

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

SPEAKER SERIES:

Inverting the 'hierarchy of intimacy' in friendship-based households

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Why does it matter that anthropologists and sociologists study modern friendship? This talk first provides an overview of my current collaborative research agenda on critical approaches to friendship. Our aim is to understand friendship in ways that avoid simply celebrating it as an intrinsically good thing in life, or as a model for ethical relations of all kinds, or as a solution to social problems like loneliness, incivility, or political polarization. Indeed, critical approaches to friendship focus on its uneven and ambivalent place in people's lives and how it is linked to larger questions in the social sciences, including social (dis)connection across public and private life, choice and autonomy in North American cultural worlds, and changing expectations and practices of intimacy. The main focus of this talk will be on findings from our 2023-24 study of adults in Nova Scotia who have formed households with friends rather than romantic partners or family members, whether as renters, co-property owners, or some combination thereof. Our aim is to understand how people are thinking about and doing friendship in a cultural moment when there is growing freedom to organize one's household or relationships in novel ways, yet also growing questions about how the stakes of friendship might be changing as people center it as a core bond in their lives.

Friday, October 30
McCain #2118 @ 2:30 p.m.
Reception to follow
All Welcome!