



VISITING
SCHOLAR
PROGRAM

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Public Lecture Offerings

How Much Does a Dollar Cost? Public Ethics, Compensation, and the Limits of Justice

This lecture examines how cost becomes the dominant language through which societies debate ethical obligations and evade questions about justice. When institutions demand that historical violence be rendered as calculable figures that can be budgeted and negotiated, money functions as a moral vocabulary that allows certain claims while foreclosing others. The analysis explores what monetary measures can accomplish and what they systematically obscure, separating redistribution as a practical necessity from the assumption that payment settles accounts that remain fundamentally open. What happens to public ethics when justice becomes a question of affordability rather than the ongoing practice of rebuilding conditions for shared life?

THE PHI BETA KAPPA SOCIETY

VISITING SCHOLAR PROGRAM 2026-2027

American Repair: Competing Claims and Democratic Capacity

Contemporary American political discourse generates competing demands for repair from multiple constituencies, each experiencing and articulating a deferral of what they understand democracy should provide. This lecture examines what happens when different groups make claims that appear incommensurable, analyzing how democratic institutions respond when confronted with proliferating articulations of injury that exceed the capacity for recognition. The talk explores repair as the language through which groups articulate their relationship to democracy's unfulfilled promises, identifying the political possibilities and sensibilities that emerge and the impact they have on the American democratic project.

The Place of Freedom: Spatial Practice and Making the World We Want

Ruth Wilson Gilmore asserts that "freedom is a place," refusing nationalist projects and other state-based frameworks to propose that place-based freedom remains "still-to-be-achieved work" of everyday people. This lecture examines freedom as an everyday spatial practice rather than an abstract ideal, analyzing how struggles over land, neighborhoods, and community, as well as imagined desires, constitute core political questions about who freedom is actually for and how it is achieved. The analysis explores freedom as directional practice, as movement toward rather than possession of, revealing why making place becomes the necessary work of collective futures.

Classroom Discussion Topics

How to Read a Map: Geography as Argument

1. Maps function as arguments rather than neutral illustrations, yet cartographic representation often appears as simple documentation of spatial facts. Geographic methods reveal how choices about scale, boundary, color, and category shape what becomes thinkable as a policy or moral response. The analysis examines how cartographic representation naturalizes spatial arrangements that reflect specific political decisions, thereby developing critical literacy to recognize what geographic thinking enables.

Scam Likely: Satire and Our Political Order

2. Why has "the scam" become ordinary language for describing institutions, media, and public authority? This discussion argues that scams function as a satire of key political, economic, and social practices, exposing the gap between what institutions claim and what they deliver.