

CaMP Anthropology Presents:

**Dr. Katherine E. Hoffman
Northwestern University**



**"Call Them by Their Fathers' Names":
Family Truths, Fabrications, and Absences
in the Transnational Circulation of Abandoned Muslim Children**

Monday, December 3, 2018

4:00 PM

Student Building SB 159

One of the most fundamental legal and social categorization schemes for humans is kinship. While for many individuals, identifying who is mother, father, son or daughter is taken for granted, for other individuals – especially those in intentional families formed through adoption or guardianship – the social right to call a person “mother” or “son,” for instance, and the legal grounding of that label, can be subject to political, moral, or religious forces beyond the human grouping itself. This paper examines the *kafala* contract of Islamic guardianship as it moves from the abandoned child's state of origin in North Africa into the European and North American states where many guardians reside. It examines the circulation of information through which these family relationships take shape transnationally, and the transformation of identity texts that accompany these children with shifts in the regimes of care that permit and constrain different adults who raise them. With some reference to *kafala* in the United States, the talk focuses primarily on

France as both the most significant receiving country for children from Morocco and Algeria and the most legally restrictive. Through examination of this little-studied Islamic institution and the discourses that surround the individuals engaging with it, the talk aims to contribute to our understanding of how Islamic legal institutions circulate outside of their states of origin, and identify the individuals, administrators and officials who become unwitting mediators of Islamic law in new settings.

Katherine E. Hoffman is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Interim Director of the Program of Middle East and North African Studies at Northwestern University. Her work focuses on the intersection of legal and linguistic anthropology in North African and among the Maghrebi diaspora in Europe and the United States. She is the author of We Share Walls: Language, Land and Gender in Berber Morocco (Blackwell 2008), and the coeditor of Berbers and Others: Beyond Tribe and Nation in the Maghrib (Indiana 2010).

This lecture series was generously funded by the Institute for Advanced Study.