



WEDNESDAY SEMINAR

09.10.2019, 17:00 Uhr, HS-C
IKSA, NIG, Universitätsstraße 7, 1010 Wien, 4. Stock

Susan McKinnon

The Work of the Eugenics Record Office in the United States: Technologies for Pathologizing and Terminating „Degenerate“ Family Lines and „Purifying“ the Nation



Susan McKinnon is Professor Emerita in the Department of Anthropology, University of Virginia. Her research and writing have been focused on issues relating to kinship, marriage, and gender, including their cross-cultural and historical diversity, their centrality in the structures and dynamics of hierarchy and equality, and their relation to ideas about nation and modernity.

Her books include *From a Shattered Sun: Hierarchy, Gender, and Alliance in the Tanimbar Islands* and *Neo-liberal Genetics: The Myths and Moral Tales of Evolutionary Psychology* as well as the co-edited volumes, *Relative Values: Reconfiguring Kinship Studies*; *Complexities: Beyond Nature and Nurture*; and *Vital Relations: Modernity and the Persistent Life of Kinship*. She is currently working on a book about the stigmatization and prohibition of cousin marriage in the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

kommende Termine

30.10.2019 Krisztina Fehervary

16.+17.01.2020 Katherine Verdery

The story of the Eugenics Record Office (ERO) in the United States has much to say about the ways in which the measurement of kinship relations through the calculation of the intergenerational transmission of “heritable” traits can become a tool for defining national belonging. In this paper, I consider how the newly rediscovered Mendelian laws of inheritance, at the beginning of the twentieth century, provided the ERO researchers with a statistical means for calculating the transmission of heritable traits — physiological, mental, temperamental, and moral — across past and future generations. I analyze the genealogical, ideological, and the cost-benefit technologies they deployed to bring into being and “make visible” the category of “degenerate” families and to make the case for their reproductive segregation and/or sterilization. And I demonstrate how they used the hereditary distinctions between “good” and “bad strains” of the population to craft what was essentially a class- and race-based case not only for “purifying” the nation but also for “building a wall around the nation” to rid the country of existing “degenerate families” and prohibit others from entering and becoming citizens.

Workshop with Susan McKinnon: "Vital Relations: Kinship and beyond"

07.10.2019 | 10:00-15:00 Uhr | Sitzungszimmer

Please register for the Workshop by 03.10.:
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