

THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S STUDIES
PRESENTS A PUBLIC LECTURE

THE THREAT OF QUEER BODIES: HIV, SEXUALITY, AND BIOSECURITY IN SOUTH KOREA

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This talk addresses what it means to be a national security threat as a queer person during a public health crisis in contemporary South Korea. I focus on how anti-LGBT organizations used the biosecurity context of the spring 2015 outbreak of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) in South Korea to engender greater fear around HIV and queer people. They were reduced to their bodies and their bodies to a virus, no longer persons but threats in need of isolation. I argue that queer and HIV/AIDS activists responded to the fear of HIV and queer bodies by reinscribing corporeal threats with personhood. They asserted that connectivity and social relations—between bodies, and between the virus and the body—are foundational to the person. Returning personhood to bodies, I contend, is ultimately social justice work.



Timothy Gitzen is a Korea Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow in the Institute for Korean Studies at Indiana University. He received his PhD in Sociocultural Anthropology from the University of Minnesota. His research focuses on sexuality and security, LGBT health and violence, and social justice in South Korea, parts of which appear in *Transgender Studies Quarterly* and the forthcoming Duke University Press collection *Queer Korea*.

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