

Humanities Center | Gender, Justice and Power Lecture

Complaint as Diversity Work

Sara Ahmed

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Scheler Humanities Forum
200 Linderman Library



What can be learnt about the workings of power from those who challenge power? This lecture draws on interviews conducted with staff and students who have made complaints within universities that relate to unfair, unjust or unequal working conditions and to abuses of power such as harassment and bullying. The lecture approaches complaint as a form of diversity work: the work some have to do in order to be accommodated. Making a complaint requires becoming an institutional mechanic: you have to work out how to get a complaint through a system. It is because of the difficulty of getting through that complaints often end up being about the system. The lecture explores how the experiences that lead to complaint and the experiences of complaint are hard to untangle. It reflects on the role of academic networks and professional intimacies in shaping what happens to complaints and to those who complain.

Sara Ahmed is a feminist writer and independent scholar. She works at the intersection of feminist, queer and race studies. Her research is concerned with how bodies and worlds take shape; and how power is secured and challenged in everyday life worlds as well as institutional cultures. She is the author of *Living a Feminist Life*, *Willful Subjects*, *On Being Included*, *The Promise of Happiness*, and *Queer Phenomenology*, all published by Duke University Press.

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