



Lecture Series in Social Anthropology

Spring
Semester
2024

Tuesday 19 March 2024 | 4.15 p.m. | Room AND 4.06

Queer Object to the Rescue: Intimacy and Citizenship in Kenya

Prof. George-Paul Meiu (University of Basel)

Campaigns calling on police and citizens to purge their countries of homosexuality have taken hold across the world. But the “homosexual threat” they claim to be addressing is not always easy to identify. To make that threat visible, leaders, media, and civil society groups have deployed certain objects as signifiers of queerness. In Kenya, for example, bead necklaces, plastics, and even diapers have come to represent the danger posed by homosexual behavior to an essentially “virile” construction of national masculinity. Based on George Paul Meiu’s new book *Queer Objects to the Rescue*, this lecture explores objects that have played an important and surprising role in both state-led and popular attempts to rid Kenya of various imagined threats to intimate life. Meiu shows that their use in the political imaginary has been crucial to representing the homosexual body as a societal threat and as a target of outrage, violence, and exclusion, while also crystallizing anxieties over wider political and economic instability. To effectively understand and critique homophobia, Meiu suggests, we must take these objects seriously and recognize them as potential sources for new forms of citizenship, intimacy, resistance, and belonging.

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Entrance free of charge.

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