



Gender Talks Series

Shadows of Agamben: Gender-Based Violence and Bare Life in South Africa



Amanda Gouws is Distinguished Professor of Political Science at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, where she holds a SARChI Chair in Gender Politics. Her research focuses on women and citizenship, women's representation, and gender based violence. She has published widely in these areas. She is the editor of (Un)Thinking Citizenship: Feminist Debates in Contemporary South Africa. (UK: Ashgate and Cape Town: Juta, 2005). Her edited book with Daiva Stasiulis, from Carleton University, Canada, Gender and Multiculturalism: North/South Perspectives appeared with Routledge Press in 2014. She has co-edited two books that appeared with Imbali Press: Nasty Women Talk Back (2018) and The COVID Diaries (2021). She was a Commissioner for the South African Commission for Gender Equality from 2012– 2014.

Shadows of Agamben: Gender-Based Violence and Bare Life in South Africa

In this seminar I will investigate sexual violence through the lens of biopolitics, using Agamben's notion of a state of exception (when the law does not apply) and bare life. I will argue that there needs to be a closer look at the neglected sexual and gender dimensions of biopolitics in settler colonial societies, and specifically at the continuities of sexual violence in the settler colony with high levels sexual violence in present day South Africa. Women in post-colonial South Africa are included in a state of exception giving rise to bare life through the abandonment by the law and state agencies that have to protect them. I will illustrate this with the Zuma rape trial and lesbian killings.

Speaker: Prof Amanda Gouws

Date: 09 September 2022

Time: 12:30 – 14:00

Moderator: Dr Nadine Lake

RSVP: khosholome@ufs.ac.za

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