South Asia Center

Workshop and Lecture with

Mabel Denzin Gergan

Tuesday, December 1, 2026

The Maxwell School

Workshop | Indigeneity and Its Many Lives in South Asia

11:00 AM - 12:30 PM | 220 Eggers Hall | Dr. Paul & Natalie Strasser Legacy Room

Indigeneity and decolonization are politically charged terms in South Asia. The Indian state rejects Indigeneity as a category, even as Adivasi and other tribal communities claim it to contest dispossession while Hindu nationalists in India and the diaspora invoke both terms to cast majoritarian politics as anti-colonial resistance.

This workshop takes up these tensions through a pre-circulated short essay, "Indigeneity and Its Many Lives: Hindutva's Cooptation and Indigenous Assertions in India," to ask why Indigenous struggles remain marginal to South Asian studies.

Together, we will consider what it means to trace continuities and ruptures between settler colonial and so-called postcolonial contexts, and what commitments follow for fieldwork, writing and teaching when Indigeneity is taken seriously as both a contested political claim and a relational tie to land.

PARTICIPANTS ARE ASKED TO READ THE ESSAY IN ADVANCE. REGISTER TO RECEIVE THE ESSAY.

Lecture | 'Crisis Temporalities and Geo-Social Futures in the Himalaya'

3:30 PM - 5:00 PM | 341 Eggers Hall | Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs

Drawing on research in Sikkim, India, with the Lepcha-led Affected Citizens of Teesta and geoscientists across the Himalaya, this talk examines the crisis temporalities through which disasters become legible.

Centering the 2023 South Lhonak Glacial Lake Outburst Flood, which destroyed the Teesta Stage III dam, I trace how state geology renders Himalayan landscapes as extractable terrain and as inherently disaster-prone. Reinforced by alarmist climate narratives, this framing obscures infrastructural decisions that make hazards catastrophic while justifying renewed hydropower and critical mineral extraction. Yet critiques of geology as an imperial discipline do not exhaust the political possibilities of geoscientific practice.

Placing scientific forecasts of the flood and Himalayan geological research more broadly, alongside Lepcha and Buddhist prophecies and sacred landscape narratives, I show how Indigenous cosmologies and geoscientific approaches read the earth, offering a shared refusal of this state logic. Without equating these knowledge systems, I argue that their fidelity to place and attention to deep temporalities can loosen the grip of short horizons through which disasters register only as crisis or catastrophe. Their encounter opens geosocial futures (Clark and Yusoff 2017) attentive to long histories and obligations without diminishing the urgency of present harm.

This event is generously sponsored by the Central New York Humanities Corridor.

Mabel Denzin Gergan is assistant professor of Asian studies at Vanderbilt University. She is a scholar of environmental justice, indigeneity and race. Her research and teaching are grounded in the Indian Himalayan region and attend to the racial and colonial logics underlying Indigenous communities' disproportionate exposure to environmental risk and vulnerability.



Central New York Humanities Corridor

Syracuse University
Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs
Moynihan Institute of Global Affairs

To request accessibility arrangements, **please contact Matt Baxter, mhbaxter@syr.edu**

Outlook

12.01 Mabel Gergan | SAC | Environmental Justice, Indigeneity and Race | Workshop and Lecture ⭐

From Matthew H Baxter <mhbaxter@syr.edu>
Date Thu 11/19/2026 11:48 AM
To ALL SAC affiliates <sac@listserv.syr.edu>

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