

Tuesday,
12 December 2023
6:15 – 7:45 pm
(CET)

Rabinstr. 8, SR 6

The People's Court: Law and Performance from Slavery to the Civil Rights Movement

Prof. Dr. Bryan Wagner

University of California, Berkeley



This lecture examines a period-bound, demotic tradition in African American music, folklore, and vaudeville comedy based on the setting and process of the minor judiciary. It discovers in this tradition an alternative philosophy of law attuned to roles rather than rights, asymmetry rather than notional equality, and improvisation rather than reasoned restraint.

Bryan Wagner is Professor in the English Department at the University of California, Berkeley. His books include *Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery* (Harvard UP, 2009), *The Tar Baby: A Global History* (Princeton UP, 2017), *The Wild Tchoupitoulas* (Bloomsbury 2019), and *The Life and Legend of Bras-Coupé: The Fugitive Slave Who Fought the Law, Ruled the Swamp, Danced at Congo Square, Invented Jazz, and Died for Love* (Louisiana State UP, 2019).