The Religion of Modernity and the Modernity of Religion: Insights from Contemporary Malawi

This talk contrasts three broad traditions that organize competing patterns of authority, community, and cooperation in contemporary Africa: the Axial Religions (Christianity and Islam); indigenous Chieftaincy systems based around chief, lineage and clan; and Globalized Modernity, represented primarily by NGOs and the global human rights agenda. The paper argues that in many respects it is the axial religions that are the most modernizing, as they directly counter the power of traditional kin obligations (and the overwhelming dangers of witchcraft), while the purportedly modern and secular NGOs practice a ritualized version of modernity, even as they are penetrated by the norms and practices of the kin-based chieftaincy system and its related system of patron-client ties.

Friday, October 26th, 2012
12:00pm-1:30pm
SOC Center (KAP 345)
Light refreshments will be provided.