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Institut für Kultur- und
Sozialanthropologie

WEDNESDAY SEMINAR

25.06.2025, 17:00 Uhr, Übungsraum (and online)
IKSA, NIG, Universitätsstraße 7, 1010 Wien, 4. Stock

Sharryn Kasmir (Hofstra University)

Reconsidering Politics in the U.S. Rust Belt.
An Anthropological of Labor Perspective from Pennsylvania



Sharryn Kasmir is

Professor of Anthropology at Hofstra University. She writes on the anthropology of labor and on the theory of uneven and

combined development. She has carried out ethnographic fieldwork in manufacturing settings in the Basque region of Spain and the southeast U.S. and is currently studying new forms of political activism in a Rust Belt, deindustrialized region of Pennsylvania. Her publications are both close ethnographic studies and theoretical engagements with the labor and politics of global capitalism.

In this talk I outline the key concepts and theoretical framework of the anthropology of labor. I discuss my research on left-liberal social movement groups in a U.S. Rust Belt region in the state of Pennsylvania, where I did fieldwork from 2018-2021. Using the lens of the anthropology of labor, I interpret events there, and I reconsider Rust Belt politics.

Pennsylvania, and particularly its deindustrialized regions, are key battlegrounds in the U.S. national political landscape, where questions of labor and class are paramount. I disrupt the familiar Rust Belt narrative, which begins with deindustrialization, job loss, and social dislocation, and ends with the right-wing turn of white working classes. Instead, I center the organizing efforts of the left-liberal groups that are active in the area. I show how those groups attempt more expansive labor formations that include marginalized, racialized populations who have traditionally not been part of how the Rust Belt labor story is understood. In so doing, they may point towards seeds of resistance in a deindustrialized region.

Details:

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