

The Comparative Literature Luncheon Series presents:

"A Queer History of Blackouts"

Cait McKinney
Simon Fraser University



Monday, February 12
12:15–1:30 p.m.
102 Kern Building

This talk offers a media history of the online blackout as a digital tactic grounded in 1990s AIDS activism. "Blackout" protests evoke power grid failures, temporarily shutting down online systems by removing content, blocking access, or replacing content with black imagery. This lasting tactic began with New York-based Visual AIDS's Day Without Art online blackout (1995–2000), which drew attention to the AIDS crisis as a systemic failure to care for minoritized people. I argue that an AIDS-informed perspective on infrastructure collapse and systemic exclusion shaped blackouts. This history helps us understand how and why blackouts trade in feelings of frustration with broken systems. I situate this historical analysis of the online blackout in a wider queer media theory of blackouts as impasses in which affective life abruptly shifts in generative ways.

*Cait McKinney is Assistant Professor of Communication at Simon Fraser University. They are the author of *Information Activism: A Queer History of Lesbian Media Technologies* (Duke 2020) and *I know you are, but what am I? On Pee-wee Herman*, forthcoming from University of Minnesota Press in 2024.*

Spring 2024 Upcoming Events:

Monday, February 19

Evren Savci

Yale University

"Queer in Translation: Sexual Politics
under Neoliberal Islam"

Monday, February 26

Anna Ziajka Stanton

Penn State

Title TBA

Monday, March 11

Eugenia Zuroski

McMaster University

Title TBA

Follow us on Instagram!

[@pennstatecmlt](https://www.instagram.com/pennstatecmlt)

Sponsored by:

DEPARTMENT OF
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Center for
Humanities and Information

CGS

Center for Global Studies



PennState
College of the Liberal Arts

This publication is available in alternative media on request. Penn State is an equal opportunity, affirmative action employer, and is committed to providing employment opportunities to all qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability or protected veteran status. Penn State encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have questions about the physical access provided, please contact Olivia Beveridge at 814-863-4288 or odb2@psu.edu, in advance of your participation or visit. U.Ed. LBS 24-368