

Department of Law & Legal Studies, with the support of the
Faculty of Public Affairs
Chet Mitchell Memorial Lecture

Friday
October 2nd, 2020
3:00 - 4:15 pm

Videoconference
via Zoom

RSVP Required

Decolonising Rights: South African Women's
Claims for Sexual and Gender Equality



There is a widespread intellectual disenchantment with the idea of rights. Some analysts dismiss it on the grounds that the human rights movement is associated with western saviour politics, and implicated in neoliberal hegemony. Others argue that the idea of the rights-bearing individual is incompatible with indigenous notions of freedom in many parts of the world and must, therefore, be discarded. In the moment of the decolonial turn, rights are even denounced as part of 'epistemic violence.' Taking a historical approach, this lecture aims to remind critics of the investments of suppressed communities in rights as frames for a politics of resistance. The lecture draws on South African women's struggles of the twentieth century to advance an argument for a more hopeful view of rights-based politics.

Shireen Hassim

Canada 150 Research
Chair in Gender and
African Studies at
Carleton University

Biography

Professor Shireen Hassim has written and edited several books including *No Shortcuts to Power: Women and Policymaking in Africa*, and *Go Home or Die Here: Violence, Xenophobia and the Politics of Difference in South Africa*.

Women's Organisations and Democracy: Contesting Authority won the Victoria Shuck Award for Best Book in Women and Politics from the American Political Science Association. Her most recent book was an archival recuperation of the work of the South African sociologist, Fatima Meer. She is a Member of the Academy of Science of South Africa and served as an elected member of its National Council.

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