"Party Like It's 1709: Riotous Meetings and Disorderly Dancing in Eighteenth-Century Bermuda"

HEATHER MIYANO KOPELSION

Thursday, January 28  
12:30-1:30pm  
SOS 250 [map]

Historians of Bermuda have briefly noted an early eighteenth-century court record of a “Tumult or Riotous Meeting made by Severall Negroes and Other Slaves” as a textual antecedent to present-day Gombey dancing, which shares African, Caribbean, European, and indigenous North American influences with mumming traditions in the Caribbean where masked figures dance to drums and other musical instruments. An interdisciplinary longue durée consideration of this court record from the tiny Atlantic archipelago involves broad methodological conversations including debates over the most accurate models and metaphors of African diaspora, as well as the constraints and fictions of the archive and their relation to competing systems of knowledge.

Heather Miyano Kopelson is an associate professor in the Department of History at the University of Alabama, and is affiliated with the Department of Gender and Race Studies. She has published Faithful Bodies: Performing Religion and Race in the Puritan Atlantic (NYU Press, 2014) and is currently researching cultural exchange through music and dance in public processions in the early modern Atlantic world.

Co-sponsored by the USC-Huntington Early Modern Studies Institute, the Gender Studies Program, the Department of History, and the Department of American Studies and Ethnicity. Please contact Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, perlrose@usc.edu, with any questions.