

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

SPEAKER SERIES

Cultural Work and the Sociology of Creativity

Dr. Saara Liinamaa, Associate Professor
University of Guelph

My objectives for this talk are twofold. First, I will discuss the sociology of creativity as a subfield in the discipline and highlight what it brings to our understanding of art and cultural production. As an illustration, I will draw on examples from my recent book, *The New Spirit of Creativity*. Based on fieldwork conducted at three art and design universities, this book theorizes the day-to-day work, organization, and administration of artistic creativity and its clashes with a "new spirit" of creativity that has widely taken hold; the combined uncertainties of higher education and cultural work make for a volatile mix. The artists, designers, and other creative practitioners employed at these art schools must navigate heightened ambiguity around artistic identity and creative excellence. Second, I will use this example to address wider issues of method and methodology, namely, big questions of meaning and interpretation so central to qualitative research. Here, I will discuss how I made sense of the different orders of meaning at stake (e.g. interactional, situational, institutional, cultural, aesthetic) within this multi-method qualitative project.

Bio

Saara Liinamaa works in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Guelph (ON, Canada). As a cultural sociologist her research combines interests in culture, creativity, and everyday life with published work on public spaces and sociability, migrant agricultural labour, cultural theory, and creative work and occupations. Her recent book, *The New Spirit of Creativity* (University of Toronto Press), was awarded the 2023 Canadian Sociology Book Award.

Friday, December 1st, 2023

2:30 p.m., 1116 McCain Building

All Welcome!