address economic and financial catastrophes or rising inequalities, but also because it is a knowledge incapable of taking into account ecological issues and democratic demands. By still thinking in terms of “natural resources,” that is, the very idea of a clear-cut separation between humans and non-humans on the one hand, and, on the other, a belief in the existence of economic “laws” or “policies” that can be replicable, and which are not constructed through local and non-expert but democratic instances, economics could only fall more and more under attack in the next decades. Looking to the past in the search for former economic knowledge which was different from economics could be helpful if we want to prepare a future replacement for an increasingly useless and baseless science.

This seminar is focused on a forgotten knowledge named the “science of commerce.” From the *ars mercatoria*, which was a set of merchant practices, some English authors had built at the end of the seventeenth century a very different science from that of political economy (then economics), which emerged at the end of the eighteenth century. This science of commerce spread in France in the 1750s as a component of the Enlightenment. This was a non-transcendental knowledge (with no “natural order,” “invisible hand,” or economic “laws”) which was opposed to universal solutions and principles, and even to the replicability of policies. In this context, only “local truths” could be discovered, generating an economic solution for one place at one time. Better still, authors of the science of commerce deployed *prosopopeia* (the adoption of the voice of an imaginary person), *false pretense* (the expression of views that are not one’s own) and *dialogism* (the creation of several “voices” within a single text) in works that neglected to provide an unambiguous verdict or render a viewpoint on what could be considered economically “good” or “bad.” Unlike the founders of modern economic science, they did not spend their time creating abstractions or cultivating “laws,” but rather left it to readers to interpret meanings – and arrive at solutions – for themselves. The contrast shows why the birth of the modern political economy in the eighteenth century (for instance in Physiocracy) took place in such a painful manner, with mutual misunderstanding, and with reactions ranging from outright mockery to accusations of charlatanism or even fanaticism. It also shows why economics today often seems to adopt the aura of a new theology.

February 8, 2021

STAYING IN PLACE
RACE, RELIGION AND PROPERTY IN THE POST-CIVIL WAR AMERICA

Sarah Barringer Gordon

After the unprecedented bloodshed of the American Civil War in the 1860s, survivors settled in to a post-slavery world. We have long known that Black religious life flourished in this period, but we have also assumed that it was simpler and more secure than this paper shows. A few scattered allusions in contemporary sources point to something much bigger, broader, and surprisingly elusive, considering its gravitas – a concerted series of battles over church property unfolded in the wake of the Great Rebellion. This is the first study to unearth this important body of case law; it upends our understanding of the tenacity of oppression and the law of religious liberty.

The shooting war lasted from 1861 to 1865, and victory for the Union cemented the end of slavery. The consequences of emancipation reverberated loud and long. The aftershock considered here involved suits that reached the highest courts of former slave states. These cases reflected valuable property holding and deep divides over ownership and interracial comity. Religious liberty and the politics of faith were crystallized in these battles over traditionally Black churches across the South and lower North.

White church members and church leaders no longer had property rights in formerly enslaved congregants. But they claimed that white ownership of the real property dedicated to enslaved worship had survived the war intact, despite Black church members' wishes. The importance of property in religious life and the liberty to hold church property lies at the heart of these cases explored. Legal doctrines that took root in antebellum courtrooms were part of the rise of judicial authority and power that brought predicatability and commercial value to American entrepreneurs and planters – and, often overlooked, religious institutions. Before the war, the law of property sustained commerce in slaves as well as great growth in the power and reach of churches. After the war, we know much less. And what we thought we knew is challenged by the legal history told here.

Scholars have focused on religious life in the postwar era but have not uncovered the conflicts at issue here. A multi-disciplinary approach yields new insights and strategies for research, however. By blending historical inquiry with work in law and religious studies, this article recovers the backstory behind the Reverend Curry's lament. The most salient evidence lies in case law. Research in legal history is uniquely accessible, valuable to researchers in many fields, whether or not they are trained in law. The exercise known among American lawyers as "doctrine crunching" corresponds roughly to financial analysts' number crunching but is grounded in past cases to structure current arguments on behalf of clients. Online access to organized and relevant caselaw is the bread and butter of the legal profession. Finding a pattern of litigation that otherwise has escaped historians' notice brings focus to postwar southern religious history. These cases clarify and contextualize the underlying conflicts that gave rise to lawsuits and important judicial decisions.

By themselves, however, the cases do not capture all of what was at stake in such legal battles. Historians of religion have written fine studies of African American religious life after the Civil War. But we have missed a key concept underlying the conflicts studied here – sacred space. Placing land and buildings and people in conversation has been a focus in religious studies. Property, ownership, sweat equity, and communal investment are all vital to this story. Drawing on the work of students of property among enslaved and free African American people across the South and lower North gives texture to the claims and social negotiations that underlay those whose churches were the subject of legal battles. Adding the analytical and theoretical tools that scholars in religious studies have brought to the question of sacred space highlights the values behind staying in place, explaining more clearly the costs of losing treasured churches where ritual and fellowship invested spaces with religious meaning.

February 16, 2021

FACING AUTHORITY
A THEORY OF POLITICAL LEGITIMACY

Thomas Fossen

This book develops a new philosophical approach to political legitimacy. Political authorities profoundly affect our lives in manifold ways: they regulate our behavior, provide education, raise taxes, control borders, and grant or withhold citizenship. These authorities purport to be entitled to rule us. But do they deserve the status they claim? And should we behave as loyal, obedient citizens, or take to the streets and demand the fall of the regime?

Facing Authority approaches the question of legitimacy as a problem of judgment. How can we distinguish in practice whether a regime is legitimate, or merely purports to be so? Contemporary philosophers usually treat legitimacy as a problem of moral knowledge, asking which moral principles (such as consent, democracy, or human rights) authorities must meet in order to count as legitimate. Judgment is then no more than an afterthought, a matter of applying the principles provided by philosophy. Yet despite their best efforts, criteria of legitimacy remain subject to profound disagreement and uncertainty. This book questions the assumptions underlying this prevalent approach, by shifting attention from the justification of principles to the practice of judgment, in the face of disagreement and uncertainty. This opens a new set of questions, not previously considered to be at the heart of philosophical theories of legitimacy. What does it mean to call a regime legitimate or illegitimate to begin with? How does the question of legitimacy manifest itself in practice, from a first-person perspective? And how can it be addressed practically, if not resolved philosophically?

Facing Authority offers a complex and systematic account of what is involved in judging the legitimacy of a regime. Drawing on the insights of philosophical pragmatism, it argues that judgment is a matter of practical involvement in a particular situation, not just applying given principles. The book explores three distinctive forms of activity that constitute judging in contexts where legitimacy is in question. It argues that judging legitimacy is a matter of *representation*: how should the relations of power be portrayed? It is also a question of *identity*: can I see myself as the kind of subject the authorities take me to be? And it is a question of the meaning of *events*: what happened here—a coup, or a revolution? While the standard approach construes these issues as prior or external to the question of legitimacy, this book argues that they constitute the heart of the matter. Addressing each question truthfully calls for practical involvement in a situation and political contestation with others.

Facing Authority proposes a new way of thinking about political legitimacy, interweaving systematic philosophical analysis with examples of struggles for legitimacy, from the extra-parliamentary radical left opposition in Europe and the United States to the protests at Tahrir Square in Cairo. In the process, the book aims to advance methodological disputes about realism and idealism in political philosophy, and offers novel contributions to debates about political judgment, representation, identity, and the significance of events.

February 22, 2021

THE GARDEN IN THE MACHINE

ARCHITECTURAL POLITICS IN AN AGE OF CLIMATE CATASTROPHE

Christo Sims

This talk presents work-in-progress from a book project that examines how corporations, cities, and states are materially reconfiguring themselves in response to climate catastrophe. Taking Silicon Valley as a case study, the talk focuses on how the leading corporations in the US digital technology sector are embracing “sustainable” architecture in response to growing concerns about climate change. The talk explores two themes: first, how sociotechnical imaginaries in Silicon Valley are changing in response to ecological critiques of capitalism; second, how the leading Silicon Valley multinationals are deploying avant-garde architecture as part of efforts to incorporate these critiques.

Until a few years ago, the Silicon Valley headquarters of Apple, Google, and Facebook were variations on a familiar architectural form, that of the suburban office or research park. As Louise Mozingo (*Pastoral Capitalism*, 2011) observed, this architectural form – which consists of a clustering of nondescript low-rise buildings around a central open space, encircled by parking lots, with a matrix of landscaping along the edges of buildings and asphalt – became a favored model of post-industrial workplaces during the second half of the 20th century. Silicon Valley, and the Stanford Research Park in particular, helped institute and valorize this architectural form as a model for cities and regions that aspired to compete in the so-called knowledge economy. Over roughly the last decade, however, suburban office parks and their knowledge economy occupants have been critiqued for being social separatist and ecologically injurious. In response, Apple, Google, and Facebook have all hired world-renown architects, or “starchitects,” to design new corporate campuses in Silicon Valley. In doing so, each of the big tech companies has foregrounded the “green” character of their new campuses, both in terms of their lessened environmental impacts and in terms of the centrality given to parks, gardens, and other natural features.

In this talk, I argue that these eye-catching new corporate campuses can be read as ethico-political technologies that attempt to demonstrate each firm’s benevolence and justify their concentrations of wealth and power, efforts that, if successful, can help absorb the social and political critiques that are increasingly being levied against them. The new campuses attempt to do this ethical and political work, I argue, by rehabilitating and reconfiguring a cultural motif that has been central to mythologizations of US exceptionalism since the 19th century – that of the “machine in the garden” (Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 1964). By figuring the awe-inspiring machinery of industrial capitalism in a harmonious relationship with Edenic landscapes, the machine in the garden motif has long helped obscure and ease moral tensions and contradictions at the heart of US exceptionalism: on the one hand, a Christian figuration of America as the new promised land; on the other hand, the nation’s ambitions to accrue and exercise economic and political dominance on the global stage. What is somewhat new in Silicon Valley’s recent recapitulation of the machine in the garden motif is that it does not attempt to integrate heroic capitalist machinery into an existing pastoral landscape; rather, it purports to recover the pastoral ideal from a landscape that has been blighted by recent configurations of capitalist development. It is this figuration of contemporary technology multinationals and the cadres who work for them as restorative agents of the natural environment that gives these new corporate campuses their ethico-political force and makes them a potentially potent mechanism for incorporating ecological critiques in the current conjuncture.

March 1, 2021

MOBS AND MEGAPROJECTS

RUMOR AND THE POLITICAL LIFE OF DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH

Nusrat Chowdury

“Mobs and Megaprojects: The Political Life of Development in Bangladesh,” is based on my current book project on the global trajectories of development and democracy in postcolonial contexts. My main topic is a river bridge in Bangladesh. It spans over a major river, the Padma, which is 120 kilometers long and about 8 kilometers at its widest. Officially known as the Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project, it will be completed sometime around 2022. It’s the country’s largest development project and also one of the most expensive. The bridge has been the center of a couple of major scandals. In 2011, the World Bank, the main donor, suspected a possible corruption by two employees of the Canadian engineering firm, SNC-Lavalin and a Bangladeshi-Canadian citizen who planned to bribe Bangladeshi public officials to get the contract to build the bridge. In 2013 a Canadian court dismissed the case in absence of acceptable evidence, labeling it as hearsay and rumor. In 2019, multiple people in Bangladesh were killed based on a rumor that the Padma Bridge needed children’s heads for completion by 2020.

My presentation asks three questions on the basis of this set of events: How do rumors, a set of utterances without clear authorship or audience connect the local, national, and global contexts within which the Padma Bridge emerges at once as an ideal and a scandal? What ideas of legitimacy, justice and sacrifice are activated at these disparate sites that in turn shape people, politics and policies? And, what do their entanglements and afterlives tell us about the political and economic imaginations in the postcolony? I argue that, while infrastructural development thrives on and energizes visibilities, language is often seen as a supplement to the visual. I want to rethink this relationship to argue that aurality, as much as visibility, is constitutive of the connections that I discuss. What people say and what they say they hear or see is the raw material that makes up development and democratic imaginaries. Also, I argue that the utterances that make up the Padma bridge scandal function through an idea of legitimacy that is largely mediated by the voices of power, such as, international donor organizations, postcolonial regimes, national and international law, and so forth. In the case of vigilante justice, however, the legitimacy is achieved not a priori, but in and through the encounter with the Other, in this case, a child kidnapper, or a *chheledhora* in Bengali.

I come to these conclusions by analyzing the Canadian Supreme Court’s verdict in the case, *World Bank vs. Wallace*, SNC-Lavalin’s history of corruption, and a particular case of vigilante violence in Bangladesh that took place in 2019. Despite Bangladesh’s newly minted “developing” status, the lynchings based on the rumor have evidenced, for many citizens and foreigners alike, the underdevelopment of Bangladesh’s most abundant resource, its people. This problematique of the people goes back to the moment of postcolonial founding, if not earlier. The temporality of development has long vexed anti-colonial and nationalist thinkers for whom many of their fellow women and men were grievously unprepared for self-rule. Indeed, what concept of the people was congruent with the time of development had been a crucial concern. The Padma Bridge events remind us that the developmental conception of the globe has remained powerful as ever, even though popular political action punctuates the time of development. To chart the postcolonial careers of both democracy and development, then, we need to listen more carefully to what people say and hear even during the cruelest of encounters.

March 8, 2021

A GENEALOGY OF INTERNATIONAL CONCESSIONS

LEGAL FRAMINGS OF THE CORPORATE CONTROL OF LAND

Joshua Barkan

It is well documented that the 2007-2008 food crisis set off a wave of large-scale land acquisitions across the globe. Collectively termed by critics the global land grab or, more neutrally, the land rush, the decade following the food crisis saw a massive transfer of land through thousands of deals and involving tens of millions of hectares of land. The scope of these land transfers also generated a flood of scholarship assessing the impacts of land deals on local communities and on agrarian social relations as well as making policy interventions designed to stem the tide of land loss. Scholars note historical antecedents to the land rush in other processes of land dispossession, but the precise mechanisms linking the past to the present remain hazily outlined.

This talk focuses on concession agreements as one such mechanism. Central to the recent round of land deals, concessions have been considered as special types of contracts in which states grant privileges to private juridical entities (either corporations or individuals) to carry out some public or quasi-public function in return for some benefit to the state. Although the term seems to suggest a grant or cession of power, legal scholars consider concessions as “synallagmatic acts” placing states and private entities in reciprocal relations. In addition to their extensive use in contemporary land deals, concessions have been used to promote a vast range of undertakings including mining, railroads, communication networks, oil production and natural resource extraction. Today, concessions are one of the primary channels for foreign direct investment and a basic tool of privatization. Concessions are drafted and administered within the structures of international investment treaties and the general rules of the international trade regime established by the WTO; a regime designed to provide security for international investors. In this sense, concessions are part of the dynamic field of international investment law and have played an important role in the development of investor-state arbitration, the semi-privatized system for adjudicating conflicts in the trade regime.

But concession agreements are also old. Many of the most infamous concessions were intertwined with the “second wave” of European colonization in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Concessions were used to establish the legal frameworks for projects as varied as the treaty ports in China, the Firestone rubber plantation in Liberia, the Suez Canal, British Petroleum’s control of Iranian oil fields, the extension of US copper companies in Chile or oil producers in Mexico, and the brutal rubber plantations of King Leopold’s Congo Free State. Prior to that, concessions had been used for other processes of colonization, extraction, and exploitation, including the *asientos* that provided the contractual basis for the Spanish, Portuguese, and, later, British slave trade or the military grants of land and resources to the crusading papal orders.

Surprisingly, given the importance and ubiquity of concession agreements, they have resisted scholarly investigation. Scholars have long lamented the lack of systematic analysis of concessions as well as the ways the contents of the agreements remain “jealously hidden” from researchers. Rather than charting the historical development of the concession, however, this talk approaches concessions as a genealogical object. Following Foucault’s conception of genealogy as a history in which “universals do not exist,” this talk considers how concessions allow us to rethink the political spatiality of modernity outside of the familiar terms of state and capital, public and private, land and territory, or property and sovereignty. In doing so, the talk and the larger project of which it is a part aim to highlight how an essentially feudal legal form for occupying land and taking resources somewhat ironically became an important model for practices of modernization and development, with often predictably violent and exploitative outcomes.

March 15, 2021

MACHINES OF GOVERNMENT
COMPUTERS, SOCIAL SCIENCE, AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY SINCE 1945

Joy Rohde

Contemporary algorithmic governance tools have sparked debates over the extent to which policy decisions can and should be ceded to machines, and what domains should remain under human jurisdiction. Despite common perceptions, the idea that information technology can improve decision-making by aiding, and even replacing, humans long precedes the current hype around big data. The aspiration to improve politics and policy via computation is as old as digital computers themselves. Tracing the history of projects to understand and manage politics via computers, this talk shows that political computing has long been an ambivalent project with important consequences for modern intellectual and political life.

Beginning in the 1950s, social scientists and government officials adopted computers as powerful tools for making sound decisions about national security challenges. In this talk, I show that social scientists and government officials turned to computers not out of hubris, as is often assumed, but as a response to existential, epistemic, and informational anxieties. Fearing accidental nuclear war, convinced of the dangers of human cognitive limitations, and overwhelmed by information, social scientists funded by the Department of Defense and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency created computer systems that purported to help detect and manage international political and military crises. With their large and stable memories, astonishing mathematical power, and appearance of political neutrality, computers seemed far superior to the cognitively limited, ideologically biased, and often irrational humans who steered the ship of state. Their efforts reimaged international relations as an information science and made information processing a form of intellectual and political authority.

Computational projects also raised difficult questions about the appropriate division of human and machine labor. By replacing some human functions with machines, political computational projects challenged expert agency and human autonomy. In the political context of the Cold War, this challenge to autonomy threatened the very democratic values that social scientists and government officials claimed to protect. System designers argued that their computers liberated humans from information overload and cognitive constraints in order to downplay fears of computational control. But this talk analyzes the ways that technological systems apportioned human and machine labor to show that social scientists, technologists, and government officials struggled to articulate the value of human cognition and defend human agency and autonomy. Already by the 1960s, projects to render politics computational were beset with confusion, anxiety, and ambivalence about human cognition and agency. The talk concludes by discussing how those ambivalences continue to animate debates about algorithmic governance tools and asserts that computationally-focused solutions—like explainable AI or algorithmic debiasing—will not resolve them.

March 22, 2021

THE NUCLEAR GHOST
ATOMIC LIVELIHOOD IN FUKUSHIMA'S GRAY ZONE

Ryo Morimoto

In this presentation, based on 36 months of ethnographic fieldwork in coastal Fukushima between 2013-2019, I ask how technoscientific visualizations of radiation (im)materialize certain sensory-cognitive encounters, inflect the experience of radiation exposure, and shape ideas about the environment in contemporary Japan. I use the term “nuclear ghost” to describe how the government’s reliance on a technoscientific framework for making sense of radiation exposure subsumes local experiences and conceptualizations of toxicity and contamination. This erasure has harmful, lingering consequences for locals because it threatens to upend their attempts to regain a sense of normalcy and safety in the wake of the nuclear meltdowns in 2011. I highlight ways in which the government-regulated definition of radiation exposure as a quantifiable, all-or-nothing encounter with radioisotopes fails to acknowledge that the relative absence of radiation can be nevertheless socially, culturally and politically significant in coastal Fukushima. In particular, this talk illustrates how the national decontamination policy—the goal of which is to remove as many contaminants in the environment as possible until the contaminated areas are determined to be technoscientifically “safe” again—comes to disrupt kinship, economic, and community structures and severs individuals’ ties to their ancestral farmlands, which have been passed down and cultivated from generation to generation.

By ethnographically grounding the experience and meaning of radiation exposure, this talk offers a view into a local, situated experience of the fallout—atomic livelihood—and considers how the delayed effects of “clean” nuclear energy and past global engagements with nuclear things have been enfolded into everyday lives of local residents as well as contemporary and future ecologies and generations.

March 29, 2021

**THE LIMITS TO COMPUTATIONAL GROWTH
DATABASES AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE CARIBBEAN**

Sarah Vaughn

This talk considers the Caribbean Community Center for Climate Change's (5C) commitments to a digital database for climate adaptation projects across the region. Treating the 5Cs as a regional project invested in computational expertise, throughout this talk I consider how digital databases enact spatial imaginaries of climate change. Rather than assume digital databases are inevitable outcomes of climate governance, I track the ways digital databases get identified with a particular affective and aesthetic ideal about growth. 5C practitioners hold competing ideas about growth—and more specifically, a feeling of cautious optimism in technology—is pervasive in much of their talk today about climate governance. To this end, I detail how growth is a humanocentric construction that requires scholars to think about how various forms of computation may be caught up in historical processes that project geopolitical space as both physical entities and theoretical constructs. And though the story of the 5C's digital database that I offer may not touch on all the richness of computational activities in climate governance, I do seek to offer the digital database as an object and mode of analysis for narrating a present history of climate change.

April 5, 2021

INJUSTICE AND INEQUALITY IN THE LAW LEGAL FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS AND EVERYDAY LIFE

Leslie Paik

In this talk, I discuss the experiences of people who have received legal financial obligations due to their involvement in the juvenile court and the implications for their everyday lives, the legitimacy of our justice system, and social inequality more broadly. LFOs are monetary sanctions that fall in three categories: 1) fees to pay for various operations of the system (e.g., counsel, drug testing, probation supervision), 2) fines which serve as penalties for the offenses or municipal infractions and 3) restitution which is compensation to those who have been harmed by an offense. While legal financial obligations (LFOs) have been a longstanding practice in the US justice system, they have proliferated in recent years. State and local jurisdictions assess LFOs in a variety of settings and situations to people who have been convicted for criminal offenses, arrested or cited for municipal or traffic infractions. They also are used concurrently with incarceration, creating a double punishment whereby people incur significant financial penalties while being locked up (which further impedes their ability to pay off those LFOs). Specific to the juvenile justice system, the court distributes financial responsibility for paying LFOs to both youths and their parents/legal guardians.

Research to date has documented LFOs' many financial, material and emotional harms on justice-involved individuals and their families who struggle to pay them and face severe penalties for nonpayment such as wage garnishment and incarceration. Based on 85 interviews with people in 6 states (California, Georgia, Illinois, Texas, Washington and Wisconsin) who either received LFOs for a juvenile court case or were victims of offenses committed by a youth, this talk takes a slightly different approach to study the idea of "harm." That is, I seek to understand *lived experiences* of individuals with this type of legal debt as a way to get a sense of the *processes* on the ground that perpetuate racial injustices and inequality.

In particular, I focus on the bureaucratic aspects of LFOs that add to the criminalization of the poor and people of color. Those aspects could be any or all of the following: 1) the timing of notification about LFO amounts in which the court sends a bill to parents only *after* they agreed to the judge's decisions about their youths' case that generates those LFOs; 2) LFO-related records (sometimes incomplete or inaccurate) that follow people across jurisdictions and agencies, extending the justice system's supervision over people; and 3) frontline administrative staff's opaque and sometimes unsympathetic interactions with parents and youths related to LFOs that lead the latter to become frustrated and disengage with the youths' court case. These bureaucratic moments accumulate to create a constant source of stress for people who try to find a way to pay or deal with constant threats of potential warrants and other sanctions for nonpayment. As a result, LFOs exacerbate the existing inequalities that led poor and minority groups to be disproportionately involved in the justice system in the first place, given people are not able to close their legal cases and pursue educational or vocational opportunities to move out of poverty. That inequality extends to their families whose economic livelihood also is threatened by the ever-present LFO bills. Not taking into consideration these seemingly mundane yet vitally relevant administrative aspects to LFOs precludes our understanding of how the law works, both inside and outside of the courtroom, to perpetuate inequality for the justice-involved persons and their families.

April 12, 2021

THE PIETY OF TERRORISTS

ISLAMIC TRANSLATIONS OF VIOLENCE IN TERRORISM TRIALS

Aisha Ghani

In this talk, I attempt to grapple with a challenge that emerges at a disciplinary, methodological, and theoretical level in my work on terrorism cases in the United States. The challenge is as follows: how to approach, think, and write about the shared analytic space between Islam and violence? It is a topic that the discipline of anthropology, to which I belong, would seem both well-poised and equipped to address. Yet, even within anthropology, this shared space has largely been avoided. Given the obvious risk that violent Muslim subjects present for the production of regnant ideas about Islam, there is little mystery and much reason for this void. But avoidance is also not innocuous, and risks producing a different kind of orientalism. One based in liberal assumptions about the givenness of violence—the idea that we know what violence is and that it is already always repugnant— and that affirms secular binaries used to divide religion along “good” and “bad” lines.

In my talk, I hope to interrupt this trend of avoidance. The talk is divided in three sections and begins, in the first part, by describing the challenges that the Islamic subjectivities of terrorism defendants, their ethical orientations and conceptualizations of violence in particular, presented for Muslims in the communities where I conducted fieldwork. The ethnographic data presented will demonstrate how this problem was managed through the production of a series of discursive gaps. I will argue that these gaps, which sought to disentangle and recuperate Islam from violence, were being produced not only at my field-sites, but also in a majority of the social science scholarship on Islam, and Islam and violence, to date.

In the second part of this talk, I will present one possible way of reckoning with, rather than getting around, the shared analytic space between Islam and violence. My discussion will move into the space of terrorism trials, and will focus, more particularly, on the sentencing hearing speeches of terrorism defendants’ in court. This section aims to offer two theoretical insights: First, that the configurations of Islam that surfaced from defendants’ sentencing speeches constituted *Islamic translations* in conditions of secular legal allowance and constraint. And second, that these Islamic translations were mediated by a distinct aim: rendering the difference between terrorism and *jihad* legible in a non-Muslim court (an aim that required both reconfiguring and relativizing the category of violence). Methodologically, this section seeks to demonstrate how an approach that treats both Islam and violence as ethnographically emergent categories, can assist us in moving away from essentialist, and towards contingent and relational, theorizations of the shared analytic space between Islam and violence.

In the third part of this talk, I conclude by describing what value, I think, is derived for social scientists from a project that aims not only to situate violent Muslim subjects within an anthropology of Islam, but also to theorize Islam through violence, and violence through Islam.

April 19, 2021

CORPOREAL CONTENTIONS A MATERIALIST UNDOING OF THE MODERN SUBJECT

Banu Bargu

Violence to the body is nothing new; in fact, it might be the oldest trick in the book of power. Today's dominant conception of the human body - its sanctity and integrity - is constituted, in tandem with our conception of modern sovereignty, precisely as a result of diverse practices of violence that have rendered the body a target, an object and site of the operation of power. The individual's bodily security has been the precondition of its membership to modern polities and the basis of its fidelity to their rule, even as the body's centrality has been occluded, if not deliberately erased, with the rise to prominence of an abstract conception of the citizen as the disembodied bearer of rights. What is relatively new about our present is not the longstanding fact of violence to the body or the body as the author of violence toward others, but that the very same body politicized by such violence has also become the subject of violence directed at itself. This violence is, furthermore, part of oppositional politics that aims to critique existing injustices, push back against domination, and at times act as a catalyzer of social mobilization and a building block of transborder solidarity.

Corporeal Contentions analyzes self-directed violence, whether in actual or feigned forms, as performances that increasingly cohere into a repertoire of political action. It situates the threat of mass suicide by Foxconn workers in China alongside public self-killings of France's Telecom workers, pensioners in Greece, those evicted from their homes in Spain, farmers in India and South Korea, young women in Iraqi Kurdistan, Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan, the urban poor in Tunisia, Egypt, and Morocco. It considers kindred performances by Turkish and Kurdish prisoners in Turkey's prisons, Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons, black and brown prisoners in California prisons, migrants and asylum seekers in Calais, in the many detention centers and border zones of Turkey, Greece, and Italy, Australia's offshore island-camps in Papua New Guinea, among countless others. These struggles, like the ones by Chinese factory workers, threaten or perform violence on the agents' own bodies by way of self-starvation, self-immolation, jumping from rooftops, and other forms of self-inflicted injury, including the sewing of one's lips and eyelids, the drinking of detergent, the injection of cleaning products into one's own veins, and the cutting of flesh. These performances constitute what I call the *corporeal repertoire of the oppressed*.

In analyzing this repertoire, I ask: What are the social and political conditions that make it possible for forms of injury to one's own body and the performance of voluntary death to appear as political agency? And what kind of agency attempts to "make history" by its own abolition? I study the insights that Marxist materialism offers in explaining the political meaning of self-injurious and self-destructive action and examine the limits posed by the same field of vision. I propose two conceptual moves or displacements to address these shortcomings: first, I suggest expanding the materialist problematic by moving from the mechanism of reflection to that of expression, with the help of Walter Benjamin, and second, I propose deepening the materialist problematic by taking into account historical regimes of corporeality that address how different forms of bodily comportment and subjectivities are forged, drawing on Michel Foucault and Nicos Poulantzas's theoretical contributions regarding technologies of the body.

Within this modified materialist problematic, involving mechanisms of expression and the deep foundations of corporeality, I suggest approaching the self-injurious and self-destructive repertoire of the oppressed as *expressing* in oppositional and visceral form their immediate experiences of injustice and oppression relying on forms of action that are conditioned by and that simultaneously push back against the dominant and modern western subjectivity and its attendant regime of corporeality in which self-destruction is equated with unreason, the denial of freedom as property, and the contravention of moral autonomy. Against this background, these protest actions put on display histories of physical violence and their manifold material damages on the body while they also allow the invisible or less visible forms of violence, such as the violence of humiliation or poverty, to break into visibility. Focusing on this form of embodied critique, I interrogate how self-destructive performances point to the limits of the political and to a conception of justice and equality beyond its existing horizon. I discuss the ethical and political demands this repertoire places upon its audience and offer reflections on the politics of repair that might honor its legacy.

April 26, 2021

GUILTLESSLY GUILTY

INDUSTRIALIZED ANIMAL AGRICULTURE (AND THE ATOMIC BOMB) IN AN AGE OF COMPLICITY

Timothy Pachirat

In this talk, I draw on contemporary industrialized animal agriculture and the making and use of the atomic bomb as two synecdoches for modern monstrosity. By synecdoche, I mean, following Kenneth Burke's definition, "part of the whole, whole for the part, container for the contained, sign for the thing signified, material for the thing made...cause for the effect, effect for the cause, genus for the species, species for the genus" (*A Grammar of Motives*, 1969, pp. 508-9). By modern monstrosity, I mean the ways in which interplays between visibility and invisibility; knowledge and ignorance; sanity and madness; remembrance and denial; and legal punishment and scapegoating facilitate widespread complicity in catastrophic destruction and, simultaneously, denial and disavowal of that same complicity. Monstrous might be understood in at least two senses: first, as a descriptor for the destruction itself; and second, as a descriptor for the emotional and imaginative ruses that facilitate and normalize widespread complicity in such destruction. My talk considers, in turn:

- a) a worker at a Wyoming pig factory farm who took his own life in the wake of an undercover investigation at his farm;
- b) the divisions of labor and space on the kill floor of a contemporary industrialized slaughterhouse;
- c) a contemporary factory farm that converted its concrete walls to glass and transformed itself into a major tourist destination;
- d) the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the heavily compartmentalized organizational structure of the Manhattan Project.

My wager is that juxtaposing the monstrosity of industrialized animal agriculture, which involves an endless production and reproduction of life, mutilation, and killing, with the monstrosity of the creation and deployment of the atomic bomb, which involves the ever-present possibility of total annihilation, generates insights into similarities and differences in temporal and spatial scales between these two synecdoches of modern monstrosity. I conclude my talk with a brief gesture towards Leslie Marmon Silko's novel, *Ceremony*, as exemplary of storytelling's potential to create the conditions for imaginative and emotional practices worthy of the monstrous world we now live in.

May 3, 2021

AFTER BIOSOVEREIGNTY
THE MATERIAL TRANSFER AGREEMENT IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Sonja van Wichelen

How can we govern bioscientific and biomedical research more equitably on a global scale?

Global inequality is often defined within economic frameworks, but research shows—and the current global pandemic confirms—that it is strongly dependent on how scientific research is governed nationally and transnationally. While developing countries contribute to global health and bioscience by sharing material and information, they are yet to gain the benefits of its successes (including access to vaccines). In examining institutionalized forms of global inequality that have persisted or increased with the advancement and globalization of bioscientific and biomedical research, my talk aims to contribute to the discussion around biosovereignty in postcolonial contexts. Drawing from methods in legal anthropology, medical sociology, and postcolonial science studies, I want to go beyond the analysis of sovereign claims and move to understanding the legal technologies that are often deployed to acknowledge such claims of sovereignty.

To illustrate my point, I turn to a case study in Indonesia and focus on the Material Transfer Agreement—an agreement that governs the transfer of biological material between two entities with the explicit intention for research purposes by the receiver. Ultimately, my aim is to address a broader question, namely how legal technologies in the transnational governance of bioscience—in this case MTAs—have come to play a role in the debate around global inequality? My hypothesis is that two developments in the past few decades—namely the capitalization of science and the securitization of disease—have collapsed two governance systems: the governance of bioscience and the governance of global health. This collapse—which we also witness currently in the global pandemic—makes visible the double standards on which their institutions were built. I argue that an anthropology of regulation, combined with a sustained and political analysis of biolegality, can shed light, not only on how regulation works in the context of the Global South, but also on what it would take to start thinking in more postcolonial terms about global governance.

May 10, 2021

II

Theme Seminar

Science and the State

Modern science and the modern state are inextricable and co-emergent. Indeed, the rise of the state form has been accomplished through the ways of knowing and extracting that scientific analysis makes possible—including classification, hierarchization, quantification, and reductionism. But while the production of science and the formation of the state are relatively well studied, much remains to be understood about the relationships between the two—how states support, use, and regulate sciences, and how the sciences support the structure, function, and legitimacy of states.

What have been the historical processes involved in the intertwined development of states and sciences, and how much have they varied across national contexts? While the state remains the driver of both private and public sector technoscience in certain societies, what has its role become in many others, where scientific innovation is increasingly seen as the purview of the private sector? As we today face issues and crises, from human gene-editing to climate change, that supersede provincial boundaries—even as forms of violence and social control enabled by science continue to be operationalized by nation-states—what forms of transnational oversight may be required? How might state engagement with the natural and social sciences, such as the use of “nudge units” and “evidence-based” claims in legislation and governance, necessitate new understandings of the relationship between states and sciences? How does the corporate world respond to increasing demands from both the state and citizens for social responsibility and ethical practice with regard to science and technology? These are some of the questions that will be addressed by the various disciplines of the social sciences and humanities.

Science, Technology and the State: Inextricable and Co-emergent – September 22, 2020

(Curated by Alondra Nelson and Charis Thompson)

Readings:

- Yaron Ezrahi, “Science and the State,” pp. 212-218 in James D. Wright (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Second edition) (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2015)
- Chandra Mukerji, “The Territorial State as a Figured World of Power: Strategies, Logistics, and Impersonal Rule,” *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 28(4), 2010, pp. 8-12
- Ashis Nandy, “Modern Science and Authoritarianism: From Objectivity to Objectification,” *Bulletin of Science, Technology, and Society*, Vol. 17(1), 1997, pp. 49-67
- James C. Scott, “Introduction,” pp. 11-16, in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998)
- James C. Scott, “Nature and Space,” pp. 18-58, in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998)

Archive:

- John Lie, “Modern State/Modern Peoplehood,” pp. 98-143, in *Modern Peoplehood: On Race, Racism, Naturalism, Ethnicity, and Identity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004)
- Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” *Daedalus*, Vol. 87(1), Winter 1958, pp. 111-134
- Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” pp. 77-128, in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (trans. and eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946)
- Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation- An Argument,” *CR The New Centennial Review*, Vol. 3(3), Fall 2003, pp. 257-337

Territory and Borders – October 6, 2020

(Curated by Joshua Barkan and David Owen)

Readings:

- Michael Biggs, “Putting the State on the Map: Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 41(2), April 1999, pp. 374-405
- Bruce Braun, “Producing Vertical Territory: Geology and Governmentality in Late Victorian Canada,” *Ecumene*, Vol.7(1), 2000, pp. 7-46
- John Torpey, “Coming and Going: On the State Monopolization of the Legitimate ‘Means of Movement,’” *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 16(3), 1998, pp. 239-259
- Lauren Benton, “Anomalies of Empire,” pp. 1-39, in *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Archive:

- Hannah Arendt, “The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man,” pp. 267-302, in *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1951)
- World Bank Report, “Technology Landscape for Digital Identification,” (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2018)

State and Quantification – October 20, 2020

(Curated by Florence Jany-Catrice and Joy Rohde)

Readings:

- Theodore M. Porter, “U.S. Army Engineers and the Rise of Cost-Benefit Analysis,” pp. 148-189, in *Trust In Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)
- Arjun Appadurai, “Number in the Colonial Imagination,” pp. 114-135, in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996)
- Antoinette Rouvroy, “The Ends of Critique: Data Behaviourism Versus Due Process,” pp. 143-167, in Mireille Hildebrandts and Katja de Vries (eds.), *Privacy, Due Process and the Computational Turn: The Philosophy of Law Meets the Philosophy of Technology*, (New York: Routledge, 2013)

Archive:

- Alain Desrosières, “Managing the Economy,” pp. 553-564, in Theodore M. Porter and Dorothy Ross (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Science Volume 7: The Modern Social Sciences*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)
- Wendy Nelson Espeland and Berit Irene Vannebo, “Accountability, Quantification, and Law,” *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, Vol. 3, 2007, pp. 21-43
- Boris Samuel, “Economic Calculations, Instability and (In)formalisation of the State in Mauritania, 2003-2011,” *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 35(1), 2012, pp. 77-96

US Election Day and the Future of the Political – November 3, 2020
(Curated by Alondra Nelson and Charis Thompson)

Readings:

- John Carson, “Opening the Democracy Box,” *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 31(3), 2001, pp. 425-428
- Stephen Hilgartner, “Election 2000 and the Production of the Unknowable,” *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 31(3), 2001, pp. 439-441
- Sheila Jasanoff, “Election 2000: Mechanical Error or System Failure,” *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 31(3), 2001, pp. 461-467
- Jill Lepore, “How the Simulmatics Corporation Invented the Future,” *The New Yorker*, July 2020
- Spencer Overton, “State Power to Regulate Social Media Companies to Prevent Voter Suppression,” *U.C. Davis Law Review*, Vol. 53(1793), 2020, pp. 1793-1829

Archive:

- Charles Stewart III, “Voting Technologies,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 14, pp. 353-378
- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, *Securing the Vote: Protecting American Democracy*, (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2018)

Corporations, States, and Technoscience – November 17, 2020

(Curated by Emmanuel Henry and Christo Sims)

Readings:

- Charles E. Lindblom, “The Market as Prison,” *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 44(2), 1982, pp. 324-336
- Mariana Mazzucato, “The Entrepreneurial State,” *Soundings*, Vol. 49, 2011, pp. 131-142
- Hannah Appel, “Offshore Work: Oil, Modularity, and the How of Capitalism in Equatorial Guinea,” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 39(4), 2012, pp. 629-709
- Sainath Suryanarayanan and Daniel Lee Kleinman, “The Bottom Line for Bayer: Agrochemical Companies and ‘Bee Care’,” pp. 72-90, in *Vanishing Bees: Science, Politics, and Honeybee Health*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017)

Archive:

- Fred Block, “Swimming Against the Current: The Rise of a Hidden Developmental State in the United States,” *Politics & Society*, Vol. 36(2), 2008, pp. 169-206
- James Ferguson, “Seeing Like an Oil Company: Space, Security and Global Capital in Neoliberal Africa,” *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 107(3), 2005, pp. 377-382
- Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, “The Denial of Global Warming,” pp. 169-215 in, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*, (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2010)

Climate Change and the State – December 1, 2020

(Curated by Ryo Morimoto, Alondra Nelson and Sarah Vaughn)

Readings:

- Arun Agrawal, “Making Environmental Subjects: Intimate Government,” pp. 164–200, in *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005)
- Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, “The Myth of Isolates: Ecosystem Ecologies in the Nuclear Pacific,” *Cultural Geographies*, Vol. 20(2), 2013, pp. 167-184
- Anatol Lieven, “Climate Change and the State: A Case for Environmental Realism,” *Survival*, Vol. 62(2), 2020, pp. 7-26

Archive:

- Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Climate of History: Four Theses,” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 35(2), 2009, pp. 197-222
- Andreas Duit, Peter H. Feindt and James Meadowcroft, “Greening Leviathan: The Rise of the Environmental State?” *Environmental Politics*, Vol. 25(1), 2016, pp. 1-23
- Joseph Masco, “Bad Weather: On Planetary Crisis,” *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 40(1), 2010, pp. 7-40

Science and the State in Times of Covid-19 – December 15, 2020

(Curated by Diana Graizbord and Sonja van Wichelen)

Readings:

- Sheila Jasanoff, “Pathologies of Liberty: Public Health Sovereignty and the Political Subject in the Covid-19 Crisis,” *Cahiers Droit, Sciences & Technologies*, Vol. 11, 2020, pp. 125-149
- Lyle Fearnly, “Viral Sovereignty or Sequence Etiquette? Asian Science, Open Data, and Knowledge Control in Global Virus Surveillance,” *East Asian Science, Technology and Society: An International Journal*, Vol. 14, 2020, pp. 479-505
- Warwick Anderson, “The Philippine Covidscape: Colonial Public Health Redux?” *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*, Vol. 68(3-4), 2020, pp. 325-337

Archive:

- Bruno Latour, “Is This a Dress Rehearsal?,” In the Moment Blog, *Critical Inquiry*, 2020, <https://critinq.wordpress.com/2020/03/26/is-this-a-dress-rehearsal/>
- Charles E. Rosenberg, “Explaining Epidemics,” pp. 293-304, in *Explaining Epidemics: And Other Studies in the History of Medicine*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)
- Andrew Lakoff, “Global Health Security and the Pathogenic Imaginary,” pp. 300-320, in Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim (eds.), *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015)
- David S. Jones and Stefan Helmreich, “The Shape of Epidemics,” *Boston Review*, June 26, 2020, <http://bostonreview.net/science-nature/david-s-jones-stefan-helmreich-shape-epidemics>

Special Seminar with Professor Alondra Nelson, Deputy Director of Science and Society, *Office of Science and Technology Policy*
– January 26, 2021

Discussion with Professor Alondra Nelson regarding her new appointment to the White House OSTP.

Extraction, Circulation, Capitalism – February 9, 2021
(Curated by Nikolas Kosmatopoulos and Waqar Zaidi)

Readings:

- Liam Camping and Alejandro Colás, “Capitalism and the Sea: Sovereignty, Territory and Appropriation in the Global Ocean,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 36(4), 2018, pp. 776-794
- Charmaine Chua, Martin Danyluk, Deborah Cowen and Laleh Khalili, “Introduction: Turbulent Circulation: Building a Critical Engagement with Logistics,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 36(4), 2018, pp. 617-629
- Mazen Labban, “Deterritorializing Extraction: Bioaccumulation and the Planetary Mine,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 104(3), 2014, pp. 560-576

Archive:

- Martín Arboleda, “Circulation: State Power and the Logistics Turn in the Extractive Industries,” pp. 109–139, in *Planetary Mine: Territories of Extraction under Late Capitalism*, (London and New York: Verso Books, 2020)
- Gavin Bridge, “The Hole World: Scales and Spaces of Extraction,” *Scenario*, Vol. 5, 2015, <https://scenariojournal.com/article/the-hole-world/>
- Deborah Cowen, “The Geo-Economics of Piracy: The ‘Somali Pirate’ and the Remaking of International Law,” pp. 129–162, in *The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in Global Trade*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014)
- Timothy Mitchell, “Infrastructures Work on Time,” *New Silk Roads*, 2020, <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/new-silk-roads/312596/infrastructures-work-on-time/>

Behavioral Sciences, Social Policy and the State – February 23, 2021
(Curated by Diana Graizbord and Magdalena Małecka)
Guest Holger Straßheim

Readings:

- Holger Straßheim, Arlena Jung and Rebecca-Lea Korinek, “Reframing Expertise: The Rise of Behavioral Insights and Interventions in Public Policy,” pp. 249-268, in Arian Berthoin Antal, Michael Hutter and David Stark (eds.), *Moments of Valuation: Exploring Sites of Dissonance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)
- Madisson Whitman, “‘We Called That a Behavior’: The Making of Institutional Data,” *Big Data & Society*, Vol. 7(1), 2020, pp. 1-13
- Manuel Wirth, “Nudging Subjects at Risk: Social Impact Bonds between Financialization and Compassion,” *Historical Social Research*, Vol. 45(3), 2020, pp. 184-205

Archive:

- Christian Berndt, “Behavioural Economics and Development Policy,” pp. 242-256 in, Holger Straßheim and Silke Beck (eds.), *Handbook of Behavioural Change and Public Policy*, (Cheltenham and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019)
- Alice O’Connor, “Giving Birth to a ‘Culture of Poverty’: Poverty Knowledge in Postwar Behavioral Science, Culture, and Ideology,” pp. 99-123, in *Poverty Knowledge : Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001)
- Holger Straßheim, “Who Are Behavioural Public Policy Experts and How Are They Organized Globally,” *Policy & Politics*, Vol. 49(1), 2021, pp. 69-86
- Sarah Stillman, “Can Behavioral Science Help Flint?: An Unusual Team of White House Scientists Works Through the Final Days of the Obama Administration,” *The New Yorker*, January 16, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/01/23/can-behavioral-science-help-in-flint>

Method, Scale and Responsibility: Between the Local and the Planetary – March 9, 2021

(Curated by Joshua Barkan, Joy Rohde, Christo Sims and Sonja van Wichelen)

Guest Anna Tsing

Readings:

- Anna L. Tsing, Jennifer Deger, Alder Saxena Keleman and Feifei Zhou (eds.), “Introduction to Feral Atlas,” in, *Feral Atlas: The More-Than-Human Anthropocene*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), <http://feralatlas.org/>
- Anna L. Tsing, Jennifer Deger, Alder Saxena Keleman and Feifei Zhou (eds.), “Feral Atlas and the More-than-Human Anthropocene,” in, *Feral Atlas: The More-Than-Human Anthropocene*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), <http://feralatlas.org/>
- Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The Politics of Climate Change is More Than the Politics of Capitalism,” *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 34(2-3), 2017, pp. 25-37
- Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg, “The Geology of Mankind? A Critique of the Anthropocene Narrative,” *The Anthropocene Review*, Vol. 1(1), 2014, pp. 62-69

Archive:

- Anna L. Tsing, Jennifer Deger, Alder Saxena Keleman and Feifei Zhou (eds.), *Feral Atlas: The More-Than-Human Anthropocene*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020), <http://feralatlas.org/>
- James Ferguson, “Structures of Responsibility,” *Ethnography*, Vol. 13(4) 2012, pp. 558-562
- Iris Marion Young, “Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model,” *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Vol. 23(1), 2006, pp. 102-130

The Crisis of Expertise – March 23, 2021

(Curated by Emmanuel Henry, Alondra Nelson and Christo Sims)

Guest Gil Eyal

Readings:

- Gil Eyal, “Crisis, Take 2,” pp. 82-103, in *The Crisis of Expertise*, (Cambridge and Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019)
- Gil Eyal, “Inside the Vortex,” pp. 104-129, in *The Crisis of Expertise*, (Cambridge and Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019)
- Max Liboiron, Manuel Tironi and Nerea Calvillo, “Toxic Politics: Acting in a Permanently Polluted World,” *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 48(3), 2018, pp. 331-349
- Stuart Hall, “Gramsci and Us,” *Marxism Today*, June 1987

Archive:

- Gil Eyal, “Introduction,” pp. 1-10, in *The Crisis of Expertise*, (Cambridge and Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019)
- Gil Eyal, “Expertise,” pp. 11-20, in *The Crisis of Expertise*, (Cambridge and Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2019)
- Gil Eyal, “Futures Present: The Pandemic and the Crisis of Expertise,” *Pandemic Discourses*, January 27, 2021, <https://www.indiachinainstitute.org/2021/01/27/futures-present-expertise-crisis/>

The Nuclear State and Non-“Western” Science – April 6, 2021

(Curated by Ryo Morimoto, Alondra Nelson and Charis Thompson)

Guest Abena Osseo-Asare

Readings:

- Abena Dove Osseo-Asare, “Atomic Lands’: Understanding Land Disputes Near Ghana’s Nuclear Reactor,” *African Affairs*, Vol. 115(460), 2016, pp. 443-465
- Abena Dove Osseo-Asare, *Atomic Junction Film*, 2019
- Vanessa Agard-Jones, “Spray,” *Somatosphere*, May 27, 2014, <http://somatosphere.net/2014/spray.html/>
- Magdalena E. Stawkowski, “I Am a Radioactive Mutant: Emergent Biological Subjectivities at Kazakhstan’s Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site,” *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 43(1), 2016, pp. 144-157

Archive:

- Abena Dove Osseo-Asare, *Atomic Junction: Nuclear Power in Africa after Independence*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019)
- Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim, “Containing the Atom: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and Nuclear Power in the United States and South Korea,” *Minerva*, Vol. 47, 2009, pp. 119-146
- Vincent J. Intondi, “Links in the Same Chain: Civil Rights, Anticolonialism, and the Bomb in Africa,” pp. 45-61, in *African Americans Against the Bomb: Nuclear Weapons, Colonialism, and the Black Freedom Movement*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015)

Future States of Science and Capital – April 20, 2021

(Curated by Didier Fassin, Nikolas Kosmatopoulos and Alondra Nelson)

Guest Timothy Mitchell

Readings:

- Timothy Mitchell, “Every Capitalist Imagines He is a Hydraulic Engineer,” (Draft)

Archive:

- Timothy Mitchell, “Uber Eats: How Capitalism Consumes the Future,” pp. 84-88, in Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (eds.), *Critical Zones: The Science and Politics of Landing on Earth*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020)
- Kaushik Sunder Rajan, “Subjects of Speculation: Emergent Life Sciences and Market Logics in the United States and India,” *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 107(1), 2005, pp. 19-30

Capstone Session – May 4, 2021

Guest Audra Wolfe

Readings:

- Audra J. Wolfe, “Science for Peace,” pp. 91-112, in *Freedom’s Laboratory: The Cold War Struggle for the Soul of Science*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018)
- Audra J. Wolfe, “Epilogue,” pp. 199-210, in *Freedom’s Laboratory: The Cold War Struggle for the Soul of Science*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018)

Archive:

- Audra J. Wolfe, "Up With Experts, Down With Technocracy," *Never Just Science*, March 24, 2020, <https://audrajwolfe.com/neverjustscience/up-with-experts-down-with-technocracy/>
- Audra J. Wolfe, "All Together Now: Science is Political," *Never Just Science*, October 27, 2020, <https://audrajwolfe.com/neverjustscience/all-together-now-science-is-political/>



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