

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

SPEAKER SERIES

In Search of Countering Violent Extremism: Ethnographic Travails in Pre-emptive Securitization

Dr. Kris Millett

Mount Saint Vincent University

This talk explores my ethnographic study on the social implications of Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), an upstart sub-field of counter-terrorism that aims to intervene in the so-called 'radicalization process' leading to terrorism. P/CVE is an exemplar of the anticipatory, pre-emptive turn that state security practices have taken in recent years, which extends the policing and security gaze outward to build 'resilience' in individuals and communities through various civil society efforts.

My work explores the growth of P/CVE and its evolution of focus (from 'Islamist' extremism towards multiple 'types' of violent extremism including right-wing and left-wing movements) and attempts to theorize on the social function P/CVE plays beyond its purported public safety and national security aims. This raises questions on what segments of society benefit from P/CVE's expansion, whose interests are misrepresented, and how P/CVE's expansion impinges on the possibility of social and political change.

I explore these questions through ethnographic fieldwork with P/CVE practitioners. In my talk I will also discuss the successes and pitfalls I encountered with ethnographic research in the pre-emptive security space. This included issues in determining what P/CVE is outside of policy discourses, obtaining access to actually existing P/CVE projects, and connecting with actors in P/CVE to learn how they become recruited to the field and make sense of their involvement.

Kris Millett is an Assistant Professor in Sociology & Anthropology at Mount Saint Vincent University

**Friday, January 30th, 2026
2:30 p.m. in McCain, #1116
All Welcome!**