



2022-2023 Faculty Colloquium Series

Tuesday, April 4, 2023, 1-2 pm
Escalante Hall, Room 128

“Small-town Feminism: A History of Midwestern Girlhood during the late Twentieth Century”

Dr. Erika Jackson

Professor of History

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Small Midwestern towns are not spaces in popular memory where one would assume to find teens who embrace feminist values. The stereotypical cultural character of the Midwest is captured in fictional towns like Lake Wobegon, Minnesota and Pawnee, Indiana, and across popular culture in John Cougar Mellencamp’s “Small Town,” and Laura Ingalls Wilder’s *Little House on the Prairie*. To outsiders, the Midwest embodies wholesomeness, nostalgia, goodwill, and rootedness to place, and people defined by the social practice of “Midwestern Nice.” Within these small towns, three feminist ideologies – neoliberal, power, and popular – converged into what I call “small-town” or “flyover” feminism, embraced by Generation X teens and informed by popular culture and mass media of the late twentieth century. Individually, these concepts are disregarded within third wave historiography as frivolous, irreverent, and immature; absent of substance; and lacking street politics and dramatic theater in marches, demonstrations, and protests. The topic of this colloquium, and the subject of my forthcoming book, focuses on the social and cultural history of how young people discovered a unique blend of liberal feminist ideologies in unconventional places during the 1980s and 1990s.

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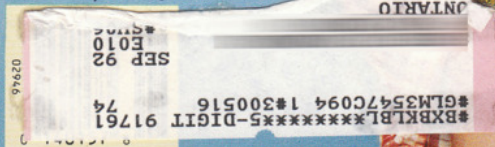
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