

THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES
FEMINIST RESEARCH SPEAKERS SERIES FALL 2017 PRESENTS

a symposium on CRITICAL PRISON STUDIES

Friday, November 24, 2017; 14:00 - 16:30
Senate Chamber (3-26 Arts & Convocation Hall)

SUPERFLUOUS TO THE WORLD: Cruelty and Carceral Logics

presented by Catherine Kellogg

ABSTRACT

Hannah Arendt's analysis of the ease with which people can be cut apart from their social and political fabrics—being made "superfluous to the world"—is one of the reasons for the recent renewed interest in her *Origins of Totalitarianism*. In this presentation I use her analysis of the production of "abstract nakedness" to foreground two questions. First, can her analysis of the "slow production of living corpses" align with the term "cruel" that recurs in legal descriptions of the limits to legitimate punishment? Second, can her analysis of social death and its cruelties help us understand the "logic of elimination" that characterizes the dispossession of Indigenous peoples in settler colonies? My argument is that carcerality is the logic of the prison exploding out; the logic governing those incarcerated is increasingly the logic for those outside of the walls of the prison.

BIOGRAPHY

Catherine Kellogg is an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Alberta. She specializes in political theory, and is the author of *Law's Trace: From Hegel to Derrida* (Routledge 2010). She has also published numerous articles and book chapters on Arendt, Hegel, Derrida, Malabou, Benjamin, Nancy, and Agamben. Her work has appeared in such journals as *Law, Culture and the Humanities*; *Philosophy & Social Criticism*; *Law and Critique*; *Cultural Values*; and *Theory and Event*. She is currently working on a project that investigates cruel punishment.

ANTI-PRISON ACTIVISM AND PRISON RESISTANCE

presented by Tanya Friesen

ABSTRACT

This presentation explores the multifaceted ways prison abolitionism and anti-prison activism provide insight into the legal system and social injustices. Prison abolition is not simply about dismantling the buildings that are prisons. It is a tool that exposes state violence and systems of oppression. Women, especially Indigenous women, are the fastest growing population of incarcerated people in Canada seeing an increase of nearly 30% for women overall in the last decade, and 60% for Indigenous women. The marginalisation of imprisoned women begins long before they are incarcerated. Women in prison share similar histories of domestic violence, sexual abuse, untreated mental illness, and historical trauma. First, I will examine the gendered composition of the prison population as a means to illuminate the social realities that lead to the criminalisation of women that place them in contact with the law, as well as other disciplinary institutions that work in tandem with the prison system. Second, I will explore various anti-prison and resistance movements that address issues of systemic and institutional discrimination.

BIOGRAPHY

Tanya Friesen is a Sociology student at the University of Alberta, and currently works as an instructor at the Edmonton Remand Centre. Her research interests are prison abolitionism and feminist critical prison studies. She is also interested in exploring transformative justice that emphasizes victim healing and empowerment, non-retributive forms of justice, and community-based strategies.

LAND, AGRICULTURE, AND THE CARCERAL: The Territorializing Function of Penitentiary Farms

presented by Kelly Struthers Montford

ABSTRACT

This presentation provides a historical analysis of Canadian penitentiary farms that have tasked prisoners with the raising, slaughtering, and processing of farmed animals. Instead of representing a rehabilitative ideal, I argue that penitentiary farms have functioned as a means of prison expansion and settler territorialization that produce carceral and agricultural power as beneficial, inevitable, and benevolent. While support for agricultural programming is rooted in its perceived benefits to rehabilitation and vocational training, I show that these justifications are untenable and reproduce settler colonial power relations. The logic of animal agriculture—in which farmed animals are the legal property of humans and are always already scheduled for death—prescribes a specific mode of relating to animals that precludes emotional and compassionate relationships as well as reproduces colonial relationships to animals, labour, and territory.

BIOGRAPHY

Kelly Struthers Montford is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at the University of Alberta (she will be defending her dissertation on the Monday after this symposium!) as well as a pre-postdoctoral fellow in Punishment, Law, and Social Theory at the Centre for Criminology & Sociolegal Studies at the University of Toronto. She has previously been a Killiam Scholar, SSHRC Canada Graduate Scholar, and the 2013-2014 Institute for Critical Animal Studies Hilda Scholar of the year. Her research interests include critical prison studies, critical animal studies, philosophy, and social theory. Her work has been published in *philoSOPHIA: A Journal of Continental Feminism*; the *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*; *Societies*; and *PhaenEx Journal of Existential and Phenomenological Theory and Culture*.



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