

The Sociology Colloquium Series presents:

The Lynching Era and Contemporary Police Shootings of Blacks in the South

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The rate of police-involved killings in the U.S. greatly exceeds that of other industrialized nations and is highly racially disproportionate. Yet, we know very little about the antecedents of police violence, and even less about what explains the distribution of police killings across space. We ask whether there is a connection between contemporary police killings of Blacks in the U.S. and the country's unique history of racial subjugation and violence. We focus particularly on lynching era violence in the South—in which thousands of recently-freed Blacks were killed by mob violence between 1877 and 1950—and theorize how this legacy of racial terror casts a shadow that continues to shape implicit biases of law enforcement today. We explore the potential pathways that lynching violence in the past might connect with contemporary police violence, and test these pathways with unique data on lethal police shootings of Blacks between 2013 and 2018