

# Research Colloquium North American History

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A lecture by Dr. K. Bailey Thomas (University of  
Rhode Island):

“Returning to the Archive: Reclaiming the Depth of  
20th Century Black American Feminist Thought”

Monday December 16 , 6pm-8pm, Room 201

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Dr. Thomas’s research focuses on bridging the gaps between epistemic, ethical, and political sphere through an argument for the integration of ethical and political frameworks into social epistemology. Thomas’s work develops radical Black feminist approaches to understanding epistemological, political, and ethical aspects of structural oppression and the lived experiences of marginalized people.

Dr. Thomas is also the founder and director of the annual Roundtable for Black Feminist and Womanist Theory.

**Abstract:** This talk critically examines the surface-level engagement with 20th-century Black American feminist thought in contemporary scholarship, where many foundational texts and scholars are frequently cited but not fully engaged. I argue that such superficial treatment overlooks the intricate complexities and profound contributions made by Black feminist theorists to the long struggle for justice in the United States. By merely citing these works, scholars risk truncating and misappropriating the intellectual legacy of Black feminist thinkers. To address this issue, I introduce a method I call “returning to the archive,” which aims to recover and reintegrate overlooked or “shelved” Black feminist scholarship. This approach confronts the systematic silencing and marginalization of Black feminist voices and offers a way to engage deeply with the rich and layered theoretical contributions that have shaped contemporary feminist thought. The talk will highlight specific examples of Black feminist works that have been shelved and propose strategies for their re-engagement in today’s academic and activist circles.

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