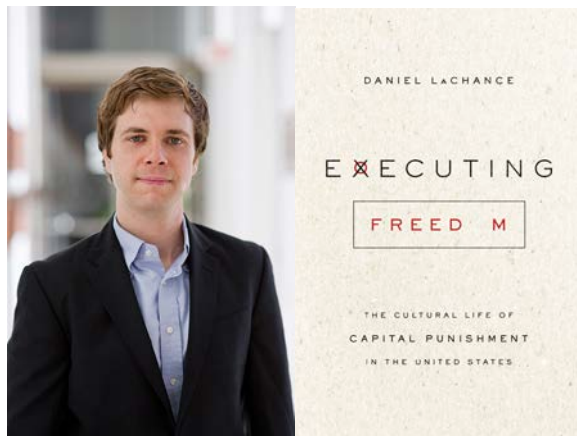


EXECUTING FREEDOM BOOK TALK



Daniel LaChance

Date: March 9, 2017

Time: 12:00-1:30pm

Location: Social Ecology I 112

ABSTRACT:

In *Executing Freedom*, Daniel LaChance explores how the revival of the death penalty in the 1970s and its overwhelming popularity in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s was part of a larger story about freedom in the United States since World War II. From conservatives who grew concerned that a paternalistic government was usurping the role of the family to civil libertarians worried that prisons were using a rehabilitative mission to dominate the minds of prisoners, Americans across the political spectrum grew wary of big government. Reborn in a moment of anti-big government consensus, the death penalty reflected and reinforced a minimalist vision of government that many Americans, regardless of their feelings about capital punishment, had come to equate with freedom. In analyzing the relationship between politics, legitimacy, and the death penalty, LaChance draws on primary sources from journalism, literature, film, and law. The book surveys these sources across most of the twentieth century, seamlessly integrating historical narrative, literary analysis, and political theory. In the end, the book reframes our understanding of modern punishment culture, revealing how harsh punishments like the death penalty create opportunities for individuals to transcend structural constraints, perversely becoming symbols of freedom.

BIO:

Daniel LaChance is an Assistant Professor of History and Andrew W. Mellon Fellow in Law and the Humanities at Emory University. His work examines the sources, meaning, and effects of the “punitive turn” in the United States, the ratcheting up of incarceration and other forms of harsh punishment in the late 20th century. Articles he has written on this topic have appeared in the journals [Law and Social Inquiry](#), [Punishment and Society](#), and [Law, Culture, and the Humanities](#). His first book, [Executing Freedom: The Cultural Life of Capital Punishment in the United States](#), was published in the fall of 2016 by the University of Chicago Press. The book examines the decline of the American death penalty in the years following World War II, its revival in the 1970s, and its subsequent use over the past thirty years. In it, he argues that shifting ideas about the nature of freedom reshaped the dominant meaning of capital punishment in America. LaChance has also contributed to national discussions on the past and present of the American death penalty through opinion pieces and news analyses published by [The New York Times](#), [The New Republic](#), and [Newsweek](#).

Co-sponsored by the Center for Law, Society, and Culture, the Department of History, and the Newkirk Center for Science and Society.

Please [RSVP](#) by March 2, 2017.