



Lecture:

“Uranium From Africa and the Power of Nuclear Things”

Dr. Gabrielle Hecht
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Thursday Feb. 2, 4:00 pm
Rockwell Pavilion (2nd Floor M.D.
Anderson Library)
University of Houston

What exactly does it mean for a nation, a technology, or a workplace to be “nuclear”? Dr. Hecht argues that the category has never been defined by purely technical parameters. Like other master categories that claim global purview, the “nuclear” both inscribes and enacts politics of inclusion and exclusion. These politics are particularly visible from the vantage points of African uranium mines during the years of decolonization and Cold War; in any given year of the Cold War, African ore supplied 20-50% of the Western world’s uranium. As both political object and material substance, this ore shaped global conceptions and meanings of the “nuclear,” with profound consequences for the legal and illegal circulation of radioactive materials, for the global institutions and treaties governing atomic energy, and for the lives and health of mineworkers. Ranging from Niger, through Gabon, and into Namibia, this talk explores the manifestations and consequences of nuclearity.



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