

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

SPEAKER SERIES

From State Racial Projects to Colorblind Ideologies: The Bureaucratic Dissociation of Race in Policing

Policing has long been implicated in state projects that construct race and racial inequality in the United States.

Recent theorizing around racialized organizations offers a means of analyzing the meso-level processes that contribute to this. In this talk, I suggest an extension of a racialized organizations framework that specifically considers the functions and forms of state bureaucracies. This offers new insights into the relationship between the racial projects of local governments, the organizational arrangements of the police agency, and the attitudes of individual police officers. I describe these relationships through a case study of policing in a segregated city. After detailing the interpolation of racial state interests into the police department's administrative structures, I draw on over 500 hours of ethnographic observations of police work to explore the connections between these same structures and the racial ideologies of officers. I argue that bureaucratic arrangements play an essential and dissociative role in articulating the racial character of policing. On the one hand, they facilitate racial governance.

On the other, they obscure the racial logics and consequences of daily work from line officers.

Dr. Daanika Gordon, Assistant Professor of Sociology
Tufts University

DATE: Friday, March 19th, 2021

TIME: 3:30 p.m. ADT, TEAMS link to follow

Bio: Daanika Gordon is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Tufts University. She received her PhD from the University of Wisconsin in 2018. Her research explores the intersections of racialized space, urban governance, and institutional practices in policing. This work has been funded by the National Science Foundation, the Center for Engaged Scholarship, and the Neubauer Fund for Faculty Excellence at Tufts University. It has appeared in journals including Law & Social Inquiry and Sociological Perspectives.