

# RETHINKING and UNTHINKING POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY

THURSDAY & FRIDAY, MAY 23- 24, 2024

10:30 A.M. - 5 P.M.

KRESGE CENTENNIAL HALL

ROOM #2350

## PARTICIPANTS

**EWA ATANASSOW**

Political Thought, Bard College, Berlin

**PRATHAMA BANERJEE**

History and Politics, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi

**CRAIG CALHOUN**

Sociology and Social Sciences, Arizona State University

**NUSRAT S. CHOWDHURY**

Anthropology and Sociology, Amherst College

**KEVIN OLSON**

Political Science, University of California, Irvine

**STEPHEN SAWYER**

History and Politics, The American University of Paris

## CONVENED BY

**DILIP GAONKAR**

Rhetoric, Media & Publics, Northwestern University

**JOSÉ MEDINA**

Philosophy, Northwestern University

## COSPONSORS

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES   DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY   DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN RHETORIC, MEDIA & PUBLICS

**Center for Global Culture and Communication**  
(An Interdisciplinary Initiative of Northwestern University's School of Communication)

and

**Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities**

jointly present a conference on

## **“Rethinking and Unthinking Popular Sovereignty”**

Thursday-Friday, 23-24 May 2024

10:30 am to 5pm

Room 2-350 (Kaplan Seminar Room)  
Kresge Centennial Hall  
1880 Campus Drive

This conference will explore the contested history and ideology of democracy from the perspective of the doctrine of popular sovereignty—the proposition that people are the ultimate source of political authority and legitimacy in any polity. How and when and in what legible form did the doctrine of popular sovereignty originate and emerge? How did it evolve and become fully embedded in the democratic project? How is this doctrine, especially its two rhetorically powerful formulations-- “we, the people” and “in the name of people”--, invoked and deployed by two competing versions of the democratic project, the liberal and the populist? How does this doctrine function, both conceptually and rhetorically, in the perennial struggle between two opposing and problematic tendencies within the democratic project, namely, the cosmopolitan/liberal inclusionary tendency and the nationalist/populist exclusionary tendency?

## **Thursday, 23 May 2024**

10.30 a.m.-12.00 p.m.

**Stephen Sawyer** (History and Politics, The American University of Paris)  
*“The Democratic Unthinking of Sovereignty in the French Revolution”*

### **Lunch**

1.00 p.m.-2.30 p.m.

**Nusrat Chowdhury** (Anthropology and Sociology, Amherst College)  
*“Mobs and Megaprojects: The Everyday Life of Popular Sovereignty in a Postcolony”*

### **Coffee**

3.00 p.m.-4.30 p.m.

**Ewa Atanassow** (Political Thought, Bard College, Berlin)  
*“What is Popular Sovereignty Anyway?”*

## **Friday, 24 May 2024**

10.30 a.m.-12.00 p.m.

**Craig Calhoun** (Sociology and Social Sciences, Arizona State University)  
*“Can Popular Sovereignty Work at Large Scale?”*

### **Lunch**

1.00 p.m.-2.30 p.m.

**Prathama Banerjee** (History and Politics, Center for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi)  
*“Rulers and the Ruled: Some Historical Scenes of Attachment”*

### **Coffee**

3.00 p.m.-4.30 p.m.

**Kevin Olson** (Political Science, University of California, Irvine)  
*"Subaltern Silence: A Counterhistory of the Public Sphere"*

Convened by

**Dilip Gaonkar** (Rhetoric, Media, and Publics, Northwestern University)  
**José Medina** (Philosophy, Northwestern University)

Cosponsors

Department of Communication Studies  
Department of Philosophy  
Doctoral Program in Rhetoric, Media, and Publics