

Plenary

Friday 13 September 2019 at 09:00 – 10:00
Exhibition Centre, Main Lecture Theatre, Room PX001

Professor Ruha Benjamin

Black Afterlives Matter: Reimagining Bioethics for an Ailing Body Politic

In this talk, I expand the frame of health and illness and broaden the terrain of bioethics, moving beyond a focus on individual bodies to the social patterns and politics that produce premature death. By engaging the idiom of “afterlife” in relation to Black existence in the United States, this talk grapples with the multiple ways in which life after death and debt is stratified. Especially when it comes to Black maternal health – so often the site of trauma and neglect – we must consider a full range of life-affirming practices that implicate the body politic writ large. In this way, I also want to shift from diagnosis to remedy. Yes, subordination, subjugation, *subaltern*, literally “under the earth,” racialized populations are buried people. But there is a lot happening underground. Not only coffins, but seeds, roots and rhizomes. And maybe even tunnels and other lines of flight to new worlds, where alternative forms of kinship and collective wellbeing have room to grow.

Ruha Benjamin specializes in the interdisciplinary study of science, medicine, and technology; race-ethnicity and gender; knowledge and power. She is author of *People’s Science: Bodies and Rights on the Stem Cell Frontier* (Stanford University Press 2013), *Race After Technology* (Polity 2019), and editor of *Captivating Technology: Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination* (Duke University Press 2019), as well as numerous articles and book chapters.

Professor Benjamin received her BA in sociology and anthropology from Spelman College, MA and PhD in sociology from UC Berkeley, and completed postdoctoral fellowships at UCLA’s Institute for Society and Genetics and Harvard University’s Science, Technology, and Society Program. She has been awarded fellowships and grants from the American Council of Learned Societies, National Science Foundation, Ford Foundation, California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, and Institute for Advanced Study. In 2017, she received the President’s Award for Distinguished Teaching at Princeton. Links to Professor Benjamin’s recent books can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

