

UCR Southeast Asian Studies (SEATriP) presents

# **Affective Expertise: Gender, Class, and the Labor of Social Work in Ho Chi Minh City**

**Ann Marie Leshkowich**

Whereas state socialism emphasized women's roles in public labor, market socialism in contemporary Vietnam now also demands that women, especially urban middle classes, perform the private affective labor of managing households as emotional and economic units. Meanwhile, the urban poor are depicted as beset by social problems and in need of expert guidance from therapeutic professionals, including social workers. This paper explores the class and gendered dynamics that shape interactions between social workers and their clients in Ho Chi Minh City. As they perform their own feminized affective labor as instruments of state developmentalist governance, social workers confront two types of failure: their own inability to achieve ideals of middle-class domestic femininity and the shortcomings of a casework model that turns the structural problem of growing inequality into matters of individual knowledge, choice, behavior, and affect.

**October 15, 2018**  
**3:30 – 5:00 pm**  
**INTS 1111**



Ann Marie Leshkowich is Professor of Anthropology and Director of Asian Studies at College of the Holy Cross (Worcester, MA). Her research focuses on gender, economic transformation, neoliberalism, middle classness, fashion, social work, and adoption in Vietnam. She is author of *Essential Trade: Vietnamese Women in a Changing Marketplace* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), for which she was awarded the 2016 Harry J. Benda Prize from the Association for Asian Studies, and coeditor with Kirsten W. Endres of *Traders in Motion: Identities and Contestations in the Vietnamese Marketplace* (Cornell University Press, 2018).