

THE 60TH ANNUAL HAROLD J. PLOUS AWARD LECTURE

Terence Keel

Ghost in the Machine: How Christianity Haunts the Biological Sciences

Thursday, May 10, 2018 / 4:00 PM / FREE
Corwin Pavilion



The idea that so-called races reflect inherent biological differences between social groups has been a prominent aspect of Western thought since at least the Enlightenment. While there have been moments of refuting this way of thinking—most notably, the social constructionist thesis emerging as a dominant framework in the aftermath of WWII—fixed biological conceptions of race haunt new genetic technologies, where race is thought to be measurable at the molecular level. Yet, the resilience of this naturalized understanding of race may stem less from overtly political or pernicious motives on the part of scientists and more from our inherited theological traditions that continue to shape and direct scientific reasoning. In this talk, Keel argues that the enduring belief that race comes from “Nature” reflects the haunting influence of Christian intellectual history on the development of modern scientific thinking about human ancestry.

Dr. Terence Keel is an Associate Professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara where he serves as Vice Chair to the Department of History and holds an appointment in the Black Studies Department and the Department of Religious Studies. He earned his PhD from Harvard University. Dr. Keel is an interdisciplinary scholar with training in religious studies, the history of science, African American history, as well as science and technology studies. He has written widely about the history of racism and its connections to the modern biological sciences, religious intellectual history, law, medicine, and public health. His first book, *Divine Variations* (Stanford University Press, January 2018) is a study of how Christian thought facilitated the development of scientific racism and shaped the epistemic commitments of the modern study of human biodiversity. He has received awards for his research from the National Science Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, and the University of California Office of the President. Dr. Keel is an affiliate of the newly formed [Center for the Study of Racism, Social Justice & Health](#) under the directorship of Dr. Chandra Ford of UCLA Fielding School of Public Health. He is also a co-editor of a special issue of the *American Journal of Law and Medicine* (Fall 2017). In addition to his scholarly work he is a senior advisor to the [Goldin Institute](#), a Chicago based non-profit organization that advocates globally for grassroots leadership, conflict resolution, poverty alleviation and environmental justice.



The Harold J. Plous Memorial Award was established in 1957 to honor Harold J. Plous, Assistant Professor of Economics. The award is given annually to a faculty member of the rank of Assistant Professor or Instructor who has demonstrated outstanding performance by creative action or contribution to the intellectual life of the college community.

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