



DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

College of Arts and Sciences
Bloomington

The Department of Geography Presents:

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American University**

**“U.S. Farm Policy As Fraught Populism: Tracing the Scalar
Tensions of Nationalist Agricultural Governance to the
Secret Old Crisis of Surplus”**

Abstract: The scalar tensions of nationalism manifest acutely in agriculture—particularly in contemporary United States. This is paradoxical since farm policy calls for and enacts nativist governance that undermines the conditions of farming: from labor, to water, topsoil, and pollinators, to export markets. At the heart of these scalar contradictions is the fraught, shifting terrain of agrarian populism. The intertwined origin of the U.S. Farm Bill, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and Cooperative Agricultural Extension shows how early 20th century fraught agrarian populism drove farm policy, but how it also carried a pivotal consensus of recognition about the ecological and economic dangers of overproduction. Drawing on archival research at the USDA National Agricultural Library Special Collections, discourse and policy analysis of U.S. Farm Bills, and qualitative research with farmer organizations, I trace the scalar tensions of nationalist agriculture back to a chronic agricultural inviability that has been subsumed within consolidation. Throughout the 20th century, the deleterious impacts of commodity crop surplus were hidden through scalar fixes like food aid, dumping, and flex crops. The once-obvious ‘farm problem’ of glut became obscured by neocolonial discourses of modernity and neoliberal discourses of scarcity, competition, and charity. Tracing the scalar contradictions of nationalist farm policy, the paper explores the gendered and racialized mechanisms by which rural U.S. farmers came to believe they feed the world, and how this geopolitical imaginary continues to hide the ecological, economic, social, nutritional, and rural crises of commodity crop overproduction—both domestically and internationally.

Wednesday, November 28, 2018

4:00 p.m.

Student Bldg. 017

Questions: Dr. Rebecca Lave, (812) 855-0940