

present an Interdisciplinary Seminar with

DR. STEPHANIE BOHON

on

Structural conditions of police-involved killings in the United States



3:30 PM*, MARCH 25, 2019

Hallam Auditorium, Room 206@NIMBioS · 1122 Volunteer Blvd.

****Reception & refreshments at 3 pm***

Police officers were responsible for the deaths of at least 1,146 U.S. residents in 2015, including 544 people of color. In our study, we contribute to ongoing debates about racial bias in police-involved violence by examining whether or not structural theories of racism explain police-involved deaths at the metropolitan area level. Using verified, crowd-sourced data on police-involved deaths, we analyze the metropolitan area conditions that predict police-involved killing of U.S. residents. We also test a power threat and a minority threat variant of an economic competition model to see which model is best and if these models better predict all deaths, minority deaths, white deaths, or black deaths at the hands of police. Our findings show that the size of the metropolitan black population relative to whites consistently predicts the expected count of killings and that a model that predicts Klan activity better explains these killings than other models we tested. Furthermore, our models better explain the killings of people of color than the killing of whites, suggesting that these are different phenomena, and while more police-involved killings occur in larger metropolitan areas, places with higher crimes rates have fewer than expected police-involved killings.

Dr. Bohon is an Associate Professor and the Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Sociology at the Univ. of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is also the Associate Director of UT's Center for the Study of Social Justice. Her specialty areas include demography, immigration, Latino sociology, urban sociology, and quantitative methodology. Dr. Bohon's work uses critical theory and statistical methods to examine the impact of place characteristics on marginalized people. She received a Ph.D. in Sociology and Demography from Penn State in 1998.